

# **Critics of the novel Tropic of Cancer in the work Sexual Politics by Kate Millett**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Práce se zabývá tematikou feminizmu a znaků patriarchátu v literatuře. Jmenovitě, je zde rozebírán *Obratník raka* od Henryho Millera. Nejenom, že bylo sepsáno co feminismus je, ale rovněž díky Kate Millett a jejímu dílu *Sexual Politics*, byly určeny a zkritizovány hlavní znaky patriarchátu.

Klíčová slova: Kate Millett, Henry Miller, ženské hnutí, patriarchát, sexualita, rovnoprávnost, rodina, agresivita

## **ABSTRACT**

The subject matter of this work is feminism and main signs of patriarchy in literature. Namely, the *Tropic of Cancer* written by Henry Miller is discussed here. Not only, there was collected information about feminism, but also thanks to the Kate Millett's work *Sexual Politics*, were pointed out and criticised main signs of patriarchy.

Keywords: Kate Millett, Henry Miller, Women's Movement, patriarchy, sexuality, equality, family, aggressiveness

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**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and certify that any secondary material used has been acknowledged in the text and listed in the bibliography.

May 14, 2009

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## INTRODUCTION

This particular bachelor thesis links social sciences with literature. The main aim was not to describe feminism but to show main signs of this movement and of patriarchy in the world literature. The best and to me the most useful literary pieces were *Sexual Politics* and *Tropic of Cancer*. Kate Millett, with her *Sexual Politics*, gave me a great tool for highlighting of patriarchy in Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

My thesis is divided into four parts: the history, biography of Kate Millet, the analysis of *Sexual Politics* and the critics of *Tropic of Cancer*. The historical part is a brief description of Women's Movement and it also points out the main representatives of feminism. The life of Kate Millett, a significant author of the second wave and one of the fundamental authors of my bachelor thesis, is dealt with in the second chapter. The third chapter is deeply focused on the Millett's work. There is mostly explained the meaning of term sexual politics and outlined the main spheres where patriarchy has the highest impact on the women's lives. Therefore, Millett also mentioned main theories which were produced in order to counter the revolution or to gain advantage from the movement in terms of reaching better political status etc. Moreover, there are examples of patriarchy in the works of Norman Mailer or Jean Genet. Last chapter focuses on the work of Henry Miller. The criticism of his piece is built on the study of the main characters and of the author himself. I have chosen this topic because feminism, discrimination and also works of Henry Miller are still current and I wanted to mold my opinion towards those subject matters.

## 1 HISTORY OF FEMINISM

Throughout centuries women have had to find their place in the society. Since they were born, they lived predestinated life, to look after the family, embroider or play the piano. It took them long time to realize that they need to fight for their rights. However, there are so many spheres, where women have had to assert themselves. Therefore the term feminism cannot cover all aspects.

As Ms.Cott mentioned in her book *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*: “*Feminism is hard to define. It’s tempting to use it to denote all the long past efforts to advance women’s status as the Oxford Dictionary did when it first included the modern word.*” (Cott 1987, 4) S.Schramm develops this statement by current definition of the Oxford English Dictionary: “*feminism are the opinions and principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women*” (Schramm 1979, 5)

In my opinion, the most suitable and clearly understandable definition of nowadays so popular word is W.O’Neill’s: “*Feminism is, then, perhaps best understood as one reaction to the great pressures that accompanied the emergence of the nuclear family. It was not a rebellion boom of ancient slavery but part of a collective response to the sexual awareness deliberately inspired by Victorian society in an attempt to foster what the 20th century would consider an oppressive domesticity.*” (O’Neill 1989, 5)

### 1.1 The First Wave

The first wave of feminism is dated from the second half of 18th century to the approximately 1930s. This period was in the name of fight for the basic human rights like the right to vote, right for education, right for freedom or property right. The American and also European society went under great changes. The feudalistic and puritan society slowly transformed into the modern middle-class and later on into industrial society (Valdrová 2004, 169-175). Nancy Woloch mentions that women were “*dependent family members, who had little opportunity to function in either family or society as individuals*”. (Woloch 1984, str.66)

The best way how to understand to women’s position in society is to read the European civil code *Das allgemeine bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* from 1811 (Valdrová 2004, 172) which for example says:

- man has to feed his wife
- man acts for woman in front of the institutions

- father of children decides how they will be brought up
- woman has to obey husband's commands

One of the turning points in history of feminism was American Revolution. Men went to the war and their wives had to manage taking care of farm and children. What is more, they had had the chance to express their opinions and in those unpleasant years they found independence. Unfortunately, after the revolution everything passed back (Woloch 1984, 66).

As a result, they were dissatisfied. They tasted freedom, reached the feeling they are able and strong enough to take care of their families. Furthermore, there were also existential reasons like the impossibility for poor or middle classed women to stay at home. Females were not able to gain education and as consequence, they had not other choice than work as factory hands, maids, wet nurses or prostitutes (Valdrová 2004, 174).

During the long period the suffrage movement evolved and they set the goals as are remarked at the beginning of this topic. This movement was mainly a middle-class crusade and moreover it was compared to abolitionists. There should be mentioned Mary Wollstonecraft, who founded the first school for girls and wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, or John Stuart Mill who defended women's rights in Parliament (Woloch 1984, 326).

Above all, the AWSA organization, later called NAWSA (National American Woman Suffrage Association), was founded and they also issued magazines *Woman's Journal* (Woloch 1984, 329).

One of the thorniest issues was contraception. Women were desperate of unwanted pregnancies and often went under abortions, which were at that time so dangerous. Margaret Sanger, a nurse and a midwife, had worked in the slums of New York since 1910s. Her main aim was to help desperate women, introduce the birth control and contraception problematic and develop contraception as itself (Woloch 1984, 364).

The World War came at that point and it was no time for demanding rights. The first wave slowly slipped into the second because of the war and also because of reaching the main goals like voting right.

## 1.2 The Second Wave

After the World War I. the women's situation calmed down, because they had to support their men, who just returned from battle fields. The economical situation had improved and there was no reason for women to go to work. Later on in the 30s of 20th century women again started to build their positions in the society. The number of educated women arose and during the Second World War they again had to take men's places. The WWII. caused the same results as the previous wars did. Men came back without a self confidence and women were those who had to help them to get over it (Valdrová 2004, 174-176).

The situation in the 50s got critical. Men expected, even though educated, women to stay at home. To reach this goal it was also discussed possible prohibition of education for females.

Betty Friedan in her piece *Feminine Mystique* described the situation in 1963: “*She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, and her home. She had found feminine fulfillment.*” (Woloch 1984, 495).

However, the 1960s were breaking point in approach to feminism and political ideologies. Mr. Woloch mentioned: “*The 1960s provided an enlarged supply of educated women, the prime movers in the new feminism; a liberated social climate, with a growing emphasis on personal fulfillment; and finally a new political climate, characterized by protest, activism and militancy.*” (Woloch 1984, 508) It was an era of hippie's and civil rights movement. The topic that was mostly discussed, not only by fighters for racial equality but also by feminists, was discrimination in employment on the basis of the sex (Woloch 1984, 512).

New feminism was legalized and transformed into two poles – moderate and radical. The goal of moderate feminism was “only” equity law. On the other hand, radical feminists cried for abolishing gender roles. Consequently, new words like sexism, male chauvinism, sisterhood or sexual object were introduced (Woloch 1984, 521-522).

The most important leaders of second wave appeared during the 70s and 80s. The most influential personalities were later regarded spoke person Kate Millett, Robin Morgan, Shulamith Firestone or Betty Friedan. “*Kate Millett's book Sexual Politics set the tone for the feminist assault.*” (Woloch 1984, 523)

“*The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance - in short, every avenue of power within society, is entirely within male hands.*” (Millett 1970, 25)

Shulamith Firestone in her book *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* provides the idea of society in which gender, class, and family would play no role, in which women would be freed from “*tyranny of their reproductive biology by every means available*” and in which “*humanity could finally revert to its naturally ‘polymorphously perverse’ sexuality.*” (Woloch 1984, 523).

