

A Feminist Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia*

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Abstract

This paper explores the subordination of women through the feminist lens, drawing from the works of feminist critics Luce Irigaray and Gayle Rubin. In light of their theories, the paper aims to analyze Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *Lavinia*. Irigaray's critique of phallogocentrism highlights the exclusion of women from the symbolic order, pointing out that the patriarchal society functions with the practice of exchanging women in order to establish relations between men. Rubin likewise focuses on kinship systems that commodify women and traces the roots of women's subordination. These themes are highlighted in Le Guin's novel *Lavinia*, which is a reimagining of Virgil's Aeneid from Lavinia's perspective. The novel highlights her lack of autonomy, her commodification and the roles that are dictated by the patriarchal norms, namely the role of the virgin and later on, the wife and the mother. Through Irigaray and Rubin's insights and Le Guin's narrative, this paper aims to navigate the issue of women's subordination, emphasizing how the novel sheds light on women's oppression and representation. The absence of women's voices in texts from the antiquity can allow feminist literature to reimagine the voices of female characters who could not be heard or understood.

Key Words: Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia*, Feminism, Phallogocentrism, Commodification, Exchange of Women

Ursula K. Le Guin'nin *Lavinia* Romanının Feminist Bir İncelemesi

Özet

Bu makale, Luce Irigaray ve Gayle Rubin'in geliştirdikleri teoriler ışığında kadınların maruz kaldığı tahakkümü feminist bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makale, Irigaray ve Rubin'in kavram ve teorilerinden yararlanarak Ursula K. Le Guin'in *Lavinia* romanını analiz etme amacı taşımaktadır. Irigaray fallus ve söz merkezliği eleştirerek, kadınların simgesel düzenden dışlandığına vurgu yapmaktadır. Irigaray'ın önemli bir diğer argümanı, ataerki toplumlarda erkekler arası ilişkiler kurmak ve geliştirmek adına kadınların takas edildiğidir. Rubin de benzer bir şekilde kadınların alınıp satılan metalara dönüşmesine neden olan akrabalık sistemlerine odaklanmakta ve kadınların erkeklerin boyundurukları altına girmelerinin kökenlerini araştırmaktadır. Bahsedilen temalar, Virgil'in Aeneid adlı epik şiirinin yeniden bir yorumlanması olan *Lavinia*'da görülebilmektedir. Roman, *Lavinia*'nın özerk bir birey olamamasına, metalaştırılmasına ve ataerki normların dikte ettiği rollere (bakire, eş ve anne) bürünme zorunluluğuna odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, Irigaray ve Rubin'in teorileri ve Le Guin'in anlatısıyla, *Lavinia* adlı romanın kadınlar üstünde kurulan tahakkümü ve kadınların temsil sorununa nasıl yaklaşıldığını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Antik metinlerde kadının sesinin yer almaması, feminist edebiyatın daha önce duyulmamış ve anlaşılmamış karakterin seslerini yeniden hayal etmesine olanak sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ursula K. Le Guin'nin *Lavinia*'sı, Feminizm, Fallusmerkeçilik, Metalaştırılma, Kadınların Takas Edilmesi

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Introduction

The roots of the subordination of women have been vigorously discussed among many feminist critics. Under what circumstances it came about or when it first appeared is among the questions that have been researched. When we examine the 20th century feminist critic Luce Irigaray's interpretation on this topic, we can observe that "the exchange of women" is at the core of the patriarchal society. Irigaray strongly criticizes the phallogocentrism which excludes women from the symbolic order. According to Irigaray, the main focus of the Western philosophy has always been to analyze the male subject. She argued that women have been kept out of the symbolic processes that are particular to systems of discourse and representation (Bainbridge, 2017, p. 271). Since Plato's time, the language of philosophy has transformed into a male discourse that justifies the exclusion of women. The absence of the female results in the impossibility of representing the female subject (Delice, 2022, p. 132). To dwell on this further, it is explained that women serve as reflectors in the phallogocentric system. This means that women are defined in relation to male characteristics such as the phallus instead of being defined on their own. This in turn, ensures the continuity of the male dominance (Bainbridge, 2017, p. 271). The exclusion of women is not only limited to the field of philosophy. When we examine the western culture as a whole, it is possible to observe that only the male subject is represented in different fields of the western culture such as politics, art, religion and law. While the male is the subject, the female is the other and the sexual difference. In light of this, Irigaray proposes a construction of the female subject. She believes that it is necessary for women to create a new language as well as new social practices. In many of her works, Irigaray attempts to reveal the male point of view which is embedded within the male discourse (Delice, 2022, p. 132-133).

