

EDIT FABÓ

**HUNGARIAN CARICATURES AND PARODIES DURING THE
DUAL MONARCHY PERIOD OF AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY**

Changes in the Social Stereotypes of Women in Humour and Satire Magazines

Theses of PhD Dissertation

Eötvös Loránd University

Budapest

2007

1. Research Topic, Research Task

The original goal of the research undertaken for this dissertation was to reconstruct and analyse an extensive group of social stereotypes (stemming from the bourgeoisification, the strengthening of the middle class) discernable in Hungarian satirical press in the 1867-1918 period. The basic assumption that I relied on was that the caricatures and parodies of the Dual Monarchy period primarily reflect the (unique) mental representations of established (or budding) stereotypes of certain groups and classes, while, at the same time, they provide information on what characteristics these groups had and how they behaved.

Unfortunately, I was faced with the fact that satirical magazines representing a mere 1-3 percent of the press published during the two-quarters of a century following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 proved to be an unmanageable mass of source material¹. Regrettably, even after I decided to focus on more established satirical magazines with a longer lifespan, this unfortunate situation did not change². Considering that one page could feature as many as four or five caricatures, satirical sketches, humoresques or parodies, analysing even one issue proved a rather time consuming endeavour. In the course of the first review and selection, I recorded (digital recording) nearly 4500 pictures and texts. Organizing these materials was rather difficult, as each piece brought with it a myriad of different aspects that would have merited analysis. At first, I attempted to examine the political-historical background (in the widest possible terms applicable), and to establish the socio-cultural and historical relevance of the contemporary publications of *Pesti Napló* and *Fővárosi Lapok*. I was forced to realize, however, that it is virtually impossible to find every piece of the enormous amount of personal news, concrete events that satirical magazine publications contained references to, and that reconstructing the background of even one satirical magazine publication could sometimes take weeks. Recognizing and deciphering the references that these publications purported (certain reality-based elements used in the visual depictions and parodied texts —i.e. the original text—

¹ In the course of my research, I did not even take satirical magazines affiliated to the Church into account. The much more pronounced focus on the relationship between the state and the Church, characteristic of these magazines forms a separate area of research. The University Library of Eötvös Loránd University did not collect these magazines, issues thereof can only be found in the stock of the National Széchényi Library (OSZK).

² *Üstökös* (1858-1905), *Borsszem Jankó* (1869-1905), *Bolond Istók* (1878-1915), *Kakas Márton* (1894-1905), *Bolond Miska* (1860-1875), *Ludas Matyi* (1871-1872), *Charivari* (1875), *Uram Bátyám* (1887), *Dongó Naptára* (1864), *Pecsovics Naptára* (1868).

indirect quotations) seemed even less practicable. All this made it even more obvious that (one of) the most important bases on which these magazines of humour and satire are built is total contemporariness, that is, a shared body of knowledge implicitly possessed by both the producers and the current audience of the satirical magazine in question, which a reader from a subsequent period obviously cannot possess (even if such a reader has a certain understanding of the period).

In terms of the feasibility of the research, the only viable option that presented itself was to narrow down the research topic. Considering that there was a conspicuous abundance of caricatures, and other satirical short fiction related to the topic of male/female relationships characteristic of the middle class (or certain groups thereof) and prevalent images maintained by the two sexes about each other, as well as a proliferation of women's movements, I decided to focus on these particular topics in my dissertation. In my view, source material filtered on the basis of these particular aspects can lead to an exploration of the defining tendencies of gender roles, very much in the focus of attention of the contemporary society, the specific types of views people maintained regarding these roles, and the old as well as new gender stereotypes (including the relationships and relations between them). Another argument for this decision was merited by the fact that source materials were recently reorganized to better represent women's history, the outcomes of which formed a certain point of reference³. On the other hand, focusing on these wide-branching women's issues seemed appropriate to represent, in terms of certain aspects, social processes with more comprehensive implications, or the reflections thereon, to be more exact.