New Feminism infiltrated into many spheres of life. Women got married later than it was usual and the age of having kids was postponed too. Women wanted to enjoy their life. Moreover in the 80s was accepted an abortion law.

The most visible goals of feminists were status, power, money, and autonomy - all historically associated with men (Woloch 1984, 523-527).

All in all, feminism is a part of our culture. Nowadays women do not have to fight for education, freedom to make their own decisions. They have the choice to live their lives as they want.

However, it does not mean feminism is going to disappear. Sarah Schramm pointed out feminism is a developmental phenomenon: “*One might liken the process to a painting in which, were layers of paint removed at places, quite different images would appear.*” (Schramm 1979, 341)

## 2 THE BIOGRAPHY OF KATE MILLETT

*“She worked for civil rights, supported gay rights and took to the streets to protest the war in Vietnam. But she was also a strict and formidable matriarch.”* That is Kate Millett, the author of *Sexual Politics*, the book which gave impulse to the radical feminism. (Return of the troublemaker.)

### 2.1 Kate Millett’s Life and Bibliography

Kate Murray Millett was born in 1934 in St. Paul, Minnesota. She was a second of three Helen Millett’s daughters. Kate graduated Phi Beta Kappa at University of Minnesota and later on she became a scholar in Oxford, where she was specializing in Victorians in English Literature. She studied how to be a sculptor and tried to earn enough money for living in subsequent years after her comeback to New York. Surprisingly, Kate Millett went to Japan for two years in 1961. She was there quite successful with her sculptors and what is more she met her future husband a Sculptor Fumio Yoshimura. She married him a year after returning from Japan because of Yoshimura’s immigration problems. Kate started to teach at Barnard College and mainly she had started to work at reaching Ph.D at Columbia. *“She was a very ordinary American liberal when I met her.”* Yoshimura says. (Time U.S.)

That changed in 1964 and 1965 because of attending lectures called: *Are Women Emancipated?* These lectures completely changed her life. She became an education chairman for NOW (Time U.S.), The National Organization for Women. (The National Organization of Women) Immediately, she did not write only Ph.D course work and give lectures. She also gave impassioned speeches and formed Women's Liberation groups. Probably as a result of her activities, she was fired from Barnard College and her “only” task was to finish Ph.D course work called *Sexual Politics*. (Time U.S.)

This piece of work was fundamental, not only for her carrier but mainly for feminism itself. In the interview for British Guardian Millett describes the atmosphere in 1968: *“I spent the year writing Sexual Politics in New York. It was a wonderful time. Crowds of women - a divine debating society - in serious study, asking questions. We had meetings every night. It was very hopeful. We thought we were going to change the world. And we did change it a bit: an inch or two.”* (These were the days that shook the world) The aim of Kate Millett was to point out male dominance in sex and also that *“sex is a status category with political implications.”* Millett brought new topic, terms. For world which was full off



changes and debatable questions, *Sexual Politics* was shocking. (Dworkin et al 2003) The analysis of so radical piece of work you will find in the next chapter.

Unfortunately, the other Millett's pieces did not reach such public acceptance as *Sexual Politics*. She wrote *Sita*, *The Loony Bin Trip* or *Mother Millett*. In the *Loony Bin Trip* she describes her feelings after the appearance of constitutionally psychotic diagnosis and also feelings during the unwilling commitments in psychiatric hospital. (Penney, 2003) In *Mother Millett* she writes about her relationship with mother. (Return of the troublemaker) Except books Kate Millett also made a documentary film *Three Lives*, which received quite positive responses from critics: "*Kate Millett's "Three Lives" is a moving, proud, calm, aggressively self-contained documentary feature, shot by an all-female crew, about what it's like to be the three very different women who talk about their lives, with feeling and a certain amount of surprise that anyone should be interested, in front of Miss Millett's camera.*" (The New York Times)

Nowadays, Kate Millett lives on her farm near New York which is called *An Art Colony for Women*. The aim of the farm's foundation was to provide a place for women musicians, artists and writers from all around the world. (An Art Colony for Women)

## 2.2 Reasons for Being an Activist

The person who fights for so many good things like civil rights, women and gay rights and protests against wars has to have reasons or let say stimulation why she is an activist. As Kate Millett's husband mentioned it was a course named *Are Women Emancipated?*

However, in my opinion there were more stimulants. First of all, her childhood and relationship with parents influenced her. Kate's father wanted a son and instead of that he had at home 3 daughters. Moreover, he was quite choleric and showed anger often. Helen Millett was also a feminist and she struggled during her life a lot. Kate mentioned in an interview: "*My mother had a college degree, and when she needed a job, what did they offer her? A job demonstrating potato peelers in the basement of a department store. She didn't take it.*" (Time U.S) To see reasons why feminists fight in a real life, in the life of her family, had to mark Kate a lot.

Secondly, psychiatric hospitals were the other stimulus. When Kate was 18 years old she worked as an aid in this type of hospital. In the interview for Darby Penney, she describes her experience there: "*I guess it was my first cause, because I saw hell. Patients were prisoners in the system. A lot of old people were there because somebody wanted the farm.*"

*And this is how psychiatry has functioned - as a kind of property arm of the government, who can put you away if your husband doesn't like you. A lot of women were put away for that.*" (Penney, 2003) However, twenty years later Millett's closest family decided she has mental problems and incarcerated her into one of those so hated hospitals. She was there at least four times. Her sister said to Kate: *"You're making hard for all us housewives in Nebraska."* She has never faced up to betrayal of her husband, sister and mother. (Penney, 2003)

Finally, the last stimulus as the icing on the cake, the already mentioned lectures only pushed Kate forward to a new life.

### 3 THE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL SEXUAL POLITICS

*Sexual Politics* was a work that “changed the world”. Our society was not in the state to be ready for receiving new ideas and moreover critics. Kate Millett, even though she knew that it would be shocking piece, wrote a book full of new ideas and critics. *Sexual Politics* was published in 1970 and it served the purpose of Ph.D course work of Kate Millett. This work is divided into three major parts. The first one, Sexual Politics is according to Millett the most crucial. Her aim was to write “*a systematic overview of patriarchy as a political institution.*” (Millett 1970, xi) The second part is concerned on historical background. Millet went through the first wave and also through the opposite movements, the counterrevolution. Kate Millett not only described the reasons for beginning of sexual revolution, but also the most important ideas which she backed with examples. Lastly, there is the third part The Literary Reflection. (Millett 1970, xi) According to the article of Andrea Dworking, Millett was one of the few who used literature to demonstrate her notion to sexual politics. (Dworking, 2003)

#### 3.1 Theory of *Sexual Politics*

The term sexual politics was at Millett’s time completely new. Sexual politics as everybody understood it; would be strictly connected with coitus. According to Millett, coitus is a biological and physical activity which is set so deeply in the larger context of human affairs. However, Millett also thinks about the idea whether the relationship between sexes can be weighted in the terms of politics. “*The term “politics” shall refer to power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another.*” (Millett 1970, 23) Millett also mentions that politics is “*the arrangement of human life on agreeable and rational principles from whence the entire notion of power over the others should be banished.*” (Millett 1970, 24) In other words, the politics should arrange the equality. Instead of being equal Millett finds there are so many spheres where inequality is usual as between races and sexes. Kate Millett divided *Sexual Politics* as a theory into eight spheres in the relationship between man and woman, where is the inequality the strongest. Namely, it is ideology, biology, sociology, class, economics and education, force, anthropology and psychology. Millett has already used the term patriarchy which in her view means that the men are over the women in all cases. (Millett 1970, 23 – 26) This term will keep company with you through the rest of my bachelor thesis.

