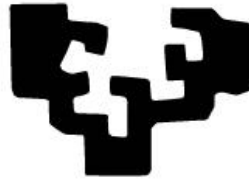


GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA, ALEMANA Y TRADUCCIÓN E
INTERPRETACIÓN

Pre-established Destiny through Patriarchal Forces in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Liebhaberinnen*

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Academic year 2016/ 2017

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0. Abstract

The writer Elfriede Jelinek, winner of the Nobel Academy award in 2004, has demonstrated throughout her career how a piece of writing can go deep into people's consciousness and make them reflect about class injustices and gender oppression. The novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975) is considered one of Jelinek's masterpieces as it is the first time she makes an excellent critique towards gender oppression. Through this work, she opens her writing to an extreme style that will define the rest of her works. The present paper will show that patriarchal forces have pre-established the destiny of the two main characters, Brigitte and Paula, in Elfriede Jelinek's novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* and that this has been portrayed throughout the story making connections with present society.

In the following analysis, information about Elfriede Jelinek and the socio-historical context the novel has been influenced on are given. Theoretical notions and explanations of the patriarchal forces are presented after. This is followed by the deep analysis of the work, where first Brigitte's and Paula's views towards destiny along the novel are portrayed and then compared, within the theoretical framework provided previously. All the statements are proved through quotes from the novel or other experts' pieces of writings.

The conclusions of this analysis show that the roles and stereotypes that lead to empowerment rejection of women play a key role in the establishment of the patriarchal forces. Both characters' inner thoughts show that they are unable to escape oppression they have to undergo and stay contemplating the irreversible changes in their lives. With Brigitte and Paula, we find a clear image of women in society, unable to escape from the pre-established patriarchal destiny.

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1. Introduction

The laureate writer Elfriede Jelinek wrote *Die Liebhaberinnen* in 1975, during a period when feminist movements were at its peak and women started showing their unconformity towards the patriarchal society we live in. This was a time of revolution and writers like Jelinek devoted their time and writing skills to critique the society that was, and still is, oppressing women. To do so, society used different kinds of mechanisms, which we still understand as normal nowadays. This novel is going to be the piece of analysis in the following paper as it was the first novel by Jelinek dealing with this tough topic. This is the novel that opened her way to talk explicitly about women's situation in society, showing the darker side of a society masked by appearances, where women have to stay quiet and obey men supremacy.

To start with my analysis, I give some notions about the author, Elfriede Jelinek, and her career, following with a summary of the novel where I explain the most important images of the book. After that, I will explain the socio-historical context that leads the author to write the story, including the first two waves of the feminist movement and female situation in German-speaking countries during the 20th century. Once this is finished, I will start the deep analysis of the novel. To begin with, I will give Brigitte's and Paula's views towards destiny throughout the novel. To do so, first I will provide an explanation of the setting where the novel occurs and analyze each of the characters giving examples from the text. After this, I will compare both characters in the light of the main forces of patriarchy found in the text. This is going to be the end of the analysis of the novel. Then, I will focus on the main conclusions I have carried out through this paper.

The present paper will show that patriarchal forces have pre-established the destiny of the two main characters, Brigitte and Paula, in Elfriede Jelinek's novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* and that this has been portrayed throughout the story making connections with society at that time.

2. Elfriede Jelinek

Elfriede Jelinek was born in Styria, Austria in 1946. Her mother was an upper-class Catholic German and her father a descendant of proletarian Czech Jewish. She grew up in the city of Vienna, where she completed her studies also. She had an unhappy childhood as she was the only daughter of a couple with marriage problems. Her father suffered from a mental disorder when she was a teenager and her mother over controlled her. This led to Jelinek's psychological problems, she has numerous breakdowns during her life. Jelinek has stated in different interviews that these breakdowns and familiar trauma have provided her with creativity and productivity to write. (Bandhauer 4)

Elfriede Jelinek was instructed in piano, organ, and recorder at very early stage and went on to study composition at the Vienna Conservatory. After her graduation in 1964, she studied theatre and art history at the University of Vienna while continuing her music studies, and in 1971 she achieved the organist diploma. (Bandhauer 4) Her first literary work was *Lisas Schatten* in 1967. She was involved in student movements, so, her writing took a social critique style. In 1970, she wrote her first satirical novel *wir sind lockvögel baby!* In the early 1970s, Jelinek spent some years in Berlin and Rome where she married Gottfried Hüngsberg. After this, she wrote her most famous works. In 1975, she wrote the novel *Die Liebhaberinnen*, which will be the object of analysis in the following paper. In 1980, *Die Ausgesperrten*, and in 1983 her greatest novel, based on her autobiography, *Die Klavierspielerin*, which was released on the big screen by the film director Michael Haneke in 2001. (Nobel Foundation) According to the Nobel Foundation:

"These novels, each within the framework of its own problem complex, present a pitiless world where the reader is confronted with a locked-down regime of violence and submission, hunter, and prey. Jelinek demonstrates how the entertainment industry's clichés seep into people's consciousness and paralyze opposition to class injustices and gender oppression." (Nobel Foundation)

It is hard to define Jelinek's texts as she shifts from prose to poetry, incantation, and hymn and includes theatrical scenes and film sequences. The greatest change happens when she changes from novel-writing to drama. In 1974, she wrote her first

radio play entitled: *wenn die sonne sinkt ist für manche schon büroschluss*. After its praise, she continued writing radio plays where she differed from the mainstream using polyphonic monologs. We find in her bitter style that she has been influenced by different authors such as Johann Nepomuk Nestroy, Karl Kraus, Ödön von Horváth, Elias Canetti, Thomas Bernhard and the Wiener Group. (Novel Foundation)

She has won plenty of prizes throughout her career. The most important one, the Nobel Prize in Literature, she was awarded in 2004 "for her musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that with extraordinary linguistic zeal, reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power". (Novel Foundation)

3. Summary of the novel

In the following dissertation, the novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* will be the piece to analysis. This book talks about two young women, Brigitte and Paula, who live in a small town in Austria. Both women try to survive getting a man as they find this the only way to earn a name and have a future.

