

Leadership across the Gender Divide: Women's Leadership Roles - Past and Present, via the Dual Prism of Sexism and Racism

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Abstract The three entrenched ‘-isms’ of sexism, racism and ageism converge and conspire as deeply entrenched social and psychological constructs to ‘sustain’ inequalities and inequities in many if not most human realms of endeavor: economic, business, political, academic, communal and artistic spheres represent an incomplete list. In focusing on the first two constructs of sexism and racism, this paper takes a discursive historical perspective, investigating the role of religion and religious institutions, and the role of language in moulding the social constructs around gender and its divide. It also reviews positive movements: i.e. progress in redressing power imbalances, recognition of ancient and more recent obstacles in moving through each (forces maintaining the status quo), and thoughts on how to override some of the obstacles, in the light of the potent forces of 21st century technological break-throughs, simultaneously with, or despite, the human condition of gloom and doom (Arendt, 1958). Particular reference is made to the role of 1. The helping professions and semi-professions, and 2. The role of expressive and performing arts (literature, music and dance inter alia), in breaking new ground to help level the playing field. Whilst no longer a chimera, it is argued that the goal of a level playing field remains an aspiration rather than a reality for the majority of the world ‘population, yet progress continues to be made, much of it based on the ground-breaking labour of women from the past. The contribution of a number of women (and some men) as pioneers in their respective fields is referred to as providing grist for the above mill of an iterative and evolutionary rather than a revolutionary social process –e.g. Biblical role models, nineteenth century British social activists, professionals and semi-professionals, expressive and performance artists, and political leaders. This paper does not purport to provide a comprehensive enumeration of progress of women in all fields. However it does provide a possible taste of the future, from a discursive yet selective search of the past –both ancient and modern.

Keywords Leadership, Gender, Sexism, Racism, Ageism, Expressive and performing arts, Female political leadership

1. Introduction

The Little Book on Gender, published by the United Nations, (UNDP 2013) provides a brief but mostly optimistic global review of the evolution of women’s progress, in its Gender Development Index, during the last two decades: of their rights, freedoms and empowerments, e.g. their huge increase in literacy and enrollment in tertiary institutions – essential building blocks along the road to equal social, political and economic status, and hence opportunities for female leadership. However the last two decades represent the culmination of much history, reflected in the writings of current post-modern and postfeminist theorists (e.g. Genz, 2009, Wilson, 2014). Some of that long history of

male-female gender divide is discussed here.

The issues of gender (in)equality and power (im)balance, of leader/submission roles between genders, and their converse, did not start with the Bible stories. However those myths definitely helped to create and re-inforce societal norms among Jewish, Moslem and Christian populations (in that chronological order). The first woman, Eve, born conveniently from Adam’s ‘rib’, was ipso facto his ‘appendage’ –thus given inferior status ab initio! The story of her tempting of the first man Adam, with the ‘apple of knowledge’, led them out of the blissful state of innocence. They were both (equally) punished by being banished forever from that state of perfection –the Garden of Eden. Eve the seductress, Adam the dupe: not the most auspicious start for the religiously sanctified chronicling of man-woman relations!

Did that apocryphal story set the stage for the next countless generations of blaming women for the basic ills

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confronting humankind? Did it establish a framework of distrust, or at least its embryo, in man-woman relations? Did it provide the ultimate justification of the burning or drowning of countless generations of women as witches, as soon as the female role of submission was judged by men to be usurping or even threatening male roles of power and dominance?

The history of Jeanne D'Arc can be seen to epitomize the rigidity of divide in the framework of gender relations, in Medieval 'Christian' Europe. There she was forced to don men's clothing in order to fight and win the Dauphin's battles –he the spineless 'leader'; she the one with visions of her mission to save her royal 'master'. As with so many histories of heroes and heroines, Jeanne's story was dramatized and eulogized in literature, albeit by two male writers, both in historical terms almost contemporary: Anouilh's *L'Alouette* (Anouilh 1953.) and G.B. Shaw's more famous *St. Joan* (Shaw, 1924.) In the former the Inquisitioner focused on Jeanne's mortal and unpardonable sin –her 'orgueil': in his male view, that of pride bordering on arrogance, in which she considered herself above the strictures of her Church. In a figurative sense Jeanne needed to shed her female skin, or 'skein', in order to adopt her role as spiritual and military leader. She paid the ultimate human price of death by torture, for that daring.