Irigaray has been heavily influenced by the Marxist criticism of capitalism and thus has formulated an analysis which suggests that women serve as commodities within our capitalist society (Zimmerman, 2016, p: 425). All historical social systems are built on the exploitation of a specific group of people. While Marx argued that the working classes were the ones who were exploited, Irigaray suggested that it was women. According to Irigaray's argument, women are exploited for their reproductive capabilities, which include bearing children and providing labor for the workforce. This exploitation forms the foundation of the symbolic order without any reciprocal benefits or compensation for their efforts (Irigaray, 1977, p. 173). Thus, Irigaray argues that society has been built on the exchange of women and that for centuries women have been perceived as mere possessions. In order to trace the roots of this practice, Irigaray examines anthropologist Lévi Strauss' work. According to Lévi-Strauss, women are scarce commodities and have been exchanged to ensure the survival of the society (Lévi-Strauss, 1949, p.38). He claims that this scarcity is caused by the polygamous inclinations of men and the insufficiency of desirable women, as he states, "deep polygamous tendency, which exists among all men, always makes the number of available women seem insufficient" (Lévi-Strauss, 1949, p. 39).

Moreover, he adds that if there were as many women as men, not all of these women would be desirable or attractive to them (Lévi-Strauss, 1949, p. 39).

However, Irigaray challenges Strauss' ideas by raising questions about why men are not exchanged between women. She also questions whether men are all equally desirable and if women have no inclination towards polygamy. (Irigaray, 1977, p. 171) Consequently, Irigaray coins the term "hom(m)o-sexuality" to argue that the patriarchal society exchanges women as commodities in order to form and strengthen the relations between men (Irigaray, 1977). While women are exchanged among men, men are not exchanged among women. To further elaborate on the topic, Irigaray states that men are "endogamous", as they remain with their families once married. However, when we examine women, we can observe that they are "exogamous" and obliged join the family of their husband and take their surname. (Irigaray, 1977). A significant factor relating to this exchange system is that women do not participate in the exchange, they are merely the objects which are bought and sold by men. A sociocultural practice of endogamy would prohibit interaction with women. Men treat women as commodities, yet they do not engage in any reciprocal transactions with them (Irigaray, 1977, p.172). Moreover, women are exploited without any kind of compensation as such compensation would suggest a double exchange system (Irigaray, 1977, p. 173).

Another important aspect of Irigaray's theory on the commodification of women is that women have been given three specific roles to play in the society. These roles are that of the virgin, the mother and the prostitute (Irigaray, 1977). A virgin woman has "pure exchange value" as she can be exchanged and given to a different family. Since she is not married, she cannot be "used" by men yet. As Irigaray explains, "She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men." (Irigaray, 1977, p.186) A mother, on the other hand, has "pure use value" due to the fact that her body can be used but no longer can be exchanged. Mothers, as reproductive tools identified by the father's name and confined within his household, are considered private possessions and are not part of the exchange system (Irigaray, 1977, p.177). Lastly, a woman who is a prostitute has both "exchange value" and "use value." Her body can be used and she can be exchanged between men. As clarified by Irigaray, "Prostitution amounts to *usage that is exchanged*" (Irigaray, 1977, p.186). She argues that these are the designated roles of women in a society that can only function with the exchange of women. If there were any compensations, the exchange would be mutual and this would eradicate the hegemony of men over women. In consequence, there would no longer be an exploitation or ownership of women. Another significant aspect of this exchange system is that a woman's exchange value cannot be discerned or observed on her physical being due to the fact that it is an arbitrary term imposed on her body. Consequently, Irigaray draws attention to the separation of women's bodies and their exchange values. A woman is made up of two bodies that are completely irreconcilable. She has a natural physical body while at the same time a social body that can be bought, sold and exchanged (Irigaray, 1977, p.180).