Brigitte, the first character presented in the novel, works in a brassiere factory. She hates her work and the only thing keeping her going in life is the thought of Heinz. She is hopeful of building a future with him. Heinz is an electrician and has a secure future but Brigitte does not even exist to him. Heinz's family does not like Brigitte because they want something better and more educated for their son; they believe that Brigitte has nothing to offer. She does not come from rich parents, nor does she look particularly good or is highly intelligent. When the two have sex, Heinz is satisfied, but Brigitte does not feel a sexual desire because Heinz is too selfish to care about what she feels. Brigitte soon realizes she has no chance with Heinz unless she has his child with him; therefore, she tries to get pregnant. When Susi, a picture-loving, young girl from a wealthy family, meets Heinz, Brigitte gets jealous and tries to get rid of her. She decides she must fall pregnant as soon as possible because Heinz's parents are excited with Susi, and find her as a better choice for Heinz. Suddenly, Brigitte falls pregnant and Heinz must marry her. Brigitte achieves her goal of being part of a family and financially secured.

Paula is the second protagonist in the novel; she is only fifteen years old and comes from the country. She wants to become a dressmaker, which is very unusual for women of her class. Normally young girls become saleswomen or housewives; there are no more choices for them. Paula's mother and grandmother are against the idea of her becoming a dressmaker, but Paula takes the risk of being beaten by her brother and father and begins dressmaking lessons. Paula is inexperienced and curious about love. She finds Erich, a young, handsome woodworker and falls in love. Erich is not particularly bright and he is only interested in motorcycles and his work. He does not even notice that Paula is in love with him. His parents want him to take a better wife as they find Paula not enough for him. They believe Erich is so good looking he could find any other woman. Paula falls pregnant and she is mocked by the whole village for her illegitimate child. At home, she is beaten and they try to kill the child, but it survives. Later she will have another kid. Erich's parents are still against a wedding, but when his stepfather dies from an asthma attack, his mother allows them to marry. After the wedding, Paula begins to work as a saleswoman and she is happy, even when Erich wastes the money earned in alcohol. Since Paula still wants to be able to care for her children and own a house to be happy with Erich, she prostitutes herself. Erich realizes the truth and he divorces. Paula is forced to give her children to her parents and find a job. She finds a vacancy in the brassieres factory, right where Brigitte started the story.

4. Socio-historical context

The following lines deal with the historical and social movement of feminism throughout the history. Even if we find the novel set in Austria, the historical context of the novel is not really limited to this country as it could have been set in any other place in western society. To talk about feminism, I will divide my socio-historical analysis in the first two waves described by many gender experts of the movement, which are the most relevant ones for the analysis of this novel. After that, I will put my focus on the German-speaking countries, as the social condition after the Second World War had a great influence in the author of the novel. Before talking about the history of feminism, I will give one of the many definitions we can find about the movement:

Feminism is the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. (Brucket & Burnell)

4.1. *First wave*

We find evidence of feminist movements from very early stage. For example, in the third century, women from the Roman Empire did a revolution against the government and the restrictions they had in order to use expensive goods. Women from the city blocked the entrance to the forum and claimed Marcus Porcius Cato to give women the right to use the goods. (Bucket & Burnell)

These feminist movements started taking importance with the appearances of the first feminist philosophers. As an example of this, we find Christine de Pisan, born in the last years of the 14th century, who is considered the first feminist philosopher. She wrote 10 volumes in verse, including *L'Épître au Dieu d'amours* (1399), in which she defended women against the satire of Jean de Meun in the work *Roman de la rose* and wrote in favour of women education. (Bucket & Burnell)

In the late 16th century, early feminist movements arrived in England. In this context, Jane Anger wrote a pamphlet defending women from the texts being published in those days, where males' supremacy was oppressing women. This text served as inspiration for other women in England for a century. Next time we find the feminist movement coming alive again is in the enlightenment. Women reacted against the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1789), where women were totally ignored. The movement took strength back again and triggered the writing of new texts. *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (1791) was written by Olympe de Gouges, calming women individualism and refusing the need of a woman to live under a man's shadow. Another important figure of this period is Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. This book is the first book written defending women rights and sex equality in the English language. By mid-19th century feminist movements spread around Europe and North America, and in 1848, the first women's rights convention took place in a town in New York. This convention was headed by Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, Jane Hunt, and

Elizabeth Cady Stanton. This last one proposed the "Declaration of Sentiments" a work based on the Declaration of Independence but asking for men and women equality. She wrote 11 claims which included for the first time the right to vote; this was the beginning of the suffragist movement. (Bucket & Burnell)

According to Bucket and Burnell, after American civil war, women expected to be included in the 15th amendment of the Constitution, but this did not happen, so, Stanton and Susan B. Anthony created the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. At the beginning, the right of the vote had as root equality among men and women and justice, but with the migration, Carrie Chapman Catt declared the votes of literate, American-born, middle-class women would serve as the balance to the foreigner votes. After this, women started focusing more on work conditions and left the suffragist movement, till in 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst led some troubles and strikes that ended by giving the right to vote to female householders, householders' wives, and female university graduates over the age of 30 in 1918 in England. (Bucket & Burnell)

4.2. Second wave

After the suffragism was achieved, feminist movements slowed down and were not as present. This changed in the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the feminism took strength back again, but this time the feminist movement was more connected with civil rights movement, and the main claims were for justice and equality. Women movements started working with nationalists, colony liberation movements, and labour rights movements. (Mccann & Kim 13)