### 3.1.1 Ideology

The ideological sphere is connected mainly with human characteristics and the most important ideas that human take as theirs. The most typical women's characteristics are passivity, ignorance, docility and virtue. On the other hand, men had to be aggressive, active, intelligent and efficacy. (Millett 1970, 26) "*Sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male.*" (Millett 1970, 26)

### 3.1.2 Biology

Surprisingly, sexual stereotypes are not based in biology. The main source is culture. "*Patriarchy is endemic in human social life, explicable or even inevitable on the grounds of human physiology.*" (Millett 1970, 27) However Kate Millett mentions that there is still lack of certain evidence. Physical strength and musculature is for example only class factor because those who have musculature are from the lower class because they usually work "by their hands". (Millett 1970, 26 – 33)

In the connection with biology there have to be defined two terms, sex and gender. It seems that the meaning is almost the same but the contrary is the case. "*Gender is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are "male" and "female", the corresponding terms for gender are "masculine" and "feminine".*" (Millett 1970, 30) In other words, sex is connected to anatomy and physiology whereas gender to behaviour, feelings, thoughts and fantasies.

In the connection with sex it was found out that embryo is at the beginning physically female but through the progress those with y chromosome develops into male. This led to development of new idea that there is no difference between sexes at the birth. Psychosexual personality is gained after the birth somehow in the time of learning speech. (Millett 1970, 26 – 33) "*Whatever the "real" difference between the sexes may be, we are not likely to know them until the sexes are treated differently, that is alike.*" (Millett 1970, 29) It means that our surroundings teach us by speech and behaviour what our sex is. As a result men and women learn the main characteristics which are mentioned in chapter above. Men are aggressive and women passive. (Millett 1970, 26-33) "*All in all sexual behaviour is almost entirely the product of learning.*" (Millett 1970, 32)

### 3.1.3 Sociology

The main institution of patriarchy is family. The family is a kind of tool by which humans connect with society. *“Family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads.”* (Millett 1970, 33) Man is the head of family and he is supported in the idea of absolute ruler in the family. What is more, child and mother are completely dependent on the father. One of those supporters is religion. Catholicism and Judaism states man as the authority. He has nearly total ownership over his wife and children. As aggressiveness is typical sign of masculinity, physical abuse is accepted. Moreover, legitimacy gained ground. Patriarchal family and mainly every child should not be without man and father. (Millett 1970, 33 -36)

Finally, *“marriages are financial alliances, and each household operates as an economic entity much like a corporation. As one student of the family states it, “the family is the key stone of the stratification system, the social mechanism by which it is maintain”.*” (Millett 1970, 36)

### 3.1.4 Class

In our society, the status is dependent upon economic, educational and social circumstances. The position of women in the upper class is “decorative” whereas in the lower class men are not able to support completely their families and women had to work. On one hand, women from the lower class gain more power because they are economically productive. At least, they have more power than women from middle or upper classes. On the other hand, their men have feelings they loose the authority and try to reach it by more aggressive behaviour. In many cases women are compared to slaves. (Millett 1970, 36 – 39) *“Sexism may be more endemic in our own society than racism.”* (Millett 1970, 39) There is one eloquent example: *“a black doctor or lawyer has higher status than poor white woman, a sharecropper.”* (Millett 1970, 36)

Finally, patriarchy creates dilemmas which every woman has to solve, whether to be a matron or whore and whether to be a career woman or housewife. (Millett 1970, 36- 39) The second dilemma is after more than three decades still current.

### 3.1.5 Economics and Education

*“In traditional patriarchy, women, as non-persons without legal standing were permitted no actual economic existence as they could neither own nor earn in their own right.”* (Millett 1970, 39) To make it easier, women were not able to earn money, inherit or to educate themselves. Their only task was to care for husband, look after children and of course do housework. Throughout the time, women were allowed to organize social events and take part in charity. (Millett 1970, 39-43) However, as we know from the History of Feminism, the time was hard and women had to become a part of labour. In the 70s it was quite common that women worked but their wages were half of the men’s even though they did the same job. Kate Millet illustrated the situation in 1966 in United States. *“The average year-round income was: white male \$6704, non-white male \$4277, white woman \$3991 and non-white female \$2816.”* (Millett 1970, 40) For specification, K. Millett used data from the U.S. Department of Labour statistics. These numbers show not only economical conditions but it also supports the class “theory” that non-white man has higher position than white woman. Kate also mentions that women who are employed have actually two jobs because nobody would help them with domestic service. (Millett 1970, 39-43)

As the education should be discussed here as well, the conditions for women were at the beginning really different. First of all, it was understood that if women want to study, they will study art, humanities or certain social sciences. The rest of disciplines like business or engineering were automatically only men’s area. Moreover the quality of education was not the same for both sexes. *“While modern patriarchies have, fairly recently, opened all educational levels to women, the kind and quality of education is not the same for each sex.”* (Millett 1970, 42) Quite interesting was the fact that Oxford did not have the same level of education for both sexes until 1920. During the WWII. some universities, for example in Japan, were open to women but after the end of war were again forbidden. The other thing was the appreciation of education. Despite reaching the degree, women still worked on lower position than they should. (Millett 1970, 39-43) Great example of undervaluation of education is Helen Millett, Kate’s mother. More about her case you will find in the chapter 2.2.

### 3.1.6 Force

As the patriarchy is associated with aggression, it can be also connected with force. *“Historically, most patriarchies have institutionalized force through their legal system.”* (Millett 1970, 43) Especially in the Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan the adultery is punished by death. However, the shame and the guilt are accredited to woman. The only exception is cross-class adultery, when man is beheaded with woman. In other cases the only guilt of man is that he touched on the “property” of other man. In the western countries, the death punishment for adultery does not exist any more. Though, society of Millett’s era found special type of punishment which substitutes the penalty of Middle East. This punishment is well known abortion which in her time was something like death sentence. Those abortions were illegal and actually women could not influence their destiny because men had the complete control over her body. (Millett 1970, 43-46)

Rape is kind of patriarchal force. *“Traditionally rape has been viewed as an offence one male commits upon another.”* (Millett 1970, 44) It was his woman, his possession which was abused. That is why the only person who is “harmed” is husband of the abused female. There is also possibility that a man can be abused. In this case, as Millett found in Genet work, man would never confess the rape because his status would be reduced to the status of female. Sadism is another type of force. The masculine role is to be the sadist and feminine to be a victim. (Millett 1970, 43-46)

To conclude *“the history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities: the suttee execution in India, the crippling deformity of foot binding in China, the lifelong ignominy of the veil in Islam, or the widespread persecution of sequestration, the gynaeceum and purdah. Phenomenon such clitoroidectomy, clitoral incision, the sale and enslavement of women under one guise or another, involuntary and child marriages, concubinage and prostitution, still take place- the first in Africa, the latter in the near and Far East, the last generally.”* (Millett 1970, 46)

### 3.1.7 Anthropology

*“Evidence from anthropology, religious and literary myth all attests to the politically expedient character of patriarchal convictions about women.”* (Millett 1970, 46) From the past, women have been taken as impure mainly because of menstruation process. In the connection with the impurity, women have been forbidden to touch any food and also ritual objects from war and religion. In the case of food in some countries women cannot eat in

the same room as men. To get back to menstruation and genitals, genitals were conceived as wounds and regarded as something dirty and disgusting. (Millett 1970, 46-54) *“The uneasiness and disgust female genitals arouse in patriarchal societies is attested to through religious, cultural, and literary proscription.”* (Millett 1970, 47) Moreover, the well known menstruation pain was understood as psychosomatic and cultural rather than biological pain.

