

Foreward

Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes? In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no "erogenous zones" (a foolish expression, besides); it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash seduces or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.

Roland Barthes

Speaking of male and female relationship, we need to evaluate current threats and challenges, loss and inevitable changes that are taking part around the world. Rita Repšienė, having chosen the "End of Male, or Different Today's Ways of Men and Women" topic, sought to demonstrate the influence of the political, social, demographic and cultural danger of realities and transgressions to the contemporary society. The change of identities, loss of "positive balance", devaluation of values impact gender relations; way perspective for men and women is quite different: the obvious rise of women and the need to change patriarchal dominions-driven priorities in order not to lose the national identities for men. In her article, Odeta Žukauskienė discusses the problems of "E-Eros and the Limits of Humanity", exploring the images of artificially created woman produced in futuristic films and literary works that embody our utopian visions and presentiments about the future. Having chosen Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2014), in which the main character falls in love with an operating system OS₁ "Samantha", as the starting point, she takes a closer look at the artificial corporeality and the interpretations of feminine Eros in popular culture, which all the same as media studies gives rise to the critical reflections on relationships between human being and technological environments that have radically changed the social life during the last decades.

Aida Savicka, elaborating on the peculiarities of self presentation to the networked community, discusses the features of virtual portraits in the social networks. Indelible traces as self-portraits left by cyber space users are modified quite hard; the footprint might be restored after a considerable time and have very significant consequences. Growing narcissism syndrome in the society, once regarded as a megalomania, i.e. exaggeration of ones perception and assessment, creates wide networks of superficial relationships and becomes a global problem of degraded inertia.

One of the most prominent Lithuanian exile philosophers Algis Mickūnas delves into the changes of Eros and discusses crossing the existing and future boundaries in

classical philosophy and historical reflection. Passionate dimension of Eros appears as the result of failing to hold out against the universal, inevitable experience. Erotic beauty in the Western world is perceived as human's inner strength, desires and soul, "which integrates the personality, on the contrary to the East. The erotic contribution, at first, is mixing of the events in the Universe". The Kundalini fire does not seek for eternal platonic shapes and perfect ideals – it creates a comprehensive erotic universe.

Various conceptual manifestation of Eros in the ancient Greek culture and Plato's philosophy are analysed in the article by Naglis Kardelis. Paying attention to the ambivalence of the phenomenon of nudity in Greek culture and philosophical reflections of it, philosopher discusses both erotic and non-erotic depictions of nudity in the contexts of "high" and "low" art, draws the attention to sublimed philosophical concepts of Eros in such Platonic dialogues as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*.

Hungarian culture historian Gabor Klaniczay, discussing accusations with orgies in the Middle Ages, based on the stories of the time, reveals the activities of those who chased the heretics with regard to slander and amateur efforts to use folklore traditions. Allegations of secret orgies can be regarded as on one the fabulous stories. This tale, disseminated by the Church elite, found its way to the people very quickly; it is evidenced not only by the hobby for which the medieval chroniclers, hungry for "tales", kept repeating it. Most important of all is the fact that it moved to the folklore faith from the end of the Middle Ages, that the Church affected the image of witch feast.

The famous Hungarian folklorist Vilmos Voigt examines the medieval stories about stealing the heart during the night sleep and later tearing or eating it. One of the most characteristic and beautiful "heart stealing" scenes is found in the famous René of Anjou, *dit le Bon* (1409–1480), love allegory *Le Livre du couer d'amours épris*, written before 1477. Researching traditional Hungarian beliefs, Mihály Hoppál confronted the problem of nudity as the negation of Eros. Nakedness as an integral part of faith was considered by Hungarians as a part of magic actions. In rituals, performed naked, nudity means infertility, symbolizes lack of love, thus in it might be considered perfectly non-erotic. Being naked was a cruel punishment, although it was free will of choice. Nowadays we are witnessing the revival of public collective nakedness. The old traditions, modern media and social rituals are the same semantic models. Rituals use symbols, the sense of which lies in the most serious objections – eroticism and its denial.

The custom in traditional China viewed in the West with great controversy is discussed in the article "Eroticism from the Perspective of Twenty-First-Century Comparative Cultural studies: Western and Chinese Approaches to Lotus Feet" by Loreta Poškaitė. Foot binding was considered as both exotic and disgusting, worth of emulation and condemnation. However, since the second half of the 20th century, Western

sinologists tend to view the bound feet as an object of eroticization. In other words, it is treated as the means of provoking men's sexual desire, as well as maintaining women's power.

Kęstutis Šapoka explores utopian naturalism of Eros, as well as some aspects of the New man development that are closely linked with the sphere of sexuality in a broad sense as well as with the two sculptures of the sculptor Bronius Zalensas – “Pigsty Joy” (1950) and “Tenderness” (1970), associated with the metaphorical symbolism of this utopian project, also showing *macabre* utopia essence and illustrating the degradation of experiment. In order to surprise the world with a new race and breed a human-animal, it was tried to cross-fertilize a man and an ape, in other words, to elevate the idea of Eros to a new level.

In the review of Dovilė Zelčiūtė's book *Kelionė su Oskaru Koršunovu. Teatrinis koliažas. Esė, repeticijų fragmentai, spektaklių, gastrolių įspūdžiai, interviu, recenzijos*, published in Vilnius, 2014, as well as in the book, four years spent with Oskaras Koršunovas as the brilliant, passionate and erotic hero and his theater are discussed. The review of French sociologist and philosopher Michel Maffesoli's book *Homo eroticus. Des communions émotionnelles* (2012), published by CNRS publishing house, discusses the triumph of Eros, *Homo sapiens* becoming *Homo eroticus* and how rational society, efficiency, intelligence and purposeful behavior is replaced by the society of emotions and feelings, world of affects and the cult of vitalism.

Creating *Le plaisir du text*, Roland Barthes has chosen the thought “The only passion in my life was fear” by English philosopher and the author of the famous *Leviathan* (1651) Thomas Hobbes. For him, a pleasure of text is like “Bacon's pretender” who could say: “Never make excuses, never explain”. And he never denies nothing: “I will direct my gaze aside, and this will be my only negation” (Roland Barthes. *Teksto malonumas*. Vilnius: Vaga. 1991, p. 274).

It is contemporary challenges, political changes, social demographic situation and cultural studies that promote us to speak about complex, changing and dangerous our – male and female – relationships. Is there any secret left in it? R. Barthes has said that daily life is full of mysterious signs and symbols, sacredness and repetitions, and that the true secret of the world lies not so much in its material, as in its folds. Folds, which we create ourselves.