

Using satire to create awareness of gender roles: egalia's daughters

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Egalia's Daughters and "Sultana's Dream"

Egalia's Daughters and "Sultana's Dream" both portray examples of what it would be like to have gender roles reversed in societies. They both criticize gender roles and show people how gender discrimination leaves the submissive gender in suppressed conditions. Poking fun at gender role reversal was one way these books helped in educating the readers. "Sultana's Dream" has a time of setting of the early twentieth century. The author of Egalia's Daughters is Gerd Brantenberg, born on October 27th, 1941 and is presently still alive.

She was born in Oslo but grew up in Fredrikstad which is the largest city in Norway. Some of her greatest accomplishments are establishing women's shelters, working in lesbian movements, in 1978 she created a literary Women's Forum, her drive being to encourage all women to write and publish, and lastly she has also published ten novels and two plays. In 1983 she was awarded the Mads Wiel Nygaards Endowment. Rokeya Hossain was born in 1880 and died on December 9th, 1932. She was born into a Bengali Muslim upper-class family in the village of Pairaband.

Her main accomplishments were establishing the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in 1909, in 1916 she founded the Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam, and even though English was her 5th language she still wrote a book in English to show her proficiency in English to her husband. In Gerd Brantenberg's novel she clearly shows that in her society women were put on the back burner just like the men were in her novel. Gerd was born back when women had very little rights. She lived during a time where women were stepping up and

rallying against the fact that they were not allowed certain rights that men were allowed and this showed in her book.

For example in Egalia's Daughters the guys or the "menwim" have the "burning of the pehos" along with other "masculist activities."

1 In Rokeya Hossain's short story she is trying to relate to her readers about the inequality of her society and the dominance of one gender over another. "In ladyland men are a part of the society but are shorn of power, as women were in Rokeya's India. They live in seclusion and look after the house and the children, again, just like the women in Rokeya's India."

2 Her society must have had a lot of sins and hatred along with harm because in the short story it says "this is Ladyland, free from sin and harm."

3 In "Sultana's Dream" women became dominant when men failed to win the war against a nearby country. The women then became the dominant gender by using science and advanced technology to then win the war. At first they were taunted for being smart and into science instead of being focused on military strength like the men. In the end it paid off being smart because "they directed all of the rays of the sunlight and heat toward the enemy. The heat and light were too much for them to bear. They all ran away panic-stricken, not knowing in their bewilderment how to counteract the scorching heat."

4 This was a major turning point in the story because at that moment the men thought that there was no hope for their country which is why they

went into the zenanas without protest and were locked in. The men then remained in seclusion and got used to the “ purdah system”.

4 The women then “ rule over the country and controlled all social matters. ”

5 Since that point there had been “ no more crime or sin” and that is how it remained.

5 In Egalia’s Daughters women being the dominant gender went a little differently. The women in this novel ruled from the beginning. There was never a time in their culture that males ruled before the females.

Spinnerman Owlmoos explained to the boys that “ the menstrual cycle in wom was precisely what bound the huwom race to life, to nature’s own great cycle and to the phases of the moon. By virtue of this endlessly recurring rhythm in her body, she was bound in a very different way, to nature, and this contact with her natural surroundings gave her an inner power and strength, which allowed her to dominate nature and the environment. In the same way that she dominated her own body by releasing an egg once a month. Wim therefore had greater control over everything; over their own bodies, over the cultivation of the soil, and over the world.

6 Therefore, the wim were in charge from the very beginning. In “ Sultana’s Dream” women’s religion was “ based on love and truth. ”

7 The women say “ we don’t take pleasure in killing a creature of god, especially a human being. ”

7 They believe this works because unlike the men who were violent and fought in the war, they used science to win without hurting anyone. As far as biology goes, basically the women explained their power over the men because of the simple fact that they were smarter and that women's brains are rather quicker than men's. They pretty much said men are good for nothing.

All of that together was their argument for why they were biologically better. In the novel, Sister Sarah explains why women are smarter than the males. She says " our good Queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly a number of girls' schools were founded and supported by the Government. Education was spread far and wide among women. And early marriage also stopped. " This is her explanation of why the women are so much smarter than men and now are the dominant race. Religion in Egalia's Daughters is quite different.

In this novel, God is a wim instead of a manwim. Donna, who is wim and also God's daughter who is like Jesus for Egalia, and they are the ones all Egalia are supposed to look up to. The reason wim in Egalia are more biologically dominant is because they bear the children and have the menstrual cycles. For some reason the people of Egalia felt that since they had a monthly natural cycle it connected them to nature and made them powerful, more powerful than any man. This in their thoughts made them the dominant gender as if they were the chosen ones.

As far as history goes Spinnerman Owlmoos taught his class the history of the wim. Like we in our society have fore fathers they had a version of those except they were women. Those women created rules and regulations for Egalia that were always followed. In Ladyland the men and the women both had very different jobs. The men “ do no skilled work” and “ they look after the house and children. ”

2 They “ mind babies, cook, and do all sorts of domestic work. ”

2 The women in Ladyland embroider; engage in scientific researches and garden.

Sister Sarah says that “ our noble Queen is exceedingly fond of botany; it is her ambition to convert the whole country into one grand garden. ”

5 Therefore, they are never sitting still and constantly gardening and such. In the town of Egalsund, the wim and menwim had very different jobs. The menwim do nothing but sit at home and take care of their children. Once they receive “ fatherhood protection” from the wim, they are to stay home and raise the children while the wim goes to work and does as she pleases.

8 The wim of course, do all the things a man would do in our society now.

They were sailors too. Menwim were never sailors and hardly allowed to be either because the wim said “ they’re always trouble! They never leave the us in peace and there’ll be strife and quarrelling and jealousy in the crew. ”

9 The wim also hold government positions and hunt as well. In both the short story and novel the women’s jobs were viewed as more important even

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though staying home and taking care of the kids was a really big and important job as well. It was just not viewed that way by the women. In both *Egalia's Daughters* and "Sultana's Dream" the women/wim were very happy.

They were at the top of the pecking order and they liked it that way.

Women/wim ruled and things happened as they wanted it to, not the other way around. On the other hand, the men/menwim were by any means happy with their lives. The men in "Sultana's Dream" at first protested. The men wanted to be free, but Her Royal Highness told them if their services were ever needed they would be sent for, so therefore, they should remain where they were. After that they slowly became accustom to the "purdah system."
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4 In *Egalia's Daughters* at first they were accustom to the way things were.

Then later on in the book, the menwim began to protest. They give speeches, burn pehos, and strip down at the menstrual games out of chicken costumes as a way of protesting.

10 Women have always been suppressed throughout history, constantly having to fight for their rights. Women in history have always been taken advantage of and also been able to be rough housed a lot easier than men because of their gentle nature. Therefore, these fictional books are related in the sense that in these books, the men's roles are actually what women's roles have been all along throughout history.

Women are the ones that have always been raped and beaten but in the novel *Egalia's Daughters* the boys are actually the ones that are terrorized. Is satire an effective way of drawing attention to gender inequality? Yes, it is because it makes things appear even more ridiculous which in turn makes it more entertaining to read. For example if both books had it where women's and men's roles were normal, the books would have been boring and lacked in attention grabbers. But since it was a bizarre setting, it makes you immediately more interested and it puts a twist on things so that it captures your attention. . Brantenberg, Gerd. *Egalia's Daughters: A Satire of the Sexes*, translated by Louis Mackay. (California: Seal Press, 1977), 218.

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