



## ALTERNATIVE FEMININE SPIRITUALITY AND FEMALE CULTURAL CAPITAL

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### **Abstract:**

The ritual in its context and indeed the magical one is approached as “text” and “speech” and its readings/hearings are extremely interesting. The female, spoken, magic words as well as the body language often shape or deny the intellectual worlds of gender. The women's experiential experience, through ritual, builds identities, even if within an occasional environment of freedom and self-determination. Moments of resistance are marked, probably unconsciously, in the patriarchal status quo and in the image of the female self that this class constructs. By exploring the identities and the social roles of the gender in reality, we examine how people, men and women, experience life in specific social and cultural contexts. The meanings, which are associated with gender and identities, eventually shape an understanding of the world and produce ideology. This fact implies a classification - however minimal - of those phenomena and their meanings that ensure the gendered status quo as a symbolic one. What were women trying to say through their magical rituals and when will we discover the importance of cultural consignment which the feminine mystique is bearing as a property and the ritual as action?

**Keywords:** female identity, magic, rituals, speech

### **1. Introduction**

All the aspects of human life are surrounded with significances and meanings, which are directly linked to specific purposes and cultural norms that determine, in specific

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socio-economic conditions each time, the fields of ethics, attitudes, dominant values and social expectations in their entirety. In this context an interest present at the symbolic representations and the cultural significations of gender, i.e. the kind of social meanings and values which correspond to men and women.

The definition of the concept of gender perspective and divide the male and female researchers. Besides the fact that "gender" includes in its definition duality and difference relations, it also contributes in the classification aspects of social and cultural life. Sexes derived from a social interaction, with the transfer of concepts and values through their reactions/manipulations of these messages from social groups and individuals. In essence, it is social/cultural dialogue which is constantly changing and worth to highlight that the discussion that is being developed around the issues of gender, reformulations and the redefinitions that are attempted, they stimulate the thought and clarify the scope of analysis of specific cultural and symbolic procedures whereby gender is constructed, although, in our point of view, it is necessary to be more emphasis on vibrant social processes and social/economic environment, in which these processes take place (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995).

The certain is that thanks to this process, the cognitive categories and symbols are redefined in a new context and in new interpretations as well as individuals and groups have the capacity to modify the system of gender equality meanings for themselves and to transfer those changes to others (Moser, 2007). The mental world of genders is therefore not only information systems but they are also flexible and fluid systems of symbols, which are surrounded with value. Thus, the categories of masculinity and femininity redefined and this contributes to the consolidation of all information relating to women in the theoretical and conceptual framework of the diversity of social structures and relationships, identities and ideologies xc(Connell James & Messerschmidt, 2005).

## **2. Magic's Redefinition from Feminine Perspective**

Occasionally, interesting theories on magic have been raised. These theories also included the determination of magical rituals, with its simultaneous inclusion in every specific cultural context. As a rule, the magic has been seen as a result of a sympathy which dominates the universe as activation spirits etc. metaphysical elements, antiscientific associative thinking, symbolic link between transport systems, metonymy, synchronicity, etc. and various activities with spiritual or material goals. The use of the term "magic" is closely related to known historical prejudices - such as the distinction between civilize/ primitive - but it is also associated with the perception of magic as an ontological category (Curry, 1985).

Parallel with these there was an attempt "magic" to be determined in contrast to other categories of thinking such as science and religion. Thanks to Emile Durkheim and especially to Marcel Mauss (1963) the magical (and religious) are considered from the early times, socially events their own autonomy which differs in that religion takes place in the context of an organized church and the magic is performed in a private and isolated place (Durkheim & Mauss, 1963). According to Mauss (1954), the magical ritual is private, secret, mysterious and typically forbidden. Through these comparisons, a number of scholars pursued to outline the organic and functional utility of magical, of its social and psychological functions and the nature of its thought (Mauss, 1954).

They answered in psychological / anthropological / folklore questions about the operation and effectiveness of the magic, the system of thought that reflects, and the distinction between the scientific and traditional. L. Stark (2006) defines the term "magical" as an energetic ritual which constitutes a kind of sociocultural adjustment that includes folk knowledge and wisdom. The last ones are important tools for understanding the role of magic in specific traditional communities. Although the magical ritual differs from other cultural behaviors, in all forms of rituals, with public or private character, the existence of common factors reveals which are pointed out mainly post-structuralist, post-symbolic and feminist approaches (Stark, 2006).