The group of women should only help to men when they wanted. Women could not operate within politics, medicine, sport or warfare. Another thing was that young boys were in the men’s houses on the same bad position as women. That was the reason for calling them wives and brutalizing them. The only reason for being on that position was the purpose of strengthening of male solidarity. In almost every patriarchal mythology, the golden age was without women. (Millett 1970, 46-54) Patriarchal character of men’s house organisation can be described as a *“group of men united in the cult of an object that is materialized penis and excluding the women from the society.”* (Millett 1970, 49) *“Most patriarchies go to great length to exclude love as a basis of male selection. Modern patriarchies tend to do so through class, ethnic, and religious factors.”* (Millett 1970, 50)

Kate Millett used two important myths, tale of Pandora’s Box and Biblical story of the Fall. The main concept of both myths is female as an evil. Both Pandora and Eve are the destruction of mankind. They were punished for their sexuality. As an example there can be mentioned Eve and her violation of taboo which led to realising of nakedness and subsequently of sexuality. (Millett 1970, 46-54) *“Sex is known to be unclean, sinful, and debilitating, pertains to the female. The male identity is preserved as a human, rather than sexual one.”* (Millett 1970, 51) There is another point which should be mentioned. Eve was created from Adam’s rib which is a great argument for men in explanation of their subordination. (Millett 1970, 46-54)

To conclude this sphere *“the connection of woman, sex and sin constitutes the fundamental pattern of western patriarchal thought thereafter.”* (Millett 1970, 54)

### **3.1.8 Psychology**

Psychological part is tight together with anthropological. The “bond” is sexuality. In previous part was mentioned that sexuality is something wrong because it violated taboo. There is a result of blaming for sexuality in this subhead. *“The large quantity of guilt is attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is,*



*culturally speaking, held to be the culpable or the more culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison, whatever the extenuating circumstances.*” (Millett 1970, 54) Besides the feeling of guilt, women do not have sexual freedom or control over their bodies. Because the man has the power, woman has to do concessions. (Millett 1970, 54-58)

Here again there has to be referred theory from class subhead. Women were compared to minorities. *“Women in patriarchy are for the most part marginal citizens, when they are citizens at all; their situation is like that of other minorities.”* (Millett 1970, 55) In this case there should be mentioned an idea what minority is: *“Minority is any group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment.”* (Millett 1970, 55) By the repeating of her inferiority, women slowly accept the situation and do not recognise any reason why to fight for equality. What is more, it is proved that women who committed crime get higher sentence than men. (Millett 1970, 54-58)

The other thing is that for man is female quite introvert, *“characteristically harsh, ruthless and frightened.”* (Millett 1970, 56) There were women who wanted to change their destiny and earn some reward by studying. However, it was not appreciated. Instead of that, males preferred docility by which their wives could reach some petty privileges. (Millett 1970, 54-58)

*“Perhaps patriarchy’s greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity.”* (Millett 1970, 58)

## **3.2 Historical Background**

Even though this bachelor thesis already has a chapter History of Feminism, there should be mentioned relations and ideas from the past that seemed to be important to Kate Millett. She divided the history to two logical parts...sexual revolution and counterrevolution. At this time Millett did not know that she is the “starter” of the second wave, a new revolution of Woman’s Movement.

### **3.2.1 The Sexual Revolution**

There was already explained what sexual politics is but never what sexual revolution is though, the term has been already mentioned. *“A sexual revolution would require, perhaps first of all, an end of traditional sexual inhibitions and taboos, particularly those that most threaten patriarchal monogamous marriage: homosexuality, “illegitimacy”, adolescent, pre- and extra marital sexuality.”* (Millett 1970, 62) Sexual revolution was a real

possibility. Actually, it has already happened. However, it took with it complications like undermining of the status of patriarchal family, undermining of the authority and financial structure. At the end, marriage would be replaced by “a paper”. (Millett 1970, 62)

*“The last three decades of nineteenth as well as the first three decades of the twentieth century were a time of greatly increasing sexual freedom for both sexes.”* (Millett 1970, 62)

There were made changes like using of contraception or reaching of education however, the patriarchy is deeply rooted in our characters and in the way of thinking. (Millett 1970, 61-73)

According to Millett, sexual revolution has started maybe in Renaissance, during the French Revolution or American Revolution. It depends on our opinion however; we can say that the biggest impact of this revolution was in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Sexual politics contained quite a lot of paradoxes stemmed from motto “polite and legal”. (Millett 1970, 61-73) *“Woman was superbly well cared for by her “natural protector.”* (Millett 1970, 66) What a paradox that women were owned by their husbands and they had no right. Her husband became a legal keeper, who placed his wife by marriage in the same class with *“lunatics or idiots”*. The natural protector should secure women by every occasion but after his death she had not right on anything from his property. She became helpless. (Millett 1970, 67)

*“The closest analogue to marriage was feudalism.”* (Millett 1970, 68) Not only, their working conditions were horrible but also they could be whenever marked by police as prostitutes, which led to involuntary medical examination and imprisonment. (Millett 1970, 61-73)

### **3.2.1.1 Political**

Three basic themes were discussed in political way of sexual revolution. It was education, employment and political organisation.

Women are actually the best way how to show the wealth and prestige of their owners. So it was given them as much as possible but only to some limit. The women should be literate and have some knowledge but on the other hand the education deduced anxieties of wanting to know more. (Millett 1970, 73-79)

The opinion of J.J.Rousseau, mentioned in Millett’s *Sexual Politics*, speaks for everything:

*“The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to make life sweet and agreeable to them – these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from the infancy.”* (Millett 1970, 74)

The only case when women were allowed to study was the need of filling the vacancy of teacher because they were cheap labour. (Millett 1970, 76)

In the case of political organisation, the Abolitionist Movement gave chance to the first actions. Some of the abolitionists sympathised with feminism but some not. When the sexual revolution was sharpened by mass demonstration or parades, there was also used violence. However, violence was used toward properties not toward humans. (Millett 1970, 80 – 85)

*“If suffrage’s ability to limit a whole social revolution to one issue was a great fault, the bourgeois character of the movement was the other.”* (Millett 1970, 84) *“The patriarchal mentality reasserted itself with great strength at the end of the first phase.”* (Millett 1970, 85)

There was quite a lot of things said about employment that everybody can imagine the working conditions and there is no need to write about it at length. Women worked for longer hours, they were less rewarded and never appreciated. They did not have their own unions. Parliament classified women and children to the same group as minorities. (Millett 1970, 85-88) At least, during the first phase there were efforts to create protective legislation to provide limited hours of work for women. The reason for doing that was clear. The long hour shift had bad influence on family life and the *“family structure was becoming disrupted.”* (Millett 1970, 87)

*“Despite the dreadful hardships of exploitative and discriminatory employment, they attained through it a measure of that economic, social, and psychological independence which is the sine qua non of freedom.”* (Millett 1970, 88)

### 3.2.1.2 Polemical

For polemical part Kate Millett chose theories of John Stuart Mill, Ruskin, Engels and Revolutionary theory. Millett's aim was to compare contradictory theories of Mill and Ruskin and ways how people thought about "feminism".

In the comparison Millett concentrates on Mill's *Subjection of Women* and on Ruskin's *Of Queens Gardens*. J. S. Mill is strictly realist whereas Ruskin romantic. As a result there is the clash of rationality and chivalry. (Millett 1970, 88-89) "*The beaming gallantry in "Of Queen's Garden "has often the aspect of senile eroticism."*" (Millett 1970, 90) Ruskin's aim was to disprove "the left" of feminism and took apart the ideas of honour and love towards women. Mill's book was a different case. He wrote it with the help of his wife and step-daughter. The influence by women led to writing a revolutionary piece, where for example Mill fights for equality between sexes. (Millett 1970, 90-91)

The first problem they meet at was "nature". Ruskin's opinion was that there are two sexes (female and male) and they are divided by thick barrier which is called *Nature*. Moreover, nature in his interpretation, also determine the differences in character and behaviour. "*They are nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give.*" (Millett 1970, 93) Mill on the contrary, thinks the distinction of temperament and roles is a method of inculcation and perpetuation. Nature is to him only a tool of political gesture. (Millett 1970, 93-95)

Secondly, in the educational problematic Mill suggests that women should reach complex education, from art to science. According to Ruskin women should be educated but only to limit of nature. They should be more ambitious in the taking right place in their families, be best friends to their husbands and support them without restraint. (Millett 1970, 96-98)