As an example, groups such as the National Organization for Women started a campaign for equality claiming for the use of the word Ms. as a neutral form to refer to a person. Collectives and rape centers were established, sexual stereotypes were erased from children's books and women's studies departments were set at universities. Laws went harder and employers found to have discriminated against female workers were required to compensate with back pay. Women began to find jobs as pilots, construction workers, soldiers, and bus drivers. (Bucket & Burnell) In the early 1970s, the notion of women was added to the history taught in that moment. The new courses offered at universities, allowed more research about women in the past who created history, but

had been erased by patriarchal forces from the books. (Downs 5) One of the most symbolical movements from that time is the bra-burning on September 7, 1968 where a group of women were making a demonstration against the beauty conquest Miss America in New Jersey and decided to burn symbols of oppression and torture towards women. They peacefully burnt items like playboy magazines, bras, high heels, false eyelashes, rollers and much more. Next day, "The Washington Post" published that after the demonstration some of the women burnt publically their bras. Even if this piece of news was false, it rapidly became a symbol of the feminist movement in the 1970s. The use of this image wanted to reveal the idea that women refused to be the object of desire. After this, the initial connection of the protest over the election of Miss America was forgotten. (Álvarez)

Feminism globalized around the world, but this fact came out with some new problems. The second wave was largely defined and led by educated middle-class white women who built the movement primarily around their own concerns that is the reason why women with a minority background did not really join these movements, they felt not represented and that some other people were talking about their own cause. (Hakim 1)

4.3 Women in German-speaking countries

In Germany, women did not have the right to vote until 1919, when after the First World War, the role of the woman slightly started to change. The war gave women the opportunity to leave their homes and work, and it also gave them the option to access higher education. The voters from the Weimar Republic elected 111 women for the Reichstag, However, there were many struggles to achieve equality. They achieved very limited freedom, and women started to question if they were better before than after gaining "the rights". Due to the confusion and the frustration of not achieving what they had been promised, women started voting to the right-wing and radical parties. These parties promised the restoration of order through traditional rules; women found this better than the actual chaos they were living. (Kaes, Jay & Dimendberg 195)

When the Nazism arrived in Germany and to the countries around it, women lost all the progress they had done in the last years. The Nazism gave few opportunities to

women outside the private sphere. Women were segregated to traditional domestic space and Nazism provided them with groups where they could "empower" themselves, thus, church groups or feminine groups in favour of Nazism. With the economic recovery in the 1930s due to the expansion of the armed forces and heavy industry, women started working in factories again. Nevertheless, women's fate was primarily determined by their reproductive capacity. During Nazism, they had to face an extreme patriarchal society, marriage barrier, lower wages, under-representation in society and brutal physical and mental cruelty. In 1945, men were less than women, as most men had died fighting in the Second World War or were war prisoners, and women had to work in the industry so as to take the country forward. (Stephenson 5)

After the war, the women that rebuilt the country and gained importance in society got the term *Trümmerfrauen*. The concept of the *Trümmerfrauen* is connected to the women who took the debris of the destroyed buildings by the war and rebuilt with them the new cities. After the war, a vast amount of men had died or were injured so women got the duty of working and reconstructing society. (Fulbrook 130) Even if the Second World War was a devastating disaster, the war opened barriers for women which soon were closed again however by the economic recovery in the 1950s. All the advances they had achieved in the last decades disappeared and women were reinstated at home. However in the 1970s feminist movement took strength back again and women achieved some freedom, even if still limited. (Hakim 1)

5. Origins of Patriarchy

To understand the origins of patriarchy, I will analyse the factors that have caused this social norm that dominates the nowadays world. I will defend that patriarchy has been socially constructed by three different factors: status, roles, and stereotypes.

5.1. Status

To organize societies, we have created a net of social structures that help us deal with the everyday. Among these social structures, we find the status of each of the individuals. "Status beliefs are shared cultural schemas about the status position in

society of groups such as those based on gender, race, ethnicity, education, or occupation.” (Ridgeway 1) Each individual has different variable statuses that are achieved through effort or inherently. (Lindsey 2)

One can have more than one status simultaneously, for example, someone can be a father, son, uncle, hairdresser, and dancer at the same time. Multiple statuses of an individual are called status set. For this essay, we will focus on the status you get when you are born. This includes gender, race and social class, but mainly gender as it is our subject topic. According to prestige, we find two types of statuses: high-prestige and low-prestige. As an example, a doctor will be higher ranked than a housekeeper. (Lindsey 2)

All societies categorize members by status and then rank these statuses in some fashion, thereby creating a system of social stratification. People whose status sets are thought to be of low-ranked attributed statuses more than high-ranked achieved statuses, which are near the bottom of the social stratification system and vulnerable to social stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. Until now, there is no known society in which the status of female is consistently ranked higher than that of male. (Lindsey 2) Moreover, women that violate this expected status order are penalized through the society so that they cannot climb in the pyramid and become threaten for men. (Ridgeway 1)

5.2. *Roles*

Social norms determine how roles are performed by different individuals in different situations. “A role is the expected behavior associated with a status.” (Lindsey 2)

Females and males, mothers and fathers, and daughters and sons are all statuses with different normative role requirements attached to them. The status of mother calls for expected roles involving love, nurturing, self-sacrifice, home-making, and availability. The status of father calls for expected roles of breadwinner, disciplinarian, home technology expert, and ultimate decision maker in the household. (Lindsey 2)

As we have observed in the previous paragraph, each gender will have some pre-established roles to play in society. Sometimes, due to rapid social changes, these roles

have been changed, leading to uncertainty among the society. As an example of this, we find women after the World War Two, who began to work because of the small number of men left. They became the breadwinners also. Women had to fulfil the mother, worker and woman role and they had no recognition for it. (Lindsey 3)