Women have involved with magic and rituals for many centuries. From the primordial therapists to the victims of the fire season, the witches through their magical rituals, systematic and defined actions, movements, speech, etc. which were taking place at a specific time and place, they covered a range of individual needs, desires and expectations which were prohibited in patriarchal social society and these women were intend "to change the entire face of the earth", as Freud pointed out (Strachey, 1961). These women also formed female places, articulated female speeches and symbols and they developed feminine forces which men could not control whereas they have constructed an interesting feminine solidarity and networking, confirming Durkheim's view about the importance of rituals as a tool of "class disruption" that contributes to the consolidation of society (Jones, 1986).

The ritual constitutes a cultural speech that comes consciously not only from the spoken word that is developing during magical rituals but also through gestures, expressions, movements, demonstrations, etc. The speech includes except form the actively transmission of information and their receipt and these kind of speech implies a communicative process of coordination and negotiation between two or more people. It constitutes part of the way in which the mental worlds of genders hurtle and clash against. Simultaneously is a media event in the context of popular culture that includes specific mental models which is worthy to be explored and interpreted from the female perspective (Marshall & Sensoy, 2011). However, in one way or another, the magical

rituals constitute a field of conscious or unconscious resistances of women in patriarchal dictates, a field of production/reproduction of knowledge and power and they construct a world where gender becomes visible and calculable. As the gender is a social, variable category every time it transfers and preexisting elements of intensity, resistance and insurgency (Frable, 1997).

The areas where take place of the feminine witchcraft are surrounded by sanctity: The witches, outside and beyond the patriarchal control, operate in conditions (always temporary) of physical and intellectual freedom, something that the other women are denied completely. They interact with the metaphysical; create symbolic worlds, their own spiritual tradition and a kind of alternative female knowledge which they bequeathed to future generations of witches. Basic female strategy is the "secrecy", the maintenance of knowledge among "those who know about it". So the women often perform the rituals in deserted houses or deserted locations during evening hours, i.e. in conditions that would prevent the "bad" eyes to make the ritual ineffective (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2006).

Secrecy serves, among other women for the creation of an atmosphere in which the participants have turned the ritual into a sort of feminine knowledge. Through limitation and concealment, the knowledge becomes valuable and finally belongs to women, outside and beyond the masculine moods and male control. The possession of this knowledge differentiates its holders of the other members of the community and constitutes a source of unique power for them (Scarre & Callow, 2001). This tradition and knowledge imply a major cultural chapter (which was ignored until our days) but and a kind of feminine s could to enter the history of ideas as well as, according to Lentaki the witchcraft requires a state of mind and so it can be examined from the perspective of thought's history. But from this kind of history, the women - with few exceptions - were excluded. Therefore, the gendered approach to magic and rituals, beyond the comprehension of the symbolic expressive actions, contributes to the rehabilitation of women as subjects in the field of the thought's history (Bailey, 2007).

### **3. The Female Body through Rituals**

Central conceptual issue in the study of women's magical rituals is the "Female Body", as natural symbol as well as a notion. It is considered to be the original means of expression and perception of the ritual and also a means of the production of belief, of symbolic relationships and ultimately of cultural knowledge. Feminist cultural studies focus on the function and content of the ceremonies and give the female body a key role in shaping the "internal" reality and insist on it as the primary means by which we understand the rituals and speak through them. The focus on the relationship between

body and ritual is an important knowledge key as from this comes that cultural knowledge, beliefs, symbolic links etc that are achieved in the frame of ceremonies can only be fully understood through a lived bodily experience, the "embodied" experience of perception and movement (Gasouka, 2006).

Especially for the latter, the fact that the body is a "way of knowledge" and how the physical experience is closely related to the production of knowledge, it is increasingly being raised. In fact, it's not just about movement, but about bodies that move, which through a ritual creates social space (Gasouka, 2006). In this way, the female body becomes a means and place of socially important transitions, as well as the boundary that divides social space, especially the 'inside' from the 'outside', noting that the concepts of 'inside' and 'outside' have always been extremely important for both values, bodies, and spaces and for the organization and division of activities based on gender. The body is the place of social information, which the society impresses on the person, requiring the body to integrate it through - mostly ceremonial - movement (Gasouka, 2006). Thus, the ritual interferes and differentiates social relations particularly that of power, alters individual perceptions while the discreteness and intensity of the ritual moment validate the ceremonial participation and the produced social transformation of the individuals.