Having examined Irigaray's perspective on the matter, it is now possible to look into the theory of another feminist critic. Gayle Rubin, who is a cultural anthropologist, similarly discusses the difference between a woman's body and the connotations which are attributed to it in her essay "The Traffic in Women". Her main argument is that a woman can only become something else, a wife, a slave, or a prostitute while engaging in certain relations with men (Rubin, 2013, p.34). To be able to shed light on the true nature of these relations, Rubin focuses on finding the root of women's oppression. While she admits that capitalism is a part of the problem, she points out that it is not the main source of it, as many non-capitalist cultures have also oppressed women throughout different time periods around the world. She cites practices such as foot-binding and chastity belts which have been enforced on women to keep them "in their place" by cultures which were not capitalist as examples (Rubin, 2013, p. 46-47). She argues that if the source of the patriarchal society was capitalism and its endless search for wealth and profit, we would need a socialist revolution to end male dominance. She makes it clear that this kind of revolution would not be enough to put an end to women's subordination. Furthermore, she questions the argument that male domination is rooted in inherent male aggression. She claims that if this was the case, we would have to eradicate men from existence (Povinelli, 2006, p. 438). By tracing the main cause of women's oppression, Rubin reaches the conclusion that it is created by kinships. She focuses on sex/gender systems by examining kinships and explains that kinship systems are not based on the biological nature of humans. Instead, a kinship system is formed when social agendas are imposed on a part of nature, making it a form of production in a broad sense. Moreover, it involves shaping and changing objects like people for subjective purposes (Rubin, 2013, p. 46). In these systems, women are exchanged like goods and are controlled by men. Their identity is shaped not according to their biology but according to the society in which they were born. The exchange of women refers to how kinship systems define social relations, indicating that men hold specific rights over their female counterparts, while women do not possess the same rights over themselves or men (Rubin, 2013, p. 46-47). This indicates that women are denied the basic human rights to themselves and that their rights are entirely possessed by men.

Lavinia by Ursula K. Le Guin

Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* was written in 2008 and is based on the last six books of Virgil's *Aeneid* which was written between 29 and 19 BC. The story tells the events that occurred after Aeneas reached Italy from Lavinia's perspective. Le Guin's novel reimagines the life of Lavinia who is the daughter of King Latinus of Latium. Since Lavinia is the daughter of the king, she is expected to marry to make an alliance with another family. Turnus of Rutulians seeks Lavinia's hand in marriage while a prophecy proclaims that Lavinia should marry a foreigner, who is revealed to be the Trojan hero Aeneas. King Latinus decides that the prophecy should be fulfilled and that his daughter should marry Aeneas. Turnus' opposition to Aeneas leads to a brutal civil war in which Turnus is defeated by Aeneas. Aeneas'

victory secures his marriage to Lavinia and decides the future of Latium. Consequently, Aeneas becomes the founder of what will eventually become Rome.

Lavinia's Silence

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lavinia is a minor character who does not utter a single word nor does she have a distinct personality. Whereas in Le Guin's novel, she has a voice of her own and the story is told entirely from her point of view (Miller, 2010, p. 29). Throughout the novel, Lavinia struggles with the patriarchal system of the world which she was born into and tries to negotiate with this system to find some kind of autonomy for herself. The novel explores a variety of gender issues such as marriage, women being exchanged like property and women's lack of autonomy and freedom in the society in great detail. By giving a previously voiceless character a prominent voice and by allowing her to narrate her own story in first person, Le Guin retells Virgil's *Aeneid* from a feminist perspective. Le Guin challenges and transforms traditional myths by giving Lavinia a voice with which she can speak her mind (Rochelle, ix, 2001).

One of the main gender issues discussed in *Lavinia* is women's lack of freedom. As stated earlier, society is built on the exchange of women. One way in which this manifests is through marriage. In Lavinia's case, marriage is an obligation, something she has to do in order for her family to establish relations with another family. When she tells her father that she does not wish to marry any of her suitors, he tells her that she carries the power of their family within her and that she is bound to marry (Le Guin, 2010, p.78). He firmly states, "You carry my power in you, our family's power, and we can't pretend you don't" (Le Guin, 2010, p.78). In addition, she is deprived of the agency to choose her husband. She is only allowed to choose someone who is one of her suitors. She cannot choose somebody who is not. Turnus, one of Lavinia's suitors, claims entitlement over her, positioning her in such a way that refusal is impossible, as it would likely incite a civil war. She states, "I saw that I must marry Turnus: it was inevitable. To accept another suitor would be to bring civil war into the kingdom," (Le Guin, 2010, p.82). Since Turnus claimed Lavinia as his own property, we would not allow another suitor to claim ownership over her (Le Guin, 2010, p.82). Lavinia describes Turnus as someone who "had to compete, to win, to be master; he would never let another man have a woman he had claimed" (Le Guin, 2010, p.82). The fact that she was "claimed" by Turnus implies that there is ownership and it is apparent that Turnus saw Lavinia not as an autonomous individual but as his rightful property. As Adichie points out: "the language of marriage is often a language of ownership, not a language of partnership" (Adichie, 2014, p.30). Consequently, Lavinia feels entrapped and helpless by the situation that she finds herself in. She describes herself as a mouse who is stuck in the field after they cut the hay. She feels extremely vulnerable and exposed, without anywhere to go or hide. She claims, "Everywhere I look there's Turnus" (Le Guin, 2010, p.80). When we consider the situation that Lavinia finds herself in in terms of Irigaray and Rubin's framework, we can clearly see that Lavinia serves as a pawn and a commodity in the story.