5.3. Stereotypes

According to statuses and roles, we construct our lives in a predictable way. They help us in relating with people from different statuses or roles without knowing them. (Lindsey 3)

Sometimes roles become so rigid that individuals lose freedom in their behavior, and these roles became stereotypes. Stereotypes are "oversimplified conceptions that people who occupy the same status group share in common." (Lindsey 3) The term 'stereotype' is nowadays a word with negative connotations rather than positive, it is used to abuse minorities or social groups under oppression. (Dyer 1) More centered towards the topic dealing now, we will focus on the gender stereotypes which are "organized consensual beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of women and men and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity." (Worell 561) Male and females are stereotypically judged through traits that are supposed to come with the biological sex. For example, "women are stereotyped as flighty and unreliable because they possess uncontrollable raging hormones that fuel unpredictable emotional outbursts." (Lindsey 3) Assignment of this kind of negative stereotypes results in sexism, that is, the thought that males are superior to females. Of course, males are affected by sexism, but females, due to their status sets, are more likely to be stigmatized. Most of the times, a female will occupy a status set that implies less prestige and less power. Biological traits are taken into account so as to justify discrimination. (Lindsey 3)

5.4. *Patriarchy*

Sexism is preserved through the social structures dominated by males that we call systems of patriarchy. “Patriarchy, by definition, exhibits androcentric—male-centered norms operating throughout all social institutions that become the standard to which all persons adhere.” (Lindsey 3) Patriarchy and androcentric are combined so as to perpetuate beliefs that gender roles are biologically determined and unalterable. In this way, sexism is reinforced. (Lindsey 3)

Men have been the authors and protagonists of what has been written throughout history, deciding the place of men and women in every historical event. History has been recorded from an androcentric perspective that ignored women. The reasons for that have been that men have been allowed to develop world beliefs about a woman’s biological unsuitability to take part in cultural, social or political events. This has restricted the opportunities for women to receive education and literacy. Due to these facts, patriarchy is understood as a piece of history. (Lindsey 3)

During the 1960s and 1970s, feminist scholars viewed the traditional patriarchal family as a major site for the oppression of women. They asserted that if a patriarchal family is understood as beneficial to social stability, it obstacles the equality of roles among men and women. This concept of patriarchal society is not limited to just a few cultures, but it is a tendency found worldwide. Women in every culture of the world have been shown to be subordinated by men, that is, by patriarchy. To prove this, we should take into account data that will show the real outcomes (Ortner 73):

- (1) elements of cultural ideology and informants’ statements that explicitly devalue women, according them, their roles, their tasks, their products, and their social milieux less prestige than are accorded men and the male correlates;
- (2) symbolic devices, such as the attribution of defilement, which may be interpreted as implicitly making a statement of inferior valuation; and
- (3) social-structural arrangements that exclude women from participation in or contact with some realm in which the highest powers of the society are felt to reside. (Ortner 73)

Either of these three is enough to show women inferiority in a culture. Certainly, according to Ortner, in all known cultures we find this subordination of women if

applied these data. However, this repression of the woman not always comes by the hand of men. Due to the pressure of society women start their own war against themselves. (Ortner 73)

6. Brigitte's and Paula's expectations towards destiny

The following lines will explain Brigitte's and Paula's expectations towards destiny. To do so, I will analyze both protagonists in an individual way and explain what expectations each of the characters had towards their destiny. This will be achieved by describing the environment and place where the actions take place, their society.

6.1. Setting

The novel is set in a small town surrounded by mountains in the Alps, in an idyllic landscape where everything looks virginal. Nature is sublime all over the place cheering up the life of the inhabitants. However, not everything is coming from nature, we have human constructions. In the middle of this town, in its heart, there is a factory that has been built by the inhabitants of the village. According to the narrator, this factory does not make any contrast with the landscape surrounding it. This factory has become integrated into town as one other element, and the workers in there come and go. Even if it would seem this factory belongs to the town and people working in there, it does not. This factory belongs to a company. This company is looking for profitable workers, according to the text; these workers are the ones that live happily. Ironically, only women work here: "the factory is nevertheless happy, when happy people pour into it, because they do more work than unhappy ones." (Jelinek 1)

I would say the picture depicted in the novel is divided into three different rings. The first and largest ring, nature and mountains, is the least powerful of the three, according to the way it is described. This is what makes the town so isolated from the rest of the world, creating a unique place. The second ring is the town, it is not natural but it is constructed by the inhabitants so as they can make their lives near the factory. The last ring is the factory itself, where the women work. It is the most artificial thing in the town, and right in the center of it. This factory is set in the middle of a natural

environment, in the center of the town as a symbol of power. This is an irony as the women working in there are powerless. These women have no identity; they belong to their families unless they have no family, which in this case is even worse as they are be invisible for the rest of the society. We see this fact when the text says: "the women, who work here, do not belong to the factory owner. the women, who work here, belong entirely to their families." (Jelinek 2)

All the houses in the town are built around the factory. Inside the building, we find another division, the division between men and women. Only women work in there. They sew brassieres and panties. However, some men are the bosses. The factory, even if ruled by men, is a place dominated by women. Inside the factory, they have their own rules. They try to have equality in the work they do. For example, the texts say that if one woman makes a short seam she will have to sew more than one that makes a longer or more difficult one. It is ironic that even if these women do not fight for their rights and their own will, they still have fairness in their work at the factory.

All these women, apart from working for the company, still must work for their families. They are slaves of their own family, starting with their parents and if lucky, followed by their husband and children. Their life will never belong to them, but this is a fact they think will never change and they will have no intention to do it either.