"*Both are sincere, yet Ruskin, whose educational scheme is patently not the favour he proclaims it to be, is much like a paternal racist of the more genial variety, fairly unconscious of the real drift of this statements. Moreover, Ruskin's purpose is to ennoble a system of subordination through hopeful rhetoric, whereas Mill's purpose is to expose it.*" (Millett 1970, 98)

Finally, in domestic theme Ruskin's opinion is that women have to stay at home and create a "sacred place" from the house. Women are able to undertake poverty, adversity and violence. Moreover, females are the reason of wars because they provoke. J.S. Mill compares females' position to "domestic slavery". Slaves have more legal rights than wives and they are not so often violently attacked. Mill also points that after a divorce,

females cannot escape from the scope of their former husbands. Males from the lower class use brutality to show their dominancy whereas men from middle class reach that by hypocrisy. The way how to keep the model of family is to be equal because it leads to “real love”. (Millett 1970, 98-107) “*Mill’s conclusion seems not only rational but full of a new and promising vigour.*” (Millett 1970, 106) “*In Mill’s tones one hears the precursor of revolution; in Ruskin’s only reaction tactfully phrased.*” (Millett 1970, 108)

For the second part Millett used Engel’s *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* and the Revolutionary Theory. The revolutionary theorists were people who were able “*to provide an analysis of the past and a new model for the future.*” (Millett 1970, 108) They saw everything from historical perspective and were capable of indicating new ways of revolution. Among the most important “revolutionists” are names of Engels, Mill, Bebel or Veblen. “*Engels provided the most comprehensive account of patriarchal history and economy.*” (Millett 1970, 108)

First of all, the origin of patriarchy was discussed. The patriarchy could be on this world from the beginning and is the natural form of society. This form is based on the physical strength and explains that women’s subordination was an unavoidable result of circumstances. However, the theory had weak points. (Millett 1970, 108-111) “*Patriarchy must, like other human institutions, have had an origin and arisen out of circumstances which can be inferred or reconstructed, and since, if this is so, some other special condition must have obtained previous to patriarchy.*” (Millett 1970, 109) At that point there can be mentioned the term describing the way of living before patriarchy; it was matriarchy. As a result, the schools were created. At least, both agreed on recent and past form of patriarchy. However, they disagreed in the task of prehistory as it was mentioned and in their opinion about future. Engels contributed by idea the history does not change progressively. As an argument, he uses slavery. (Millett 1970, 108-111)

“*Engels constructed a series of stages in social or family history, passing by degrees from matriarchy (mother-right) through succession of sexual associations: promiscuity, group marriage, the consanguineous family, the Punalua, and ending in patriarchy through pairing and finally monogamous marriage.*” (Millett 1970, 111)

Millett in this part of Engels theory argues that he forgot to think about possibility of patriarchal takeover. He suggests that patriarchy was slowly created from matriarchy by

changes of sexual life from promiscuity to monogamy and by realising of paternity. (Millett 1970, 111-115)

Sexuality is to Engels important topic. *“Sexual intercourse is in fact (for women) a political act of submission.”* (Millett 1970, 116) As a result, women have negative attitudes towards sexuality and are frigid. However, with regard to frigidity Engels and scientists argue that women are much better equipped for coitus. Female have special organ, clitoris and moreover they can reach more than one orgasm. (Millett 1970, 115-120)

*“One also observes the paradoxical situation that while patriarchy tends to convert woman to a sexual object, she has not been encouraged to enjoy the sexuality which is agreed to be her fate. Instead, she is made to suffer for and be ashamed of her sexuality, while in general not permitted to rise above the level of a nearly exclusively sexual existence.”* (Millett 1970, 119)

According to Engels, marriage and family were introduced by coming of patriarchy. Sexual politics was a cornerstone to social, economic and political structures. Monogamy, which is part of “deal”, only women have to keep strictly. On the other hand, prostitution Engels takes as “natural product of marriage.” (Millett 1970, 109-127)

To conclude, *“the emancipation of women is primarily dependent on the reintroduction of the whole female sex into the public industries. To accomplish this, the monogamous family must cease to be the industrial unit of society.”* (Millett 1970, 126)

### **3.2.1.3 Literary**

All in all Millett mentions from the literary point of view three schools. The first one is realistic and revolutionary. Among the representatives were, already mentioned, John Stuart Mill, Engels, Dickens or Meredith. Their aim was to prepare society for revolution. The second was sentimental and chivalrous school where Ruskin is great example of representative. As the name of the school tells, those writers are sentimental in the terms of family. Finally, the last group is school of fantasy. Those writers have works done from extremely masculine point of view. Norman Mailer, Oscar Wilde or poet Swinburn, are devotees to this school. Women are to them evils, adulterous where prostitution is something normal. (Millett 1970, 127-156)

To sum up, *“the chivalrous school, deeply antirevolutionary and conservative, was, by comparison, utterly unproductive save for its empty proclamations. It was the realists and the fantasist who brought about the revolution.”* (Millett 1970, 129)

### 3.2.2 The Counterrevolution

First phase did not finish by huge revolution but by an “agreement”. Sexual revolution would mean the danger not only for patriarchy but also for marriage and family. For those instances is the authoritarian leading the best. (Millett 1970, 157-159)

Even though the end of first phase was only agreement it caused response. It was a response from the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and from Freud. All in all, Freud only criticised and made new theory but Nazi and Soviets tried to capitalize on feminism. (Millett 1970, 157-203)

Nazism was in Germany huge problem; they got to power and built strong Party. They had to deal with Women’s Movement carefully. First of all, the Movement in Germany appeared quite lately and the only way how to “turn profit” from it was to create positions like *Frauenorden* or *Frauenchaft* for women in the Party. Females got feeling they are appreciated and Nazi got strongest position ever. The lack of men brought employment opportunities for women. However, Nazi battled with the lack of men not only in employment but also at the battle fields. The Party got to situation where they needed women at home and also at work. Finally, Nazi ordered to every woman in the productive age has to be married and be mother. Moreover, only in the economical emergency cases women were able to work. (Millett 1970, 159-168)

Soviet Union at the beginning seemed to sympathise with revolution. Lenin decided family, as a social institution, is not necessary. Women could work or gain economic equality. Abortion, incest, homosexuality or illegitimacy, were no longer recognised. For Women’s Movement all that changes were great but Soviets were not ready for it. There cannot be changed the whole social world because Lenin had decided. Everybody was brought up in patriarchal family and especially men did not want to be plundered of their authority. The other reason for returning to patriarchal family was on-coming war. The necessity of increasing of birth rate led to law recognition of abortion or homosexuality again. The changes which were positive for women slowly return to the foregoing state and what is worse their situation worsened. (Millett 1970, 168-176) *“Twenty-seven years after the revolution, the Soviet position had completely reversed itself. The initial radical freedoms in marriage, divorce, abortion, child care, and the family were largely abridged and the reaction gained so that by 1943, even co-education was abolished. The sexual revolution was over, the counterrevolution triumphant.”* (Millett 1970, 176)

According to Freud whatever theory about sexual politics should not only be supported by psychology or sociology but also by biology and mathematics. Freud's aim was to support feminine movement however his work had contradictory result. The core of his theory is *penis envy*. After a birth of female, she realises during her childhood that she is missing penis. According to Freud she is "*born castrated*". As a result of recognition of sex women automatically feel subordinated to men. Moreover, women are jealous of men because of penis and they are trying to somehow reach "it". First of all, after this recognition girls have closer relationship to their fathers. The relationship to mothers worsens because mother caused that girls were born without penis. Later on, after realising there is no chance to get a penis, women tend to have a child. The best situation is when a boy is born. Through the stronger relationship of mother and son Oedipal stage develops. (Millett 1970, 176-189) To sum up, "*Freudian psychology has tendency to view each personality as the result not of individual choices or social conditions, nor as interaction of the two, but as a product of a childhood biography imposed upon inherent constitution by parental behaviour.*" (Millett 1970, 203)