She is exchanged between families to prevent a civil war from breaking out, which shows that trading her establishes good relations between families and ensures that there is peace in the land.

Upon Lavinia's refusal of Turnus due to a prophecy which states that Lavinia must marry a foreigner, civil war ensues. Rather than holding Turnus responsible, people unjustly hold Lavinia accountable. Lavinia is expected to diminish her individuality, therefore existence, in order to please Turnus. We can observe her total lack of autonomy as the choice to refuse Turnus was also not her choice. It was due to a prophecy over which she had no control. It indicates the lack of control she has over the important decisions involving her own life, such as whom she will marry. This also reflects Rubin's theory of women's trafficking. "Women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought, and sold" (Rubin, 2013, p.45). As Rubin points out, women do not have rights over themselves in the same way that Lavinia does not hold rights over herself. Society imposes on her to be meek, passive and submissive as she is an unmarried virgin who must play her role adequately. She resents this necessity to conform to gender roles that are designated for women. She makes it clear that she does not "want to sit at the banquet, the silent modest maiden" (Le Guin, 2010, p.35). As the unmarried daughter of the king, she has to play the role of the silent virgin and protect her exchange value, a role she does not wish to associate herself with.

As mentioned previously while discussing both Irigaray and Rubin, women are not perceived as human beings by men, but merely as objects that they can possess. This can be clearly seen in the novel, as Lavinia is presented by her father as a part of a treaty with the Trojans. She deems being exchanged like a cup or an item of clothing as "deep an insult as could be offered to a human soul" (Le Guin, 2010, 107). This clearly shows that the patriarchal society fails to see women's humanity and reduces them into objects that can be owned and exchanged by others. Again, we can observe that Lavinia is used between her father and her suitor to keep the peace. Here, in Irigaray's terms Lavinia, who is a virgin, is exchanged by her father and given to Aeneas which actualizes her exchange value. And once she is married to him, she will become a mother and therefore actualize her use value. Therefore, she is bound by the social roles that are imposed on her. As a result, on her wedding day to Aeneas, Lavinia does not consider herself as a happy woman marrying a man she loves but a lamb which is about to be sacrificed. She thinks that she is ornamented in the same way that a sacrificial lamb usually is and that the role that she is supposed to play is the same as theirs, docility and submission (Le Guin, 2010, p.192). Society makes it an obligation for Lavinia to be a dutiful wife and a mother and despite her reluctance, she has to perform this part. So we can clearly see the roles she is expected to play change based on her relation to men. When she is unmarried, she is "the modest maiden" and when she is married, she is "the dutiful wife and mother." Therefore, her own identity is perceived as innately connected to men and as not independent from them. Parallel with Irigaray's theory, Lavinia can only be a reflection of men, she has no existence in the symbolic order of things. She is devoid of any presence on her own.

An important point Irigaray explores in her essay can also be seen in this book, which is exogamy. She explains that exogamy necessitates departing from one's familial, tribal, or clan affiliations to form alliances. However, it does not permit marriages with groups that are excessively distant or culturally different in a way that contradicts existing norms (Irigaray, 1977, p. 172). Likewise, Lavinia is forced to marry and leave her family and her city to make an alliance between Latium and the Trojans. Before it was decided that she was to marry Aeneas, it was considered that Lavinia should marry Turnus in order for the country to be on good terms with Rutulia, where Turnus is from. Parallel with exogamy, Rutulia is also geographically close to Latium. Lavinia feels bitter about leaving her home to get married and exclaims, "Why, why is a girl brought up at home to be a woman in exile the rest of her life?" (Le Guin, 2010, p.44).

