

S U M M A R Y

Since classical antiquity, abstract philosophical concepts, eternal truths and human qualities have been represented in creative art as living and active beings, personified in allegories: justice, wisdom, virtue and vice, art and nature, seasons and parts of the world. New allegories have been created as world-views have changed. Disproportionately, the female form has served to represent these allegories. Cillie Rentmeister attempts to explain the meaning of women personifying the central concepts in the areas of 'tradition' and 'progress' by using a number of examples and by using Bornemann's thesis of patriarchal oppression as a background. At the same time, women's allegorical existence is compared with women's real lives.

The role of the muses is examined first. Traditionally, the nine muses have been considered an *Inspiration* for artists and scientists. It is interesting to note that in a pre-patriarchal period, these nine matriarchal goddesses existed fatherless. They were mother earth's and the air's daughters — all powerful and cognizant. With the entrance of patriarchy, the muses are degraded in standing, adopted by Zeus and lose their power and might.

During the nineteenth Century, it becomes clear that the muse may inspire but not carry out her profession. Women were systematically prevented from practising their art. For example, women who were admitted to the art academy were excluded from the decisive part of the training, thus making it impossible for her to create a work of importance.

Similarly within the sciences women were excluded from pursuing professions. Medicine was, for example, personified by the female

figure 'Hygieia' and yet women were prevented from following a medical training despite the fact that earlier they had mastered considerable knowledge within this field and especially within the area of child-bearing.

Cillie Rentmeister examines further how industry and work have been allegorized. Interestingly work, as opposed to industry, has been personified by men, despite the fact that women have been an important and growing sector of the work force. Allegories concerning sexuality are also addressed such as in the art that can be designated by the term 'flesh and iron'.

Cillie Rentmeister concludes by stating that the sex of allegories is not arbitrary. All female allegories are an affirmation of the myth concerning woman's dualistic being, that of either saint or whore. Woman is reduced to an object. Part of women's struggle today is against being a muse, an allegory, a pin-up. Instead we struggle towards an independent identity.

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