The Bible (King James Authorized edition, 1611) cannot be blamed for offering only subversive or weak female stereotypes. It provides both overtly powerful and manipulative: the prophetess Deborah led the Children of Israel against the infidel army of Sisera, and overthrew him. The woman Jael personally slew the fugitive leader, albeit by lulling him into a sense of false security first, through food and succour (and the suggestion of sexual seduction). Earlier in the Old Testament Miriam was responsible for the life and protection of her brother Moses, albeit in a back-up role. When she attempted to usurp that role, she was punished (with leprosy, by Divine intervention!) And later, Delilah? Not exactly a righteous female: she used her attractiveness to lure her 'master' Samson into giving up the secret of his colossal physical prowess; i.e. his uncut hair.

On balance the Old Testament seems to support interpretation of either a supportive or a subversive role, neither omnipotent, for the female gender. And the ultimate arbiter? God inevitably depicted as a male figure, with Man made in his image!

The New Testament follows suit: it provides all successive generations of males and females with the powerful symbolic image of a male Christ, son of God, and the role of his Mum –a sexless, and therefore pure, 'virgin' Mary, whose principal role, once again, it is to support and succor, as in the Old Testament, but this time the stakes are higher –she is responsible for the early childhood well-being of her Divine Son. The very thought of supplanting her little 'wunderkind', by her own right and power, would be considered heresy of the highest order!

2. Corpus

One might argue that the myths of religion have no bearing on contemporary social structures, human relations, or modes of thinking. However in Western civilization at least, the Church, in all its major manifestations –Catholic, Protestant, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Evangelical, has provided an on-going institution, a prototype of what we now label 'global', with transnational or more accurately 'meta-national' power. Kings and Kingdoms, Czars, Emperors and Reichs have come and gone, but The Church has maintained its hold –on purse strings, real estate property, on social relations and behavior, and most intangibly, yet perhaps most significantly, on the psyches of men and women. The largest, the Catholic Church, has yet to accept women into positions of power and leadership in its deeply entrenched organizational structure. Both sexes are born and raised into that structure, and their perceptions of the appropriateness of man-woman power relations have been framed, and to some extent still are so framed, by that structure. In Berger and Luckman's terms, this has represented, and through consistent inter-generational re-enforcement still represents, a major constituent of 'the social construction of reality' (Berger and Luckman, 1966). The village priest, the father confessor, the bishop and archbishop, and at the peak of power 'el Papa': all male roles embodying earthly empowerment, reflecting an all-male hierarchy supported by religious –implicitly or explicitly "Divine"- authority.

And yet! An evolution, if not a revolution, can be perceived in the redressing the imbalance of power between the sexes. Some political milestones have included the almost global enfranchisement of women, during the last century –for this the world owes to this day a debt of gratitude to the 'crazy suffragettes' in England, who chained themselves to the fences of the then most powerful political institutions on the globe, in order to demand change –an heroic act of early social, non-violent and overtly female disobedience.

The first and second world wars, appalling as they were, still had the unplanned effect of having females acknowledged and accepted as skilled or trainable workers, in economies which had been stripped of male workers due to military conscription. An economic ratchet effect ensued, and with it, with cash in their pockets, politically 'liberated' females could get their feet on at least the bottom rung of the ladder towards economic 'liberation'. Still a far cry from executive management, but no longer could any latter-day French Revolution call just for 'fraternite' in its proclamation for human justice: together with 'liberte' and 'egalite', the rallying cry would need to be changed to include both sexes!