2. Research Aspects, Research Sources

The main principle that formed the basis of my categorization of the so-called women's issues related caricatures, parodies and other genres of communication utilized by satirical magazines was to separate the depictions representing the various spheres of the lives of and, different roles undertaken by, women within the family

³ The most significant research was undertaken by Dr. Anna Fábri, which resulted in the publication of the first volume of the collection of excerpts entitled "Women and Profession" [A nő és hivatás (Bp., Kortárs)] in 1996, and the second volume in 2006. The collection of studies related to the research programme entitled "The World of Women" [A nők világa (Bp., Argumentum)] was published in 2007.

and outside the family. Then, I continued by further organizing the material based on the experiences of the relevant works of Hungarian women's history, and the following topics have been established: *traditional women's roles (wife, mother, housekeeper) women's work, women's learning opportunities, efforts to attain women's equality, women's associations and women's movements*. Considering that the satirical press always reacts to current events, my goal was also to try to reflect on women's issues in this reflexive context. In addition, I strived to interpret the ensuing contemporary discourse by comparing the different opinions published in the various forums of the press.

In view of the fact that satirical magazines were primarily aimed at the general public, which is why their specific communication was geared towards the average person's level of informedness, and that they primarily represented men's views and opinions, for the purpose of the comparative analysis of the caricatures and humorous pieces featured therein, I mainly relied on the publications of the most popular and highest rated contemporary family and cultural magazines (*Vasárnapi Újság, Családi Kör, Fővárosi Lapok*), as well as those of magazines representing specific women's interests (*Magyar Bazar, Nők Lapja Nemzeti Nénevelés*). Moreover, I could not overlook the comparative analysis of the above-mentioned caricatures in the light of the news material and communications published in one of the most influential and authoritative dailies, *Pesti Napló*. This daily seemed particularly appropriate for the purpose of comparative analysis, as it remained relatively popular and well received during the entire period examined.

In terms of the socio-historical interpretation, and the history of mentality related interpretation of the sources, as well as the exploration of motifs and correlations related to requesting, giving, assuming and accepting social roles, I predominantly relied on the works of such notable 20th century social theoreticians as Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu.

3.1 Summary of the Main Partial Results of the Research

Satirical magazines characterized by presenting arguments for the protection of traditional values (and every satirical magazine was characterized by this tendency in one aspect or another) argued for the conservation of traditional gender roles. Although these papers tended to parody and dismiss anything that went against this

concept, they still managed to foreground women's issues and transform it into one of their central topics. It became clear in the course of analysing the sources that satirical magazines did not directly participate in the discussions on women's issues; they rather reacted to the views and new interpretations of women's roles presented. The frequency and sharpness of their reflections and commentaries, the extent of their mockery all point out the way in which these changes were gradually accepted by the society.

Similarly to the previous decades of the 19th century, also in the period of the Dual Monarchy, there was intense public dialogue about traditional women's roles, about what a good wife, mother and housewife is supposed to be like. The more sophisticated press depicted the ideal of the educated (or striving to be educated), middle-class woman chiefly concerned with the welfare and prosperity of her family and husband, engaged in creating an agreeable home environment for her family. Although this idealized image of women was adjusted, in some insignificant respects, to the changes prevalent in those times, it did not differ substantially from the desired mother/wife model of the preceding period of the Age of Reformation (and even before). Satirical magazines did not primarily consider setting ideals as one of their main goals, rather they strove to present the apparent anomalies, and drew attention to financial interests permeating family life. Although these magazines did not depict marriage as a wholly corrupt institution, they frequently concerned themselves with (inconsistent) solutions concealing and representing the failures of marital life. The relationship between man and wife was frequently depicted as a series of power plays. That is to say, that middle-class wives kept their husbands under control by exercising emotional and financial blackmail, while lower-class wives resorted to direct physical violence. While female "tyranny" was often mentioned in a variety of different forms, tyrannical husbands were never (almost never) the subject of parody. Considerably less judgment (and mockery) was passed on mothers, most of which was directed at mothers-in-law (or mothers with daughters about to become mothers-in-law). On the one hand, the figure of the mother-in-law represented the woman who compensates for the unhappiness of her marriage by interfering in the domestic life of her children. On the other hand, she played the role of the scapegoat in the marital life of her children, as, thanks to her, the spouses were able to defer assuming responsibility for their real problems, saving themselves from the considerable financial and existential losses caused by the realisation of the truth. In addition to mothers-in-law (who

attracted very little attention in the entire press), satirical magazines only featured, in numbers worth mentioning, so-called “anti-mothers”, that is, women who failed to fulfil their duties as mothers, or who put their endeavours towards self-actualisation as a priority over motherly responsibilities. (This group consisted of women who have exited the sphere of domesticity, women who went to cafés with their children, as well as mothers who have chosen to become intellectuals, or assumed a public role /in women’s association/, or have become involved in politics.)

