**A comment on Anna Kaluza’s essay**

by Noha Abdelrassoul

Anna Kaluza leaves one question, that she herself poses near the end of the article, almost unanswered: She asks whether the “protection of women against aggression and humiliation poses a further restraint upon women, if they choose to derive lust from it.” First of all, the question is contradictory, “protection against aggression” is positively connoted, she probably means: If criticising the imagery of women deriving pleasure from pain, used by women, creates a restraint on their self expression. She jumped a step ahead and called it “protection”, giving an answer within the question, but it’s her own answer which she provided before she even argues why.

In her attempt to explain, she refers to Herbert Marcuse, and concludes that according to his concept of “repressive tolerance” no enjoyment can be derived from such pratacices, (probably because he assumes that these practices are only subtle acceptance to men fantasy?)

Without further going into discussing what a woman enjoys by free will and what does she only have the illusion of enjoying, influenced by “men’s fantasy”, which is, in my opinion, an almost impossible thing to tell, because, how can we pin down what exactly is a woman’s motive and free will, if there has been no “getting out” ever from that frame[[1]](#footnote-2) (I am not accepting it as a status quo that cannot change, but I’m saying it’s what unfortunately still is), or, since we are always reflecting about our “preconditions” in the present „preconditions“ (in Foucault’s words) and these preconditions have never changed ever since the creation of Adam and Eve: We still live in societies dominated by male views, with a „male gaze“ being not only exclusive to respresentation of women and men in media, but applied on all levels. There are methods, of course, to make aware and to express being aware of this influence, by self-reflexive commentary on one’s own language, which is something that I see present in the following example poetry:

„Ja nie slysze swojego, chociaz slysze twoj.“ (Ich höre meine nicht, obwohl ich deine höre) (Justyna Bargielska, Sol i ogien, Salz und Feuer)

„ale nie lubie swojego piekna, bo faceci lataja za nim“ (aber ich mag meine Schönheit nicht, gerade weil die Männer ihr nachlaufen) (Justyna Bargielska, Inna roza, fremde Rose)

„Ona potrafi powiedziec wszystko, ale to jest jej jedyna umiejetnosc, i w dodaktu jeszcze nie nauczyla sie uzywac jej tak, by obszlo sie bez ofiar.“ (Sie ist fähig, alles zu sagen, doch das ist auch alles, was die kann und was sie nicht mal so zu nutzen gelernt hat, dass es ohne Opfer abgeht.) (Justyna Bargielska, Lejek czyli lejek, Der Trichter, oder der Trichter)

„takie wydarzenia plus lektura tego co pisza niektorzy goscie“ (solche sachen dazu die lektüre der ergüsse einiger typen) (luxemburg i inne wiersze, Marta Podgornik)

And in Joanna Mueller’s poem “jak ja kochasz?” (Wie liebst du sie?), in which Joanna Mueller lists male fantasies and models of love and if we assume the speaker in this poem, the “I” at the end, is a man and the one posing the question in the title is a woman, it is clearly a poem that makes aware of stereotypes and the description “stupid daughter” “dümmliche Tochter“ is an indication that these stereotypes should be despised.

In the end, I think that Anna Kaluza did provide valid arguments for her opinion about Bargielska’s poetry, which I still have to take a closer look on. But while reading I wondered, why a firm distinction between the lyrical I and the poet was considered an accepted defence of the male poets and why in case of a female poet she is put under close examination and accusation of adopting or surrendering to patriarchal models? Could one argue or at least consider that Anna Kaluza’s reading itself: First, that this imagery is a male one, second, that a woman, when fantasizing in these imagery is only seeking to please a man or serve a male fantasy, is in itself a patriarchal reading? Because in a way, it denies a woman a lyrical attempt to reverse roles (even if she’s not changing the imagery, she is at least putting the woman in the position of the doer). Anna Kaluza refuses in the end to confirm that Bargielska’s poems might be at least confronting women with their self-destructive fantasies that are derived from male fantasies and it is not clear, at least for me, why this strong refusal?

1. Here, a closer look on the examples provided by Anna Kaluza which relate to “emancipatory stories” (she mentions Katarzyna Kozyra, Zofia Kulik, Alicja Zebrowska) can be beneficial to understand Kaluza’s expectation from female writers, and according to it, I could change my view on this point [↑](#footnote-ref-2)