Directly related to the female body during magical rituals is the experience of the socialization processes and this is associated with the "internal" processes taking place. So the body is not just a physical instrument, but also the place of production and evolution of sociality, which occurs through a ceremonial action and practice. It is ultimately the intermediary between the lived experience and the external world, between individual and collective experience, a fact that transforms the ritual into tangible act, an act that is physically expressing the technique, control and coordination, as well as the somatic experience (Schilbrack, 2004; Gasouka 2007).

#### **4. The Magic Speech (Logos)**

Gender and identity are constructed through language. Mary Joe Frug (1992) suggests the acceptance of a basic principle: that human experience inevitably lies in language. She notes that power is exercised not only by the imposition of direct coercion, but through the way in which social reality shapes and / or limits language. However, as the language is available to new interpretations, it may also be used as a means of resistance in this dominant form and restrictions. So one authoritative male logos may cause a feminist logos of resistance (Frug, 1992).

Chances are that sex is part of a conceptual system produced from the language so special emphasis on the study of the ways in which identities and sexuality (female,

male, homosexual, heterosexual, etc.) are built, and played in the Word (political, legal, historical, literary, etc.) is given. The Logos is an integral part of the magical process. The magic language as strange and incomprehensible it may be, though sacred according to Malinowski (1948), it has archaic origins and becomes effective only in combination with other activities: using objects, body language and movement in a particular place or time. It contributes to the cleansing of the sanctified environment, but also in the “performativity”, i.e. the effectiveness of the magical incident. The “The magical power of words” (Tambiah, 1968) is based on the belief in the inherent ability of the Logos to affect the universe. Since, as it seems, the magical Logos itself is a magical ritual, when it comes to women, it releases internal forces, gives them a strong sense of power and structures the identity and self-image of the strong woman-witch.

The female magical Logos during its articulation violates a fundamental function of the language. That is a broad of communication. It is converted to a code of communication and intellectual exchange of a small privileged group of female insiders. It is a language inherently resistant to patriarchal order. It is a reason for overthrowing the female subordination, even temporarily, so it is deeply political.

Prayers, spells, songs, blessings, curses, blessings, etc. transformed into paeans of female, secret, confidential and private power which comes from far away, from the misty and black memory of the female primordial past, of an alleged "golden age", which often was resulted in the destruction of the witch (recall the time of the fire) from the patriarchs and their laws (courts, sacred exam, e.t.c.) so that the other women to be exemplified and not challenge their social situation (Stratton & Kalleres, 2014).

## 5. Conclusions

The construction of identity is a fundamental issue for contemporary debates which are developed in the context of feminist and cultural theory. The meanings that are associated with gender and their identities eventually shape an understanding of the world and produce ideology. This fact implies a series of one - even minimal - classification of those phenomena and meanings that ensure the gendered status quo as symbolic order. In its context, the ritual, and indeed the magical one, is approached as "text" and "speech" and its readings/hearings present exceptional interest.

The female, spoken, magic words as well as the body language shape or often dispute the mental worlds of gender. The female personal experience, through the rituals, constructs identities and images of self, even in an occasional environment of freedom and self-determination. Through these rituals marked moments of resistance, probably unconsciously, in the patriarchal status quo and in the image of the female self that this class produces. This field of exploration of gender has exceptional importance

and it experienced as a conceptual world. The women and gender research should reveal how various types of culture contribute to the construction of social experience and personal identity, especially for women. In such a framework, the culture is understood as a political practice, but also as a kind of reconciliation between individuals and, consequently, this same acceptance (and its study) on one hand contributes to the production of cultural messages, but also to the delineation of political reality and on the other hand it include features of critical intervention and political action.

Among other things, we must reveal the female worlds of magic, to understand what they tried to say through their magical rituals and discover the cultural significance of the cultural load which feminine witchcraft bears as a property and as a ritual act. If we can achieve this through the rituals, and not only the magical one, we can watch a field of the cultural progress of women (and to some extent to reconstruct a part of their history), the structures and the symbols with which are organized this process, how they relate to the social environment of women and how they affect their social identities. Simultaneously we can uncover how the patriarchy repelled information about the relationship of women with the production and development of culture and the silencing of their contribution and cancellation together with the slander of their magical powers, which had to remain hidden until today. Thus, it is very interesting this turn that takes place lately to these negatively charged and hidden potentials of women.

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