While woman’s role as housewife was presented as a matter of the national economy in certain printed media, satirical magazines were noticeably less interested in the topic, and even if they did feature a piece on the issue, women were mostly blamed for their inability to control household finances, and for their squandering (that is for the characteristics of the middle-class lifestyle criticized generally both in public and high literature). Domestic servants, however, employed to perform disparaged domestic tasks were much more interesting for the press. The issue of domestic servants appeared in the press as a specific, women’s issue with implications for the entirety of society (also for the legislator). Domestic servitude was depicted as an employment relationship in which the majority of employers and employees were mostly women, especially in urban areas, such as large towns and cities. On the other hand, the issue of domestic servitude (in this narrow context) was portrayed as a middle-class issue, as almost all middle-class families (or even persons) had to find ways, or *modus vivendi* if you will, to make living in the same household easier. The majority of those publicly voicing an opinion regarding the issue of domestic servitude emphasized the mutual affronts (and grievances) felt by those who maintained and those who suffered from servitude. At the same time, they also pointed out the socialization related tasks and even obligations of employers, as well as the beneficial consequences of leading by example. Satirical magazines actually endorsed the reproachful treatment of domestic servants by depicting them as asinine and undereducated; people who, more often than not, do not even have the mental capacity to recognize how and why they are being hurt. This opinion seems to be rather under differentiated, let alone an extremely one-sided presentations when compared to the views expressed in the authoritative press. At the same time, satirical magazines represented the relationship of servants and their mistresses in terms of a two-person game, sometimes even amounting to continuous fights generally typical of marriages. Servants often emerged triumphant from these fights, as it was their duty

to ensure that the physical comforts of the family were provided for, and thus were able to cause significant discomfort by beggarly retaliating for the grievances they had suffered. On the other hand, servants were able to act or appear as rivals in the love affairs of their mistresses. By presenting the latter, satirical magazines were able to shed light on an aspect of the issue that publicists burdened by the weight of responsibility (and sometimes social and moral sensitivity) were intentionally or unintentionally sidelining.

From the first years of the Dual Monarchy, the press had treated the issue of working middle-class women with great interest. The publications of the authoritative papers regarding this issue took a moderately liberal stance (held by Ferenc Deák as well) by saying that “any person who has practicable knowledge and wishes to use his/her knowledge shall not be rejected solely on the grounds of her being a woman”. These publications did not only discuss the domestic situation and problems, and did not only consent to long articles being published, but they also regularly reported on the continuous expansion of women’s work opportunities abroad (Western Europe, and the United States). Satirical magazines on the other hand, portrayed the job seeking of middle-class women as a useless activity that unhappy, unmarried young women (wishing to find a partner) resorted to, and emphasized that instead of serious, real work, women use various insidious practices to avoid it.

Many of those who were against (middle- or upper-class) women’s desire to work as a matter of principle, accepted and even approved of women’s role in teaching and agreed to open new avenues for them in medicine and pharmacology. On the other hand, however, notwithstanding the fact that the number of teachers grew consistently every year⁴ (or perhaps exactly because of this), there were intense discussions about women’s ability to reconcile the various demands of the job with their private duties. The traditionalist stance taken by satirical magazines was in no way reconcilable with the image of the working intellectual woman, which is why these papers tended to emphasize the irreconcilability of the two spheres. There was only one vocation that could avoid their judgment: the work of actresses was not only accepted but also appreciated and respected. Like the other papers, satirical magazines lauded the most accomplished actresses, the prima donnas and leading drama