### 3.3 Literary Reflection

Kate Millett did not only describe the main ideas of feminism and give some basic examples. She also used literature to put her theory to reality. Her "tools" for doing that were mainly Norman Mailer, Henry Miller and Jean Genet. Those authors are significant by their prose and show three streams of sexual politics. Norman Mailer with his *An American Dream* is the representative of extreme patriarchy. Henry Miller with *Sexus* and *Tropic of Cancer* is in the stream of moderate patriarchy. Lastly, Jean Genet with his homosexual piece *The Thief's Journal* is clearly in the stream of showing patriarchy from the "other side". (Millett 1970, 235- 361)

#### 3.3.1 Norman Mailer

"*Mailer hated authority, homosexuality, women and almost certainly himself, producing fiction and essays that would be comically bad if they did not display addictions to violence and abusive sex.*" (Farewell to Norman Mailer, a sexist, homophobic reactionary) That was famous American writer who created so extreme piece of work *An American Dream*. This work can be characterized by terms sodomy, sadism, devil, adultery, violence or murder. It is full of patriarchic signs. (Millett 1970, 314-335) There is a hero who is a master to his wife. After separation of hero, Rojack, finding a new "partner" of his wife



becomes a death sentence to her. “*Committing of sodomous adultery is evidently too severe to Rojack.*” (Millett 1970, 10)

The other important point is female sexuality. “*It is depersonalized to the point of being matter of class or a mater of nature.*” (Millett 1970, 12) The upper class meant in the terms of sexuality that women were too “cold” or frigid. On the other hand, Mailer denotes sexuality of lower class as something dirty. As a result, the middle class was the most suitable to him. Besides discrimination, there was also racism because his maid and also “slave” in his bed Ruta was a German proletarian. Rojack did not call her nothing but Nazi. (Millett 1970, 12) Symbolism is also part of the work. The Devil or death is in reality sodomy and Lord or life is procreation.

The severe reason why is this piece classed into the extreme patriarchy is that Rojack was not punished for murder and violence. “*Mailer’s An American Dream is an exercise in how to kill your wife and be happy ever after. The reader is given to understand that by murdering one woman and buggering another, Rojack became a “man”.*” (Millett 1970, 15)

### 3.3.2 Jean Genet

Jean Genet is complete opposite of Norman Mailer. Jean Genet, in *The Thief’s Journal*, *Our Lady of the Flowers* and other his pieces, writes mainly about how both sexes see the behaviour of each other. Jean Genet was homosexual and when he was young he felt neglected from the rest of the society. There can be said that Genet was “*both male and female.*” (Millett 1970, 17) Even though he was male; he was raped and humiliated by other man. As a result he was more “feminine” and his literature, too.

Genet contributes to other theories with opinion that sexual roles are not based on biology but on class and caste. The reason for that is clear. You can be born as a male but behave as woman because you are gay. More over your position in the relationship is the “feminine” one. What is more, Genet describes typical signs of patriarchy such as male being brute, aggressive and also that males can buy their wives. (Millett 1970, 336-361)

“*Genet is convinced that by dividing humanity into two groups and appointing one to rule over the other by virtue of birthright, the social order has already established and ratified a system of oppression which will underlie and corrupt all other human relationships as well as every area of thought and experience.*” (Millett 1970, 20)

To conclude Genet's work, he presumes that sexual politics is the centre of troubles and humans have to look to the core of it. (Millett 1970, 16 – 22)

### **3.3.3 Henry Miller**

Because Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* is in the foreground of my interest, more information about Miller's literary reflection you will find in the next chapter.

## 4 CRITICS OF THE NOVEL TROPIC OF CANCER IN THE WORK SEXUAL POLITICS

As it was mentioned in previous chapters, there were so many authors who had hidden meaning of patriarchy in their works. Namely, Kate Millett criticised Norman Mailer or D.H. Lawrence. However, Henry Miller was a different case. She did not criticise him, she only pointed out the most important signs of patriarchy. Among works which were discussed in *Sexual Politics* are *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn* and finally the trilogy *The Rosy Crucifixion*.

### 4.1 Henry Miller and Tropic of Cancer

Henry Miller was born in 1891 in New York. He was the son of German immigrants. His life was rich and full of twists. He had an attempt to study at the university but he did not manage to finish it. As a result Miller worked for his father for some time. He loved travelling and from his biography is visible he could not stay only at one place. Miller lived in France, Greece, New York or Big Sur in California. (The Henry Miller's Library) "*He never had any money, cadging off his rich friends but he never once felt sorry for himself. Life was about Art. Fun. Sex.*" (The writer who should win a Good Sex award)

Because of travelling, Miller widened his scopes, gained experiences and moreover met a lot of writers, thinkers and philosophers. Anais Nin, Alfred Perles, Lawrence Durrell or Emma Goldman began the world of Henry Miller. Miller was also popular with women. He was married four times and had all in all three children. (The Henry Miller's Library) His daughter Valentine says about Miller: "*He truly enjoyed life and made the world a better place by his wholehearted embrace of the world. He was tolerant, kind, inspiring, droll, genuine, loving, intelligent, thoughtful, a wonderful combination of many talents, humble as well as proud.*" (Henry Miller, Personal Collection)

Miller did not write imaginative stories. He concentrated on life as it was. As a result his works like *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, *The World of Sex* and many others were unique. "*Partly autobiography, partly philosophical treatise, and partly a strangely American brand of street corner storytelling.*" (Here's to Henry Miller) That was his unique style. Miller simply and truly described his and his friends' and companions' lives. On one hand, the success of his pieces was in sincerity, bluntness. On the other hand, the bluntness

led to the prohibition of his works almost all over the world. The best example of piece that was too sincere for this world is *Tropic of Cancer*.

#### 4.1.1 The Plot of *Tropic of Cancer*

*Tropic of Cancer* was at his time something impossible or unbelievable, first of all, for Miller's typical style. *Tropic of Cancer* is more or less an autobiography. (The writer who should win a Good Sex award) Miller wrote about his staying in Paris, about his surviving in misery that he had never valued as something wrong. He was rather poor than to live life full of pretending. He gave an account of writing of his "new" book (with the highest probability he wrote *Tropic of Cancer*). (Miller 1993) "*There is only one thing which interests me vitally now, and that is the recording of all that which is omitted in books.*" (Miller 1993, 8) This quotation from Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* is closely connected to second reason why the work was so unique and criticised. Miller naturally wrote about his thoughts, about his opinion of this world. Truly description of life cannot be written without private things, without sex. Miller described sex so naturally, described his attitude to sex, men and women. (Miller 1993) Again in *Tropic of Cancer* Miller wrote: "*This is prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants of God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty...what you will.*" (Miller 1993, 3)

#### 4.1.2 The Characters of *Tropic of Cancer*

The main character of the book is of course Henry Miller. Miller is mentioned only once through the whole book and it is on page 58 where the trivial conversation with Irene is: "*Hello! Are you Henry Miller?*" (Miller 1993, 58)

The rest of characters can be divided into two groups: men and women or fundamental characters and those who only crossed the way with Miller. Among fundamental characters there have to be mentioned Van Norden, Mona, Ginett, Fillmore and Carl. Van Norden and Carl are Miller's friends who from time to time Miller lives with. They criticise women, work and many other things. Van Norden is in his life active and as he says: "*All I ask of life is a bunch of books, a bunch of dreams, and a bunch of cunt.*" (Miller 1993, 55) That could be taken as his motto. On the other hand Carl is a little bit different. He likes women but he gets easily to the depression. "*Fundamentally Carl is a snob, an aristocratic little prick who lives in a dementia praecox kingdom all his own.*" (Miller 1993, 27) Fillmore was first of all, in the same rank of "friends" as Peckover, Boris, Collins or Nanantee. They

needed Miller's services, or were willing to give him money so Miller was their "friend". Miller's opinion of Fillmore was: "*People said he was a bore and so he was, I suppose, but when you're in need of food you can put up with worse things than being bored.*" (Miller 1993, 98) However, we would do injustice to Miller to say he helped Fillmore only for money at the end of the book, when Fillmore got himself into the trap with Ginett. Finally, there was a bond between them and friendship was created.