This village is set apart from the rest of the society. Even if we are said it is set in the Alps, the narrator could be talking about any other town in any other place in the western society. As we find no cultural evidence so as to connect it with Austria. In this town, there are its own rules, it exists what I will call the "public privacy". It is such small town, isolated from the rest, that this has become like a small world where everybody is worried about appearances. Nobody makes a move unless they know it will be socially accepted or it will be kept as a secret forever. However, in the end, everything will be known as secrets cannot be hidden in such a small place where everybody knows each other.

This distribution of the village is a critic towards women situation in society. The heart of the town is a factory where women work sewing women's brassieres, corsets, and panties, that is, not any kind of clothes but a symbol of oppression by

patriarchal society towards women. The center of the town is a building where a symbol towards women oppression is being created, and this garment is produced by women themselves. They produce brassieres till they can leave the factory and get what they consider a “life” under the shadow of a man. If not, they will sew till the end of their days.

6.2. Brigitte's expectations towards destiny

The novel opens with Brigitte's story; the narrator introduces the character as a woman trying to get a future. For her, the future can be only achieved through a man, in her case, this man will be Heinz. Her life follows the path of conformity; she has no future, no destiny or identity unless she gets a masculine figure to give her a life. These are the values she has received from the environment she is living in. She has been taught that without a man she will be nobody, and this idea has become part of her beliefs:

[...] one day brigitte decided, that she wanted to be only a woman, all woman for a guy, who was called heinz. she believes, that from now on her weaknesses would be strengths and her strengths very much hidden. (Jelinek 5)

This excerpt is at the beginning of the novel, after the foreword, it starts by saying that Brigitte took the decision of looking for a man, but not any man, but Heinz. The narrator states that she made a decision, which we soon recognize as an error. Due to social pressure, she chooses Heinz. Women have no possibility to select what they want as we see in this quote from the foreword: “if someone has a fate, then it's a man, if someone gets a fate, then it's a woman” (Jelinek 3). This beginning is a mere irony that will show us the bitterness the novel follows.

To get a life she follows the established social norms. Firstly, she states how she needs to take care of her appearance. In this novel, we see how the concept of beauty has been applied to the figure of women in society, even if in the foreword of the novel we will find a totally different description towards beauty, where it is connected to nature. This beauty is spelled in capital letters like "BEAUTIFUL" (Jelinek 1) as it would relate to something that is really truthful, making the contrast with all the small letters in the text. This beauty will be the real one, connected to nature and the

mountains. After this, we find what we consider the “unnatural” beauty, the one that will be connected to physical characteristics, to the perfection of youth, something ephemeral.

The inner is left apart and women are portrayed as mere objects. These women are compared to the machines in the factory but not only they have to deal with the work in the factory and their families, but they also should maintain their appearance unpolluted and ready to be exposed to the men so that they decide if that body is the brand-new manikin they want to acquire. As said in the text, “if one has no present, then one must take provision for the future.” (Jelinek 5) In order not to be judged in the future for having her skin marked by the pass of time, Brigitte will buy cosmetics. “when one is young, one always looks young, when one is older, then it’s too late anyway. then if one does not look younger, the judgment of the world is merciless: did not make cosmetic provision when young!” (Jelinek 5) She has a passive attitude towards the oppression she is suffering from society and feeds the capitalistic monster by buying products. Brigitte follows the mainstream path in order not to be judged and get a man that chooses her for her physical appearance. Besides, Brigitte is concerned about aging:

brigitte has youth, which she also has to share with others. for example with the factory and the noise in it and with crowded bus. they gnaw at brigitte's youth. brigitte grows ever older and less woman, the competition grows ever younger and ever more woman. (Jelinek 10)

The older she gets, the more difficult will be to get a life. According to this quote, as the time passes, a woman loses her femininity and her capacity to get a life. A woman’s youth vanishes the more she works. For this not to happen she must fight for her future, that is, for Heinz. She uses her skills and her abilities to convince Heinz that she is the one, the perfect woman that is worth to stay at his side, the woman that will be prized with the honour of becoming his wife and getting a name, a life, and a future. Apart from trying to look "beautiful" she will pretend she loves children:

brigitte explains, that such a tiny being would make her a mother a mother a mother, that heinz doesn’t know what to do with babies, because he is a man, that she knows very well what to do with babies, because she is a woman. heinz will learn to love the baby later, brigitte will be able to love it right away and on the spot. (Jelinek 37)

She behaves like a perfect housekeeper and she tries to fulfill the stereotypes marked by society. However, as we read in this extract, we find she hates children:

in reality, brigitte is repelled by infants. in reality, she would love to snap the delicate little fingers, and stud the helpless little toes with bamboo splinters and stuff a dirty rag into the gob of the newly arrived number one instead of the beloved pacifier, so that for once there really would be something to scream about. (Jelinek 38)

Brigitte would not like to have a baby and she does really hate children. We see in this piece of text that the fact of being with a baby makes her sick. It shows the side Brigitte hides to the society, her true thoughts, where she must hide her real desires. She would never want to have a baby as she does not feel herself like a mother, but she neglects this and has she needs an offspring with Heinz to follow the destiny she has been determined by being the woman. If she would not desire to have a baby, she would be excluded as a candidate to be his wife and if she does not get him, she has an uncertain fate:

but brigitte also knows, that there is no going up in the world for her, there is only heinz or something worse than heinz or sewing brassières until the end of her life. sewing brassières without heinz means the end of her life right now. it is left completely to chance, whether brigitte lives, with heinz, or escapes life and goes to waste. there are no rules for that. fate decides brigitte's fate. (Jelinek 6)

She believes that because she has the capacity of having children she has to use it so as to hunt Heinz. Even if she hates children she feels that having one is something indispensable to get a life, so she leaves her self-will aside and desperately desire a baby. Once again, she has a passive attitude towards the oppressive society:

in addition brigitte has the capacity to bear children which not everyone has. she hopes to be allowed to bear such a child soon. since brigitte has known heinz, she feels an urge, to bear a child. if that's not a feeling, what on earth is a feeling?... the child will be a wanted child. the child is wanted by brigitte, but not by heinz. (Jelinek 128)