⁴ The number of women in educational institutions trebled between 1880 and 1910, and their ratio compared to their male counterparts more than doubled. L. NAGY Mariann, *Nők a magyar gazdaságban a dualizmus korában = Nők a modernizálódó magyar társadalomban*, szerk. GYÁNI Gábor, Debrecen, Csokonai, [2006] (Artemisz Könyvek), 213.

actresses. One of the reasons why these papers heralded these exceptionally successful representatives of the acting profession was that these women embodied the traits required of women in their traditional roles, such as femininity, beauty, and education. In addition, by showing that actresses can be independent and that they can fight for their rights effectively, they acknowledged that there were, in fact, situations where it was not only permissible but entirely natural to allow women to stand up for their rights in the workplace. Independence was usually restricted to mere appearances for less successful actresses, who were generally as helpless and dependent as prostitutes in those times. The discourse did not cover their realm (only gossip columns featured their stories occasionally), but satirical papers went behind the scenes on a regular basis and exposed the typical traps (in essence, the various stages of prostitution).

In the discussions on whether or not to establish finishing schools and secondary schools for girls, arguments for achieving social recognition for working (middle-class) women by attaining thorough education or even a university/college degree gained a more pronounced role. Additionally, it was also stressed that women can only become equal to men in the world of work, if they possess the appropriate level of education and training. Looking at women's issues as a whole in this period, the most intense press controversy and reactions from satirical magazines, in fact, accompanied the issue of the secondary education of girls, and the university education of women later. Satirical magazines, however, only presented a view, held by the public, which not only questioned the need for educating girls, but also their sensibilities in terms of being able to comprehend what is being taught. Undoubtedly, learning and education was a very important galvanizing force behind the creation and acceptance of the new roles of women. This was, in fact, the last bastion that men were able to maintain to subjugate women in both private and the public spheres of their lives. At this time, men were not the sole proprietors of the knowledge necessary to make the most important decisions in the family anymore: wives had become just as educated. Moreover, it was not uncommon for husbands any more to have to fight for their position at the workplace not only with their male co-workers but with female co-workers, who could represent just as big of a threat to them as men. Perhaps, this is exactly why women's (and to some degree social) desire to attain university degrees was greeted with such widespread and intense public protest. Although opinions for both for and against the issue were part of the press discourse,

sometimes worries for adequate resources (held by men with a university degree) were sometimes the most vocal. Satirical magazines laid emphasis on something entirely different. Taking account of the fact that they saw marriage (childbirth) as the ultimate test and proof of a woman's maturity, they perceived learning as an unnecessary detour taken by girls before marriage. At the same time, women's representation in student bodies of universities was thought of as nothing more than the institutionalisation of opportunities for men and women to get to know each other before they got married (a comfortable and beneficial practice for both genders). Moreover, such papers also blew some views (held by the public) out of proportion. These included the opinion that prolonged studies somehow burn up girls' youth, spirit, and that they also diminish their opportunities in life and that the hordes of women just about to swarm university grounds will have unprecedented opportunities to flirt, or even to fall in love (and marry afterwards). Satirical magazines were rather adamant supporters of the older (most often female) generations' worries expressed about the lifestyle and value changes chosen by the younger generation and the inability of such older generations to understand such a lifestyle and values, which feelings sometimes turned even into pity. In addition, these magazines were also very concerned about the confusion ensuing in terms of determining an acceptable code of behaviour in new situations, primarily about the uncertainty as to how men and women are supposed to behave in previously prohibited situations arising during medical training.

Although this era was not able to attain total equality for women, there were a number of important intermediate results. In the beginning, in the 1870's and 1880's, women's emancipation was so uniformly and strongly opposed that M.P. István Majoros, the Parliamentary advocate of the cause suffered a degrading blow as a result, leading to his disappearance as a politician. To a certain extent, satirical magazines caused his downfall, as they very much liked to ridicule the cause of emancipation and its apostle, M.P. Majoros with a complete disregard for reason and decency. In the 1890's, however, satirical magazines started to deal with the clarification and more differentiated (although by no means tolerant) treatment of women's demand for new roles. Whereas, in the first half of the period, satirical magazines reflected upon emancipation efforts by depictions of men and women assuming completely reversed roles, in the second half of the period these were replaced by emphasis on such real problems as to whether or not the abilities,

knowledge, and perseverance of women who chose to become intellectuals was sufficient to allow them to assume their new professions, and that men were generally ill-equipped to provide adequate support for women's newly acquired roles. From the end of the 1890's onwards, there were depictions, which portrayed women's equality (or women's emancipation) as a marital problem. Husbands portrayed in satirical magazines were surprised to find out that their "mistresses and commanders" would have the option of using legal arguments to push their wills through. This also suggests that traditional male and female roles started to erode within the sphere of marriage.