Now to get to ladies...there were only two who are worth to mention at this point of thesis. It was Mona and Ginett. Of course, the whole book is fulfilled with women, mainly with prostitutes like Claude and Germain. However, those two were the most important for the story. The rest had come to Miller's life and after some time they left again. Mona and Ginett were complete opposites. Mona was probably the only woman who Miller, at this part of his life, loved and did not think about her anything wrong. "*I couldn't allow myself to think about her very long; if I had I would have jumped off the bridge.*" (Miller 1993, 91) On the contrary, Ginette, fiancée of Fillmore wanted only money, to feel safe and live as a former whore without scandal and shame. However, the means by which she tried to reach her aim were "violent". "*Ginette had never been anything but a whore, that Ginette was a bloodsucker.*" (Miller 1993, 149) "*She has no heart. She wants someone to look after her. No Frenchman would ever marry her. She wants him because he is too stupid to find out about her.*" (Miller 1993, 150)

## 4.2 Critics of the novel *Tropic of Cancer*

*"What Miller did articulate was the disgust, the contempt, the hostility, the violence, and the sense of filth with which our culture, or more specifically, its masculine sensibility, surrounds sexuality."* (Millett 1970, 295)

Henry Miller, according to Millett and also Karl Shapiro, belongs to the elite. Miller was taken as a writer of pornography however his only aim was to write about "sexual freedom". Nowadays, the book is no more prohibited but it took academics long decades to realize "different meaning" of his books. (Millett 1970, 294)

*Tropic of Cancer* is a fundamental piece of work in terms of patriarchy and Women's Movement. Not only sex is discussed here but also the men's opinion on women. As Henry Miller described a lot of his sexual adventures, Millett questions whether it is possible to

have so many experiences and whether Miller is in this task sincere. Millett concludes this issue by fact that it does not matter that it did not happen because there is more important fact, “emotions” were sincere. (Millett 1970, 295)

*“Miller’s genuine originality consists in revealing and recording a group of related sexual attitudes which, despite their enormous prevalence and power, had never (or never so explicitly) been given literary expression before.”* (Millett 1970, 295)

O Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours, those fat, heavy garters, those soft, bulging thighs? There is a bone in my prick six inches long. I will ream out every wrinkle in your cunt, Tania, big with seed. I will send you home to your Sylvester with an ache in your belly and your womb turned inside out. Your Sylvester! Yes, he knows how to build a fire, but I know how to inflame a cunt. I shoot hot bolts into you, Tania, I make your ovaries incandescent. Your Sylvester is a little jealous now? He feels something, does he? He feels the remnants of my big prick. I have set the shores a little wider. I have ironed out the wrinkles. After me you can take on stallions, bulls, rams, drakes, St. Bernards. You can stuff toads, bats, lizards up your rectum. You can shit arpeggios if you like, or string a zither across your navel. I am fucking you, Tania, so that you'll stay fucked. And if you are afraid of being fucked publicly I will fuck you privately. I will tear off a few hairs from your cunt and paste them on Boris' chin. I will bite into your clitoris and spit out two franc pieces... (Miller 1993, 5)

This extract is typical example of Miller’s sexual expressions. However, it has to be mentioned that this sexual scene is probably “the worst” of the whole book. Miller’s relationship to women was strange. His sincere “emotions” are queer as you can see in this example. He does not express anything else then the coitus itself. There is no intimacy, no erotic tension nor real emotions. (Millett 1970, 294-313)

Miller was in a group of friends who lived only for fun and women. One of his friends was for example Carl or Van Norden. They were not interested in long-term relationships. Their only aim was sex, the cold procedure. Kate Millet expressed their behaviour so nicely: *“The formula is rather simple: you meet her, cheat her into letting you have “a piece of ass,” and then take off. Miller’s hunt is a primitive find, fuck, and forget.”* (Millett 1970, 296)

Moreover the language, which caused the classification into pornography, is typically masculine. No woman would think about sex in that way and for sure, except whores, would pronounce these words. Actually, the whole book is for “men”. Whoever man read that piece, he would completely understand the meaning. He will understand Henry Miller. *“See that ass? Danish. How that woman loves it! She just begs me for it...”* (Miller 1993, 56) Women can criticise the appearance or behaviour of woman but they would never discuss whether she loves coitus and whether she is good at it. Finally, the top of men’s friendship and their masculinity is in the situation when they “lend” current women to each

other. *“If my Georgia cunt calls tell her to wait. Say I said so. And listen, you can have her if you like. I’m tired of her.”* (Miller 1993, 54)

The driver brought her home that way, half-naked, and when Jimmie saw the condition she was in he was so furious with her that he took his razor strop and he belted the piss out of her, and she liked it, the bitch that she was. "Do it some more!" she begged, down on her knees as she was and clutching him around the legs with her two arms. But Jimmie had enough of it. "You're a dirty old sow!" he said and with his foot he gave her a shove in the guts that took the wind out of her – and a bit of her sexy nonsense too. (Miller 1993, 105)

Miller used words like lascivious or fuck which disparage the sex, brutalize it and mainly degrades women. Miller of course defended himself against this kind of accusation. He mentions, there are no idioms which could describe obscenity by “suitable” way. (Millett 1970, 294-313) Millett mentions that obscenity is: *“a form of violence a manner of conveying male hostility, both toward the female (who is sex) and toward sexuality itself (which is her fault)”*... (Millett 1970, 307) In the example above there is a situation which leads to complete women degradation. Yvette is Jimmy’s wife and she wanted to kill herself because she had an affair and she discovered that her lover had other women as well. The core of woman’s degradation is in the violence used when jimmy punishes her. (Miller 1993, 102-105)

By that point, there were already mentioned two signs of patriarchy brutality and creation of hero. Miller creates a hero from man, who has coitus with woman, by omitting emotions. Man is the one who enjoys sex, not woman. Brutality and pain is necessary according to Miller. (Millett 1970, 294-313) He also explores how women feel during the coitus and finally he reaches a view that women have to feel pain. (Miller 1993, 41) *“It was ordained that the women must suffer, that offstage there should be more terror and violence, more disasters, more suffering, more woe and misery.”* (Miller 1993, 17)

Did you ever have a woman who shaved her twat? It’s repulsive, ain’t it? It doesn’t look like a twat any more: it’s like a dead clam or something. I never in my life looked at a cunt so seriously. And the more I looked at it the less interesting it became. It only goes to show you there’s nothing to it after all, especially when it is shaved. It’s the hair that makes it mysterious...When you look at them with their clothes on you imagine all sorts of things: you give them an individuality like, which they haven’t got, of course. There’s just a crack there between the legs and you get all steamed up about it – you don’t even look at it half the time. You know it’s there and all you think about is getting your ramrod inside; it’s as though your penis did the thinking for you. (Miller 1993, 73)

What was Miller’s opinion on woman? *“Miller felt an anxiety and contempt toward female sex.”* (Millett 1970, 296) Women’s talk is according to the author: *“wild consumptive notes of hysteria, perversion, leprosy”* (Miller 1993, 11) Most of the women were for

Miller only whores and bitches. On one hand, Miller knew their names and at least something about them but on the other hand, he gave only brief description in order to humiliate them and degrade them. Miller is interested only in one thing on the whole woman and it was cunt. Woman is “*simply a commodity, object.*” (Millett 1970, 297) However, he also gets to the point when he realises, with the help of Van Norden, that cunt is all in all disgusting. That it does not give any surprise inside of it as it is mentioned in the passage above. It is only a dark hole, where is vacuum. (Miller 1993, 73)

Claude had a soul and a conscience; she had refinement, too, which is bad – in a whore. Claude always imparted a feeling of sadness; she left the impression, unwittingly, of course, that you were just one more added to the stream which fate had ordained to destroy her.