We observe the previous ideas in this quote. Brigitte says she desires to have a baby, and that that baby will be wanted, but in fact, that baby will be used as a tool to catch Heinz. She is that obsessed by the idea of being a wife that she behaves merciless

towards human life. She will compare an infant to a sewing machine and see the pro and cons of it:

and perhaps the child is better than the sewing machine. one can go for a walk in the fresh air with the child, not with the machine. the machine has no heart, the child has. apart from that, the machine is in the factory and the child at home well-ordered surroundings. (Jelinek 130)

She decides to have the baby, but she is still afraid of being left apart while she is pregnant and we see her disdain towards the baby when she compares it to a worm: “it can take many months, here it’s many pages, before the child pops its head out of the womb like a worm out of the apple, perhaps we won’t even get that far here. Perhaps we’ll have to break off before then.” (Jelinek 130) This apple would be the symbol of life, the symbol of free, fresh nature and the worm inside, a harmful creature devouring the apple from inside. Jelinek makes a metaphor portraying this baby like the last piece that will end with her freedom, a being that is going to kill her from inside.

Heinz is just the key for what she considers her destiny. Even if she talks about loving him, we soon learn what she considers love is not the expected. As we see in this quote Brigitte profoundly hates Heinz: “He enjoys so much, the pig. Brigitte would slam his roaring head against the wall.” (Jelinek 32) She can’t stand to be touched by him. For her, the act of having sex is just a disgusting procedure she must go through to get the baby that will provide her with her destiny and identity. Every time they have sex she thinks about something else and finds no satisfaction in it. “Brigitte almost has to vomit. It hasn’t been as bad for a long time. Heinz hurries to his mates on the sports field. Brigitte wipes the poor almond croissants, she feels so sorry for them.” (Jelinek 132)

In conclusion, we find Brigitte as the image of women in German-speaking countries in the 1950s, when after the chaos of the war; women were imprisoned at home again. She presents herself passive towards the oppression of patriarchal society. She accepts the fate she has been provided with and represses her inner thoughts, as women did in this period of time.

6.3. *Paula's expectation towards destiny*

Paula is the second protagonist in the story, opposite to Brigitte when the text starts talking about Paula, we realize that she already has a life. She is only fifteen years old and comes from the country. She wants to become a dressmaker, what is very unusual for women of her class, she has plans and desires for her future. She has two sisters. We find in the example of her two sisters that they do not exist anymore as they got married: “until now country life has held her in check - just like her sisters erika and rene, who are married. one can already write both off, it is as if they were not in the youngest and still properly in the world.” (Jelinek 12) Paula understands marriage as the moment when women lose their lives and identity to become the property of a man.

At the beginning, Paula does not follow the socially established norms. She connects working with life. According to the text, if a woman wants to keep being alive and build herself, she chooses the path of working for at least some years, till she finds a proper man. A proper man is not any kind of man, but one that has a good job and is able to sustain a family.

sometimes a daughter does not want to die as quickly as she should, but prefers to remain a sales assistant for one or two years and live! yes live! in rare cases she would even like to become sales assistant in the country town, where there are other professions such as priest, teacher, factory worker, plumber, joiner, locksmith, but also watchmaker, baker, butcher! and pork butcher! and many more. many more promises of life in a more beautiful future. (Jelinek 14)

In this quotation, we see how Paula dreams about different choices in life and she gets excited just by thinking about different trades. She connects living with working; she has not closed her mind to be a housewife. However, in society marrying a man is understood as a natural process. A young girl has two possibilities: to become a sales assistant or a housewife. If she chooses to be a housewife, she will be imprisoned at home till she marries and finds her end. If she chooses to be a sales assistant, she will have a life for at least a couple of years till she finds her fate, sells herself and ends up incarcerated at home. This idea will be expressed in this paragraph retrieved from the novel:

so over the years a natural cycle has come into being: birth and starting to work and getting married and leaving again and getting the daughter, who is housewife or sales assistant, usually, housewife, daughter starts work, mother kicks the bucket, daughter is married, leaves, jumps down from running board, herself gets the next daughter, co-op shop is the turn-table of natural cycle of nature, the seasons and human life in all its many forms of expression are reflected in its fruit and veg. (Jelinek 12)

Surprisingly, Paula has a voice in the novel and she states her revolutionary ideas to her mother. She does not want to follow the established fate she has been provided with. She shows her emotions and ambitions. She is a dreamer and wants to find a life somewhere else; nobody around her had thought to do this before. For her to be a housewife or sales assistant is not enough, she is a nonconformist, something never seen in the town. Her dream is to become a dressmaker as we observe in the following excerpt:

however paula says, but mother i don't want to, i want to learn dressmaking. and when i've finished learning to be a dressmaker, i want to have something of my life, drive to italy and go to the cinema with the money i've earned myself, and after i've had something of life, i want to drive to italy once more, for the last time and, with the money i've earned, go to the cinema once again, for the very last time [...] (Jelinek 17)

Paula dreams about learning, about culture, about traveling and about making her own money for her whims. At the beginning, we find Paula as the image of an independent strong woman, but in the following line we learn that after some years she wants to build a family. However, she wants to have a family not because of the social pressure, but because she really wants to do so.