There was only one type of public role to which women were welcomed without resentment from the public. In the 1860's and 1870's, satirical magazines viewed women's charity activities as a traditional female activity that had an impact on the whole of society, and had the ability to solve the problems of society. The prestige of the women involved in the organization of charity auctions had a very beneficial effect on the value of the auctioned objects, as well as the amount of money collected for any charitable cause. The disproportionate price/value ratio was compensated for by female attractiveness and affection. Men also joined in to support these charitable causes and had a substantial impact on their success. By the second half of the period of the Dual Monarchy, the support shown for women's associations was withering away. An increasing number of journalists called the public's attention to their disapproval of pompous appearances apparent in charitable work, which fundamentally contradicted the spirit of charity. At the beginning of the 20th century, rich women engaged in charity considered this task in the same manner as women in the 1860's and 1870's did: as an extension and natural consequence of their traditional female roles, except the fact that maybe more women were involved under more organized circumstances. At this time, satirical magazines hardly ever reported on charitable actions, and even if they did, they did so without a morsel of sympathy or support. In turn, associations that boasted successful charitable actions took a conservative stance (i.e. similar to that taken by satirical magazines) on the issue of the emancipation of women in many respects. They considered that independent careers for girls, including university/college degrees, let alone scientific careers, were not only unnecessary but were downright useless.

The Association of Hungarian Feminists founded in 1904, looked for new avenues, and elaborated on new programmes, while also building on the achievements

and experiences of the 19th century domestic women's movements. In the meantime, the organization relied on a more uniform but at the same time much more artificial female ideal for its statements and actions, compared to traditional women's associations, with which it had been co-operating on a number of issues since 1905 under the loose umbrella organization of the Hungarian Federation of Women's Associations. The member associations of the federation often had very different ideas about women's emancipation, and although all of them considered women's suffrage a fundamental issue, many of them were rather conservative about women's roles in political life. It was mainly the associations representing the socially more sensitive aristocratic and upper-middle class women that wanted to solve social problems by organizing large-scale aid programmes, and wanted to set goals for national education. Feminism appealed to working women and girls of the middle classes, who practiced social work in their everyday lives: they performed mentoring, guardian, information-provision and control duties. Conservative and feminist women's movements (associations) alike practiced charity derived from (traditional) women's innate nature, albeit differently. They also wanted to prove that women are, in fact capable of, thinking and being useful members of the society, and as such were equal to men and had every right to demand suffrage. Many of these women's movements pointed towards the establishment of the welfare state, i.e. instead of focusing solely on women's problems, they concentrated on the problems of the whole of society. At the same time, not even the outstanding social sensitivity, commitment and familiarity with a number of fields of feminists were able to conceal the typical traits of a movement: impatience, dogmatism, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the fact that they were not striving to reconcile interests, but to assert them at all cost. All of this led to the concealment of the undoubted virtues and achievements of these movements even from their fairest opponents.

Feminists portrayed by satirical magazines were far from the ideal woman engendered by feminist, women's association papers, which the representatives of the movement were trying to become. The conservative brotherhood of men, public opinion and, as a result satirical magazines as well, were baffled by the success of the work undertaken by women's organizations, which had many ties to foreign countries, too. With respectful distaste at best, men looked at the women who were becoming increasingly independent, who were able to and wanted to cope with the challenges of life without men. As somewhat wounded bystanders men regarded

women and their programmes for the betterment of society as unsympathetic, watching even for the most minute sign suggesting that all these women wanted was to get married and have a family. The thought of a woman being able to exist independently, without a man's support was becoming ever more dislikeable, suspicious and seemed increasingly insensitive and uninhibited. As a best case scenario, men criticized, otherwise entirely ignored these women.