It is significant to point out that Le Guin makes Lavinia meet Virgil himself, which makes the text metafictional. In the text, Virgil is neither alive or dead, he is described as a shadow. They meet at the sacred forest of Albunea and he says that the reason why he talks to Lavinia and not the other characters of his creation is because he never gave her a voice. Throughout *Aeneid*, people talk about Lavinia and they even go to war for her. However, she is the only character who is completely voiceless during these events which relate to her directly. We do not get to have glimpse of her thoughts or feelings. The fact that Lavinia in this book has a life of her own surprises Virgil. When he talks about the difference between Aeneas and Lavinia in his poem he says that he saw him but he failed to see Lavinia. Further on, he describes Lavinia as "nothing" in his poem. He states that he did not give her a life in the same way that he gave Dido, another female character in his poem, a life. Virgil deems Lavinia's life as "ungiven" (Le Guin, 2010, p. 66). While Virgil never gave her life, Le Guin did and built an individuality for her, giving her feelings, thoughts and opinions. Therefore, Le Guin gave Lavinia a chance to represent herself. One of Irigaray's main arguments was that women cannot be represented as she has no place within the discourse of the symbolic order. It is possible to interpret allowing Lavinia to speak as an attempt to represent a woman who was silenced.

Another theme that Le Guin explores in the novel is war and its intrinsic connection with ownership and men. When we examine war in itself, we can see that it inherently involves possession. Mars, who is the god of war, plays a prominent role in the novel. Lavinia describes Mars with these words, "Mars has no altar in the city. Men worship him. A girl, a virgin, I could have no business with him and wanted none" (Le Guin, 2010, p.33). Here Le Guin clearly separates the "men's" world from "women's" world. Consequently, we can gather that the god of war belongs to the men's world, not women's. In the book, once Mars takes over men, war becomes something unavoidable. Furthermore, when Lavinia talks with Virgil she asks him why there must be war and receives this answer, "What a woman's question that is! Because men are men" (Le Guin, 2010, p.91). Le Guin associates war with men since wars start to claim ownership over other lands. It is possible to observe that Le Guin

establishes a connection between owning land and owning women. In the same way that men claim ownership over women, they also claim ownership over other lands.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is possible to interpret Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* by using a feminist approach and read it as a feminist retelling of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as the novel discusses feminist themes and focuses on issues involving gender. The way Lavinia is given away in marriage to make an alliance between Latium and the Trojans is parallel with the theories of many feminist thinkers who are previously mentioned such as Luce Irigaray and Gayle Rubin. Irigaray's theory on the topic focused on the exploitation of women and how it is actualized in society. Inspired by Marx's ideas on the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeois, Irigaray argued that women are exchanged between men in order to establish kinships between other men. In this transaction, women are merely commodities, they do not participate in the exchange nor do they get any kind of compensation for it. Moreover, Irigaray suggests that women play three distinct roles in society, that of the virgin, the mother and the prostitute. The virgin has pure exchange value since she can be traded but cannot be used for childbearing. The mother, on the other hand, has use value as she cannot be exchanged but can be used. The prostitute has both exchange and use value due to the fact that she can be traded between men and she can also be used by them. When we examine Rubin's theory on the subordination of women, we can see that she reaches a similar conclusion. The subordination of women is caused and actualized by the practice of exchanging women. To reach this conclusion, Rubin examines the kinship systems between different communities and finds out that throughout centuries women have been used and traded with the purpose of establishing kinships between different men. Marriage can be given as an example of this kind of transaction. Women have been traded by their families so that they could form alliances with other families. Given by her father to another man, a woman becomes his property, takes his name and lives in his household. Therefore, we can observe that both Irigaray and Rubin point out the fact that women are traded and are deprived of their basic human rights by being treated as less than human beings. Le Guin's *Lavinia* also gives Lavinia a voice, a personality and a chance to tell her story which was something she did not have in *Aeneid*, where she does not speak once throughout the poem. As Irigaray points out, the representation of women is made impossible by the symbolic order of the western philosophy. The western school of thought excluded women from this order and she could not have any existence as a subject within it. This is one of the main arguments of Irigaray and we can see a parallel between what Le Guin aims to accomplish with *Lavinia* and Irigaray's critique. Here, Le Guin places Lavinia at the heart of the novel and allows her to speak. She attempts to give Lavinia the chance to represent herself with her own words as a female subject.