[...] and then i want to look for a decent man, or a less decent man, such as one sees in the cinema more and more often now, and then I want to marry and have children . and all together and love them at the same time, yes love! and there will be two, a boy and a girl, and then i would like to take the pill as well, so that there are only two, a boy and a girl, and everything's always clean and neat. (Jelinek 17)

Paula is a revolutionary for her time. She wants to learn a trade and that is not the usual in town. She is the only character in the novel that wants to fight against the establishment. She has clear ideas of what she wants. She wants to enjoy her life as an individual till she learns from her own experiences and after that, find a man that will

give her children and love. Paula has revolutionary ideas for the time, but she still wants to find a man after she has enjoyed her youth. Unfortunately, this is not allowed by her family. Jealousy will provoke a brutal and overwhelming answer by the women in her family and even harder from the men. In the next paragraph, we read her grandmother's brutal answer to her dreams:

momma says, that she will tell dada and gerald. she at most went to the cinema three times in her life, and she didn't like it and it didn't interest her, and she was glad when she was home again. i haven't been to italy at all, never, and the tv is much more interesting, one sees the whole world, without wanting or having to be in the whole time. when my dada was still alive, i slaved for him, and then i went on slaving for your dada and for gerald, and now that you're old enough to slave with me, you suddenly don't want to any more but learn the clean trade of dressmaking instead. why and for what have i slaved all my life, if not for dada and gerald, and now when you could at last slave with me, you don't want to. you can put it out of your head! (Jelinek 18)

We find how mothers end up developing hate towards their own daughters. They are jealous of the fact that they could have a chance of getting a life by escaping the pre-established destiny they have been provided by society. The oppression women are dealing with has dehumanized them to the point to desire evil to their own daughters instead of having mercy for them. They will try to destroy their daughters' lives as their mothers did with them as we read in this quote: "the women begin to hate their daughters and want to have them die as quickly as possible just as they once died, so: so they must get a man." (Jelinek 13)

Paula is a character that evolves backwards in the novel. Even if she starts being an example for the rest of the society as a strong empowered woman, after her family finds out her plans, she is oppressed and starts to look for a man.

Appearances are once again one of the most prominent topics in Paula's world. When a couple gets married, they try to purchase any trendy materialistic thing. They need to show off in front of the neighbors and family that their life is perfect. Women are compared to home appliances. Everything described inside a house must be new; nothing purchased by second hand is accepted. The men are the ones that control the money and subtly the narrator makes connection between the money earned and the

alcohol they drink, saying it is a small amount with bitter irony. This can be observed in this quote:

[...] and the husband is good and hands over all the money and only drinks a little, and the kitchen is all new and the vacuum cleaner is new and the new cooker is admittedly used but as new ... [...] (Jelinek 14)

Women are treated as another object from the house; they must be useful, trendy and new. Nobody wants a used woman; that is unacceptable as we observe in this excerpt:

[...] and the daughter is still as new, but will soon be a sales assistant and rapidly age and become used. but why should the daughter not become used up if the mother has been used up too? the daughter must be used soon, she really needs it urgently and so let's have new and the better, that is priest, teacher, factory worker, plumber, joiner locksmith, watchmaker, butcher! and pork butcher! and many more, etc and all of them too, but they themselves by no means want to buy an already used woman for further use. no. that makes things difficult. because where does one get unused women from, if women are constantly being used? there is no prostitution, but here are a lot of illegitimate children, [...] (Jelinek 14)

Women are objectified, they are at the same level as the home appliances and the narrator explains how once a woman is used, she will become not fancy anymore. It is very important to stay virgin, nobody will want to take a used woman, so women must be careful of what they do and be aware of how their value in the market could drop if they let someone take them before time. In this part of the excerpt, it is stated that there is no prostitution. Ironically, this will be the fate of Paula who is forced by the need created by her alcoholic husband. Through prostitution, she finds the money she needs to purchase her dreams. Prostitution is a reality in this society, but it is rejected by the narrator as it is so much hidden for trying to keep up appearances. Women are blamed for becoming prostitutes, but men putting price to women's bodies remain masked.

used women are rarely taken, and then only by the first user. then they have to hear for the rest of their life; if i hadn't taken you, no one else would have taken you, and where would you get the money for the child, but i took you at the last moment after all, and now you can take money from me, after I've taken the money for drink first, and then i can take you in return without any

problem as often as i like, but i'll make sure, that nobody takes our daughter unlawfully, so that she doesn't turn in someone like her mother, who let herself be taken BEFORE. (Jelinek 15)

As we read in the quote, if a woman is not careful and loses her virginity before time, she is mistreated the rest of her life, harder than any other woman. If she is lucky and a man takes her, she should be glad to his tremendous mercy and be grateful to him for the rest of her life. This man's duty is to bring up their daughter in a way, so she does not follow in her mother's footsteps and instead becomes a proper woman.

In conclusion, Paula starts the story as a powerful character with clear ideas. She is the portrayal of those women in the 1970s who resurfaced the feminist movements in western society. Elfriede Jelinek makes a critique to these women through this character by showing how Paula gives up her dreams and her own will due to the social repression. In this way, Jelinek wants to give strength to those women so they can empower themselves and do not give up the feminist struggle. The character of Paula shows how to let the battle go gives no happiness or reward.

7. Brigitte's and Paula's comparison towards pre-established destiny

In this part of the analysis I will compare the both characters, Brigitte and Paula, in order to show the ingredients that have lead each of them to fall in the trap of the pre-established destiny.

7.1. Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Gender roles are very much present and fixed in the novel. As we have mentioned in the previous pages gender roles are "shared expectations that define how women and men should behave (prescriptive) and how they do behave (descriptive)." (Worell 561) In Brigitte's case, she knows clearly what her roles in society are. Patriarchal forces have determined that to be a woman you must be a good housewife, a good wife and a good mother. These are the roles she tries to pursue. She has a reduced range of possibilities as she never had the opportunity to make a choice. She follows the path of conformity. Brigitte trains herself to become the perfect woman. These three roles are thought to be innate in women behavior, but they are not, as we observe in Brigitte's character. A woman is not born with cleaning and cooking skills, caring skills,

or maternal desire. Neither is she born to be submissive to her husband. However, Brigitte suppresses herself and learns these roles to fulfil her husband's desires as it is the only way she finds to get an identity.