Although women wanted to expand and sometimes even completely transform their roles, there were no signs that pointed to any substantial changes in men's behaviour and mentality. The demand for new roles was solely interpreted in the context of the familiar relationship between the two sexes. Men were baffled by, and sometimes were even repulsed by women in their environment who wanted work, education, a white-collar job or suffrage. This was simply perceived, and even interpreted by many as women's desire to engage in rivalry with men, i.e. that women clearly wanted to extricate themselves from the definiteness of the traditional norms that used to govern male-female relations. There were a number of people (even among the authors of satirical magazines) who resolved the resulting tension by interpreting women's newly formulated ambitions as unique variants of erotic advances between men and women. Women's demand for new roles was often presented as an excuse for getting acquainted with men, or simply referred to it as ordinary coquetry.

In the meantime, it became increasingly unclear as to how men were supposed to behave with women who were able to cope with the challenges of work (and even public life) like men; who were independent, perhaps even married. It was also unclear for men when and at what time relationships can become, if ever, more intimate (this also proved to be a problem for women). According to traditional stereotypes, however, publicly active women were still considered a (nagging) challenge. The strength of provocation was strongest at the start of the period and this is when depictions in satirical magazines were most erotically charged as well. Later when the process of emancipation further developed, and was more independent, and in many respects more masculine women took to the frontlines of the process, the feminist women portrayed by satirical magazines, adamantly fighting for their rights, considerably lost from their erotic appeal.

3.2 Summary of Research Outcomes

The novelty of this doctoral dissertation is that in exploring and analysing women's gender and mentality history, it relies on sources that have been disregarded by research efforts in this field until now. Although the discussion and organization of the sources have been focused on one larger topic, i.e. women's issues, the conclusions that can be drawn most probably must have had an effect on the whole of the society. Similarly to the way in which traditional historiography only recorded and examined the events and actions of a society that has been termed as predominantly male-dominated by feminists, it was able to – and rightfully so in most cases – expand its conclusions to cover the entirety of the community. At the same time, the analysis of the spheres and revelations of middle and end of 19th century discourse on women's roles, situation and opportunities, while focusing on public thought and the deviations from that thought, provides a snapshot of a process in social history (the origins and proliferation of women's emancipation) that had long-lasting implications.

The dissertation shows that magazines of satire and humour are, in fact, adequate and researchable sources for the field of history. More precisely, it shows, from the perspective of women's history, that the actual and conceptual processes responsible for the creation of new roles for women are present throughout the 19th century, albeit they only become more defined and at the same time successful as a result of a series of conflicts in the period of the Dual Monarchy. At a more general level, it illustrates how slowly and with what resistance a community is likely to change its established order of values and customs. The present review of traditional and (sometimes radically) changing gender stereotypes presented in satire and humour magazines outlines, in essence, the slow process of the transformation of community mentality, a process whereby something that is initially irritatingly new becomes tolerated, then accepted and how this finally becomes an everyday reality.

1. *Alapos lapparódiák = Évek és színek. Tanulmányok Fábri Anna tiszteletére*, szerk. STEINERT Ágota, Bp., Kortárs, 2005, 205-212.
2. *Körvonalak – formára fűzve és szabadon*, Bp., ELTE Egyetemi Könyvtár, 2007
3. *Egy Apostol kirekesztése: Majoros István női egyenjogúsítási törekvéseinek karikatúrái = Nők világa: Művelődés- és társadalomtörténeti tanulmányok*, szerk. FÁBRI Anna, VÁRKONYI Gábor, Bp., Argumentum, 2007, 313-337.
4. *A hivatalnok uralkodó megdicsőülése avagy A forrásfeltárás jelentősége*, Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei, 2007 (in press)

PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE PERIOD PRESENTED IN THE
DISSERTATION

5. *Valóság - humor - bölcsesség, Magyarország, Millennium, 1900*, Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei, 2001, 283-299.
6. *A reflektív társadalomismeret nyilvánossága*, Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei, 2003, 301-316.
7. *A hely szellemének humora (ELTE Egyetemi Könyvtár, 1865-1965)*, Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei, 2005, 145-192.