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in feminist mythological retellings that focus on women who have been silenced in literary works of antiquity. This can be observed in other works akin

to *Lavinia*, where the focus is on reimagining stories from antiquity from a female perspective. The popularity of these retellings are significantly influenced by the growing interest among readers in these narratives. This interest presents an area for further research, particularly in exploring what it is that makes these retellings so compelling to contemporary audiences. Understanding why these stories resonate with people and why they are in demand could provide insights into literary trends. Additionally, examining other mythological retellings through a feminist theoretical framework may reveal patterns among them, creating a deeper understanding of how these narratives are being reshaped in the context of feminist discourse.

Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study titled “A Feminist Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's Lavinia”, scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Birçok feminist düşünür, kadınlar üzerinde kurulmuş eril tahakkümün kökenlerine inmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma yapan düşünürlerden birisi Fransız feminist yazar Luce Irigaray'dır. Irigaray, kadınların batı felsefesi tarafından bir özne olarak dışlanmalarına önemli eleştiriler getirmiştir. Bu dışlanmanın yarattığı sorunlardan birisi, kadınların temsil edilemez bir konuma gelmeleridir.

Irigaray, fallogosantrizmin kadınları sembolik düzenin dışında bıraktığını savunmuştur. Batı felsefesinin ana odağının her zaman erkek özneyi analiz etmek olduğunu ve kadınların bu sembolik süreçlerin dışında tutulduğunu belirtmiştir. Platon'dan bu yana, felsefenin dili erkek söylemine dönüşmüş ve kadınların dışlanmasını meşru kılmıştır. Kadının yokluğu, kadın özneyi temsil etmeyi imkânsız hale getirir. Irigaray, kadınların bu sistemde erkeği yansıttıklarına ve dolayısıyla erkeklerin özelliklerine göre tanımlandıklarına vurgu yapar.

Irigaray, Marx'ın kapitalizm eleştirisinden etkilenmiştir ve kadınların kapitalist toplumda meta olarak hizmet ettiğini savunur. Bütün tarihsel sosyal sistemler, belirli bir grubun sömürsü üzerine kurulmuştur ve Irigaray'a göre sömürülen grup kadınlardır. Ona göre toplum kadınların değiş tokuşu üzerine inşa edilmiştir ve yüzyıllardır kadınlar sadece mülk olarak görülmüştür. Irigaray, antropolog Lévi-Strauss'un çalışmalarını inceleyerek bu uygulamanın köklerini araştırır. Lévi-Strauss, kadınların toplumun devamını sağlamak için değiş tokuş edildiklerini savunur. Poligami eğilimleri ve istenen kadınların yetersizliği nedeniyle kadınların az sayıda olduklarını iddia eder.

Irigaray, Strauss'un fikirlerini eleştirerek neden erkeklerin kadınlar arasında değiş tokuş edilmediğini sorgular. Kadınlar için tüm erkekler eşit derecede arzulanabilir midir veya kadınların poligamiye eğilimleri yok mudur? Irigaray, "hom(m)o-seksüellik" terimini ortaya atarak ataerkil toplumun kadınları bir eşya gibi değiş tokuş ettiğini ve bu alışverişin erkekler arasındaki ilişkileri güçlendirdiğini savunur. Kadınlar erkekler arasında değiş tokuş edilirken, erkekler kadınlar arasında değiş tokuş edilmemektedir. Irigaray, erkeklerin endogamik olduğunu ve evlendikten sonra aileleriyle kaldıklarını belirtir. Kadınlar ise egzogamiktir ve kocalarının ailesine katılmak zorundadırlar. Kadınlar, herhangi bir tazminat olmaksızın bu sistem içinde sömürülürler.