In the case of Paula, at the beginning of the novel her gender roles are not as visible as for Brigitte. She knows what roles she must fulfil, but she does not see clear whether to follow them or not. At the beginning of the novel, the only clear role she has is the one of a daughter. She shows her family her roles as a dreamer, self-motivated learner, individualistic and passionate girl. She is determined to find her real love, the love she has seen in the magazines, but before that she will try to build herself as a person. In the end, due to social pressure she ends up trying to achieve those non-innate values and trying to make them part of herself. She develops nurturing, self-sacrifice and home-making to please the people around her. However, she has no reward. She changes her roles in society to please people and this confuses her, leading her to prostitution, what makes her lose everything that she tried to gain, even her personality. All these changes lead her to disgrace.

These roles Brigitte and Paula deal with are that fixed in society that they have become stereotypes. These stereotypes are “organized consensual beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of women and men and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity”. (Worell 561) At the beginning, both characters fulfill the stereotypes fixed by society. Brigitte becomes the perfect woman, but Paula, even if she tries; she is diminished and left alone. There is no place in society for non-stereotypical women.

In conclusion, throughout the novel, we find how the patriarchy has established gender roles and stereotypes in both characters in the novel. Brigitte has them clear since the very beginning, but Paula will start by having some roles she will change due to the social pressure. We see how these two women are the portrayal of society. We find this establishment of gender roles and stereotypes as another way of oppression women suffer in society by not allowing them to grow as individuals, keeping them closely tied to male supremacy.

7.2. Empowerment rejection

These roles and stereotypes applied to women lead in women's rejection of power. Since the very beginning of the novel, Brigitte rejects to take the power of her life. She has a passive attitude towards her destiny. She has clear that her only choice to get an identity is to marry Heinz. She does not even think about other candidates. Heinz is the one for her, and the only time she uses her power is to get him. She rejects to have power over her life as she believes herself inferior to men in her society. She has being taught since she was a child that she needs to find a man; that is her only pursuit in life. She has no conscience over her own qualities and she recreates what is the perfect woman in society even if she deeply hates it. Brigitte hides her inner thoughts and this is going to kill her from inside, she does not complain or show her feelings. The only few times she shows her real thoughts is when she is alone with Susi, a picture-loving, young girl, from a good family. Brigitte tries to take the power over Susi, as she finds this woman her major threat to separate her from her destiny.

On the opposite side, we have Paula. We find this character much more secure about her choices and power in life. Since the very beginning, she states to her mother her desire to be a dressmaker. She tries to convince her family to let her pursue her dreams, but she is repressed, mostly by her mother and grandmother. At the start, she feels powerful to choose the life she really wants. She dreams about getting work and traveling, building herself as a person—marrying and having two children. She has the power to make these statements; she even speaks about taking the contraceptive pill to have only two children, as this is what she really wants. But everything changes after her family gets to know her intentions of having a better life than them. She is repressed. She loses her own power in life and decides to find a man that gives her a future without living her own life before. At the beginning, she considered marriage the end of freedom, now she thinks as Brigitte and she desperately looks for a man to become a housewife. Her priorities in life totally change and from being a rebel woman she becomes another sheep in the flock. This is her end. She finds a man, but she does not get the love and happiness she was expecting and she ends up alone, repressed and powerless. We could say that she is a character that started at the top of her expectations and ends up alone with her dreams shattered.

In conclusion, both characters end up powerless in the story, living lives that do not give them happiness. According to Brigitte, she never had the power. She lost it the moment she was born due to the environment where she was raised and which never let her think about the possibility of having her own destiny composed by her own decisions. As for Paula, at the beginning, she has the power to decide her future but she does not achieve it due to the repression around her. She starts powerful but she quickly loses her self-opinion and becomes another puppet of society. None of the characters has the chance to take the power for their lives, they both have been deprived the opportunity to make a choice.

8. Conclusions

Throughout this paper, I have examined the novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* by Elfriede Jelinek, focusing on the repression of patriarchal forces applied to the main characters of the novel, Brigitte and Paula. To do so, I have spoken about the author and her background. Then analyzed the socio-historical context that lead Jelinek to write this piece of work. After providing a summary, I have studied the two characters individually and through comparison. *Die Liebhaberinnen* is, in short, a masterful illustration of the devastating effects of the patriarchs on the psyche of women. This is, the novel depicts the many ways in which Brigitte and Paula carried the weight of the status, roles and stereotypes towards women in society, and how this has led them to have an already determined destiny.

Empowerment rejection together with roles and stereotypes are key elements in the narration as they constitute a clear reflection of the disastrous consequences of the patriarchy in society. In the narration, Brigitte is the portrayal of women in the 1950s. She is passive towards the oppression she is suffering and accepts it. The only time she fights is to achieve the destiny established for her. On the other hand, Paula is the symbol of those few women that fought in the 1970s. We take her as the revolutionary of the novel, the hope for women. But there is still a critique to Paula as she gives up very easily and falls into the trap most women do, she follows the path that has been established for her and this leads her to disgrace. In short, in the novel, women have abided patriarchal society. They live a life that has been designed by men for men

pleasure. They are convinced that that is happiness for a woman: to have a house, a husband, and children.

Repressive social norms make Paula earn money through her body and these the same social norms make her live alone and repressed for the rest of her life. Brigitte does not rebel at all to these social norms. She gets the house, the husband, and the children but she is never happy. She dedicates her life to a family that will never fulfil her heart. These women seem to be alive, but in fact, they are dead inside. Although the characters seem to be in pursuit of distractions, Jelinek details her characters' inner thoughts thus showing that they are unable to escape contemplating the irreversible changes their lives have undergone.

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