

Abstract

Title: Seduced by Eros. Gender and Morality among Foreign Women Living on a Greek Island.

Written in Swedish, summary in English. 246 pages

Author: Merete Hellum

Doctoral Dissertation at the Department of Sociology

Göteborg University

Box 720, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

ISBN:91-974106-8-3

ISSN:1650 4313

Göteborg, 2002

This thesis is a study of how immigrant women from the northern parts of Europe, North America and Australia living on a Greek island interpret and negotiate gender and moralities in order to become respectable. The aim of the study is to investigate how these women create gendered and moral meaning in a setting recognized by liquid modernity.

The study contains of nine months fieldwork carried out in two periods; one during the autumn and winter, the other during spring and summer. The analysis is based on participant observation and conversations with fourteen foreign women married or cohabitant with Greek men.

The women in this study struggle with the same question: How to be respectable? The analysis shows that they create different meanings of respectable femininity, one that bring forward the female moral code of "being of Use" and the other "finding Oneself". In the way the foreign women performed gender, they changed the content embedded in respectable femininity in regard to different social valuation gazes. Gazes such as their village neighbors, their husbands, their in-laws and origin families, the Greek women, the Greek men and the foreign women's different circle of friends and the researcher.

In the women's struggle for the preferential right to interpret respectable femininity they try to establish the "boundless" gender of femininity. To be respectable is a question of establishing the feminine gender according to the moral meanings that surrounded the gender. The question the foreign women wrestles about is how their respectability should be performed in front of whom, in other words, the struggle for the dominant right to interpret their own gender.

Insecurity generates different ways of searching for security, but not necessarily physical protection. It looks like the foreign women are insecure in defining femininity in their new situation. This leads to conflicts connected to questions about female morality. To feel secure becomes a question about winning the preferential right to interpret female morality, in order to protect the female gender against symbolic violence. A sort of violence which has become so common and normalized for women's existence within the heterosexual matrix, that women themselves are active in the process by moralizing the female gender.

Keywords: Gender, Morality, Discourse, Emotions, Culture, Ethnography, Migration, Greece.