Irigaray'ın kuramın bir diğer önemli unsuru ise toplumda kadınların oynadığı üç farklı rolün olduğunu savunmasıdır. Bu rollerden birisi bakire rolüdür. Bakire bir bireyin toplumda değişim değeri vardır fakat kullanım değeri yoktur. Irigaray'a göre bakire bir olasılıktır, potansiyel olarak evlilik yoluyla alınıp satılabilir fakat kullanılamaz. Kadının toplum içindeki bir diğer rolü ise anne rolüdür. Anne artık değiş tokuş edilemez çünkü bir erkek tarafından alınmıştır. Bu nedenle de değişim değeri yoktur. Bunun yanı sıra anne kullanılabilir ve kullanım değerine sahiptir. Son olarak toplumda kadınların oynadığı rol hayat kadını rolüdür. Bu kadınların toplumda hem değişim hem de kullanım değerleri vardır. Irigaray, tüm toplumsal hayatın bahsedilen değiş tokuş sistemi üzerine kurulu olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Gayle Rubin, benzer bir şekilde erkek egemenliğinin kökenlerini araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Kapitalizmin ataerkil toplumun üretiminde rol oynadığını kabul etmekle birlikte, bunun erkek egemenliğinin ana kaynağı olmadığını belirtir. Ataerkil toplum yapısı kapitalizm öncesi toplumlarda da gözlemlenebilmektedir. Rubin, erkek egemenliğinin temelinde akrabalık sistemlerinin yattığını belirtmektedir. Akrabalık sistemleri belirli toplumsal amaçların bireylerin doğasına dayatılmasıyla inşa

edilmektedir. Bu sistemlerde kadınlar mal gibi deęiş tokuř edilir ve erkekler tarafından kontrol edilir. Kadınların deęiş tokuřunun temel amacı ise erkekler arasında iliřkiler ve ortaklıklar kurmaktır. Bahsedilen deęiş tokuř genel olarak evlilik yoluyla gerekleřmektedir. Rubin'in kuramına gre btn toplumsal iliřkiler akrabalık sistemleri tarafından belirlenmektedir. Toplumun erkek bireyleri kadınlar zerinde hak sahibi iken kadınlar aynı řekilde ne kendileri ne de erkekler zerine hak talep edebilirler.

Ursula K. Le Guin'in "Lavinia" romanı, Virgil'in "Aeneid" adlı eserinin Lavinia'nın perspektifinden yeniden yazılmasıdır. Virgil'in eserinde Lavinia, konuşmayan ve belirgin bir kiřilięi olmayan bir karakterdir. Le Guin'in romanında ise Lavinia hikayenin ana karakteridir ve olaylar onun bakıř aısından anlatılır. Roman, patriarkal sistemle mcadele eden Lavinia'nın yařadığı cinsiyet sorunlarını ve zgrlk arayıřını detaylı bir řekilde iřler. Le Guin, geleneksel mitleri yeniden řekillendirerek Lavinia'ya bir ses verip onun hikayesini feminist bir bakıř aısıyla yeniden anlatır.

Romanda ele alınan ana cinsiyet sorunlarından biri, kadınların kendi kararlarını verecek zgrlkleri olmamasıdır. Toplum kadınların deęiş tokuřu zerine inřa edilmiřtir ve bu alıřveriř evlilik yoluyla gerekleřir. Lavinia'nın Turnus ile evlilięi, ailesinin bařka bir aileyle iliřki kurması ve oluřabilecek bir i savařı nlemek iin bir zorunluluktur.

Le Guin'in romanın stkurmaca boyutu, Lavinia ve Virgil'in diyalogunda grlebilmektedir. Virgil, sadece Lavinia ile konuřtuęunu nk yarattığı tm karakterler iinde bir tek ona bir ses vermedięi syler. Virgil'in "Aeneid" eserinde Lavinia hakkında konuřulur, ama Lavinia hi konuřmaz. Virgil, Lavinia'ya hayat vermemiřtir ama Le Guin ona bir ses vererek Lavinia'nın kendini temsil etmesini saęlar. Irigaray'ın temel argmanlarından biri, kadınların temsil edilememesidir ve Le Guin, Lavinia'ya konuřma hakkı vererek bu durumu tersine evirir.

Ursula K. Le Guin'in "Lavinia" romanı feminist bir yaklařım kullanılarak yorumlanabilmekte ve feminist bir yeniden anlatım olarak okunabilmektedir. Roman, feminist temalar iřler ve cinsiyetle ilgili sorunlara odaklanmaktadır. Lavinia'nın evlilik yoluyla deęiş tokuř edilmesi, birok feminist dřnrn kuramıyla paralellik gstermektedir. Irigaray ve Rubin'in kuramları, kadınların smrlmesi ve toplumda nasıl meta olarak kullanıldıęını vurgulamaktadır. Irigaray, kadınların temsil edilememesini de sorunsallařtırır. Le Guin'in "Lavinia" romanı, Lavinia'ya bir ses vererek onun hikayesini anlatmasına ve kendini temsil etmesine olanak saęlar.