Germaine, on the other hand, was a whore from the cradle; she was thoroughly satisfied with her role, enjoyed it in fact, except when her stomach pinched or her shoes gave out, little surface things of no account, nothing that ate into her soul, nothing that created torment. (Miller 1993, 25)

This part of *Tropic of Cancer* takes us to the point, who is an ideal woman to Miller. It is a whore. Men do not have to make an effort, it is for him easier. What is more, a whore should behave as dirty woman who likes coitus. The contradictory description of Claude and Germaine shows us which characteristics whore has to have and which one not. “*A whore is never too tired to open her legs.*” (Miller 1993, 146)

In the terms of coitus, Miller tries to separate sex from the rest of the life and he obtains that mainly by the lack of intimacy in the description of coitus. (Millett 1970, 299) “*The perfect Miller fuck is a biological event between organs, its hallmark-its utter impersonality. Of course perfect strangers are the best, chance passengers on subways molested without the exchange of word or signal.*” (Millett 1970, 300) The sex is an addiction to Miller and to his other friends. The best way would be to meet some stranger for example on a bus stop, have sex and then leave her. Do the thing without introducing, thinking and telling address. Moreover, his masculinity has to be “comforted”. First of all, the sex and man’s performance has to be “announced”. The best way is to tell other friends how good he was or even better is to watch the coitus of friend with some whore. Secondly, man’s ego is the most important. It does not matter whether he liked the sex, whether he felt any libido but his performance is fundamental. It would be huge intervention into his ego in the case of failure. (Millett 1970, 294-313)

Through the whole book Miller had commentaries on his manhood, mainly by mentioning his genitals. (Millett 1970, 294-313) You can see that for example in the paragraph from page 10:



With that bottle between my legs and the sun splashing through the window I experience once again the splendor of those miserable days when I first arrived in Paris, a bewildered, poverty-stricken individual who haunted the streets. (Miller 1993, 10)

Sex is not connected only with libido to Miller but also with waste, elimination and as a result to excreta, too.

I don't care who comes or what happens. We wriggle into the cabinet and there I stand her up, slap up against the wall, and I try to get it into her but it won't work and so we sit down on the seat and try it that way but it won't work either. No matter how we try it, it won't work..... (Miller 1993, 11)

There was a situation when Miller could have really “hot” American lady but the only place, where they could have a sex was toilet. Miller was so disgusted and feared of excreta so he “failed”. (Miller 1993, 11)

Last but not least point, which should be mentioned are money. Miller tries to persuade us he does not care about money through the whole book. And to some point it is true because, when he had money he spend them, give them to people who needed them more. Millett creates a theory where connection money and women is crucial. When Miller cannot have money he can for sure have women. Miller in the topic of money criticizes the easiness to get women. He mentioned that it is as easy as to order water in a hotel...as long as you pay. (Millett 1970, 294-313)

As I watch Van Norden tackle her, it seems to me that I'm looking at a machine whose cogs have slipped. Left to themselves, they could go on this way forever, grinding and slipping, without ever anything happening. Until a hand shuts the motor off. The signy of them coupled like a pair of goats without the least spark of passion, grinding and grinding away for no reason except the fifteen francs, washes away every bit of feeling I have except the inhuman one of satisfying my curiosity. (Miller 1993, 75)

The last paragraph from *Tropic of Cancer* is closely connected with the “money” topic too. Even though Miller does not care about money, there are situations when he does. It is mainly the instance of getting what Miller paid for. In the case above Van Norden paid to the whore 15 francs however, she was hungry and it completely changed the situation. Van Norden was disgusted to have hungry whore again and she was so hungry so she was inactive as whore should not be. Even though Van Norden did not have a fancy for sex he commanded it, not for libido but because he paid for that. (Miller 1993, 74-76)

Miller also was in similar situation. He met a girl, probably whore who was again “hot” and they had decided to have a sex. They really had sex however, she did not do as much as Miller expected so when she was out of the room he took back his money and disappeared. He did not get what he paid for. (Miller 1993, 107-110)

*“What we observe in his work is a compulsive heterosexual activity in sharp distinction (but not opposed to) the kind of cultural homosexuality which has ruled that love, friendship, affection – all forms of companionship, emotional or intellectual – are restricted exclusively to males.”* (Millett 1970, 303)

### **4.3 My opinion**

*Tropic of Cancer* is literary work which is on the edgeways. The book is full of strong ideas about life and I really appreciate that those ideas were sincere. I truly agree with the opinion of Kate Millett that Henry Miller did not write pornography. The reason for this opinion is clear. Miller did not write about his lust but about happenings in his life.

Moreover, Miller is “a good representative” of patriarchy. Maybe, he did not mean it as the aim of his work but he wrote masculine piece of work. *Tropic of Cancer* can be taken as a manual to other men in the cases of behaviour to women. I believe Kate Millet was right in this and many other ideas. The Millett’s critic of violence, brutal behaviour and the attitude to women as to cunt in Miller’s work seems to me necessary. There has to be some voice that would discuss it publicly and say no to this kind of behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

Women's Movement has gone through great changes. Women had almost no rights at the beginning. They were good only for giving birth, coitus, cooking etc. That was women's position less than three centuries ago. The Women's Movement has been created slowly but on good basis. So many thinkers or writers have fought for the same thing, to gain equality or to edge out violence and brutality. The way to reach the goal was long and somewhere in the middle, the work of Kate Millett was published. Books like that were at that phase of feminism necessary because they showed the reality. They showed patriarchy in the real life. Moreover, Kate Millett did not focus only on the theory of the movement. Millett used literary pieces, which were at that time controversial and full of sex. Thanks to that controversy, she was able to show what patriarchy means in the life of woman.

According to criticism of *Tropic of Cancer*, there was concluded that this work cannot be classified as pornography because Henry Miller only described his "feelings" and his real life. Moreover Miller, as the main character of the book, follows the typical rules of patriarchy. He believes that woman has to suffer; the best woman is a whore and cunt is only empty and disgusting hole. Henry Miller showed how men think.

What is more Kate Millett proved, by the analysis of Miller's work, that patriarchy is deeply rooted in our society and we behave under the patriarchal rules.

To conclude, Kate Millett reached goals which she laid out. She highlighted the necessity of dealing with the feminine problematic and moreover if we look to the past, we will see that she laid the corner stone for sexual revolution, which changed our society.

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## APPENDICES

P I      Review of the book *Sexual Politics*.

## APPENDIX P I: REVIEW OF THE BOOK SEXUAL POLITICS

### □ REVIEW □

Millett, Kate. **Sexual Politics.**

Doubleday. 1970. 360p. bibliog. index.

LC 70-103769. \$6.95. soc sci

New causes that suddenly make newspaper and television news—student upheaval, black militancy, Vietnam protest, economic crisis, environmental disaster, women's liberation—are not manifestations of some fad or fashion invented by the press, the publishers, or New Left intellectuals, but reflections of deep problems in Western society and of disintegrating social relationships. Despite masculine attempts to dismiss or underrate it, the issue of women's liberation is extremely significant. Millett's work is an impressive, serious, and important work, a curious mixture of literary-political analysis, historical discussion (i.e., of the movement for women's freedom and of the sexual revolution), and political theorizing. Her basic argument is convincingly if at times too widely argued, namely that "the primary social and political distinctions are not those based on sex." It is hard to argue with her central contention that the relationships between the sexes are political, i.e., relationships of power, of subordination and superordination, of hegemonic control of one group by another. A true sexual—and human—revolution thus requires, she writes, "an end of traditional sexual inhibitions and taboos" and an overturning of the "institution of patriarchy" with its accompanying ideology of male supremacy. Though more definitive works may appear in the future, Millett's book is so intellectually rigorous and so theoretically pioneering for our times, that it is essential for every library.—*Henry J. Steck, Political Science Dept., SUNY, Coll. at Cortland (LJ 8/70)*