It would be argued by Levi-Strauss and more recently Chomski, that we humans of both genders have been trapped in our own skins of perceiving our world, and our position

within it, not just by social structures, as outlined above, but by the very language which we learn and use, from earliest infancy. Words –our means of communication, are the building blocks to our understanding of social reality. In many languages the masculine form includes and ‘embodies’ the female: thus in Spanish ‘padres’ or fathers, includes mothers, making them invisible in the generic form of ‘parents’. French revolutionaries would have similarly argued that ‘fraternite’ would naturally have included ‘sororite’ –it was just a technical matter of gender inclusion. To a three-year old brain learning the meaning of language, this is no technical matter. It goes to the roots of her/his understanding of the world, and its social distribution of power.

This is not to declaim the profound impact of the French Revolution’s ‘battle cry’. 20th century women labelling themselves as part of the women’s liberation movement recognize the deep connection, linguistic and social, between *liberte* and liberation. Here we go one stage further and suggest an ineluctable causal link between liberation and empowerment.

Pioneers of social activism –a female tradition of leadership?

A curious phenomenon marked the activities of the major manufacturers of chocolate in England e.g. the Frys, Rowntrees, and Cadburys. In modern business language all these firms were among the first to introduce the notion of social accountability and ethics into the business arena – in the face of Adam Smith’s at- the- time recent notion of perfect competition, or in more everyday language: “every man for himself and may the best man win”. Each used their considerable economic power to address urgent social issues. Foundations were created, which exist to this day –more than a century later. Workers were treated to decent housing at an affordable price, within the company built community. Without the wordage, CSR had been introduced into private sector organizations. An additional aspect of this curious social phenomenon was that perhaps the most famous English social activist of the time was a member of these families, and female: Elizabeth Fry, mother of 11 children, married to the nephew of Joseph Fry, owner of Fry’s Chocolate. She gained the confidence of Queen Victoria, was friends with the Home Minister Robert Peel, gave an audience to the King of Prussia on social reform, set up a formal training centre for nursing at Guys Hospital, and addressed the British Parliament on the urgent need for reforms in the prison system, especially for women –who were highly vulnerable to abuse. Fry and her colleagues came from economically and socially privileged families and shared a strong Puritanical ‘Quaker’ background. (Daggers, Neal and Butler, 2006). Given similar levels of opportunity, can we look to the female side of the gender divide for pioneering efforts in social activism?

Segmented spheres of leadership for women –slowly dissolving the historical divide

Women have found leadership roles more accessible in some spheres of social activity, than in others. The two on

which this paper will focus are:

1. The Helping Professions and semi-professions
2. The Arts –performing and expressive

3. Women in the Helping Professions

The classical professions of law, medicine and priesthood have traditionally been barred, not just from females, but from all except politically/legally/socially approved classes of males; likewise the ‘officer classes’ of the military. In this way elites were perpetuated in class systems. Other more traditional societies maintained exclusivity through a rigid caste system, which was if anything less permeable than the Western class system observed and critiqued by Marx (1867). In all these systems women have historically been excluded from elite professions –hence the argument of systemic exclusion.

In Western societies the above scenario has been attenuated, so that, with the exception of the Catholic Priesthood, women may aspire to work in the ‘elite professions’. Judge Rosalie Abella, in a landmark study on the Status of Women and other minorities in Canada, attested to the fact that whilst women cannot be legally barred from entry, their representation in the elite professions was substantially lower than male counterparts of similar credentials (Abella, 1985). This was in a country which prides itself for its egalitarian and inclusive culture. Of course exceptions can be documented. A notification was posted in Facebook (May 6, 2015) of the awarding of Life Membership by the OMA (Ontario Medical Association) to Dr. Beryl Chernick, for over 40 years of pioneering work in sex therapy in Canada. Most telling in this context of opening up a chink in conventionally male professional bastions, was that she was the sole female recipient of that honour, out of 12 medical practitioners, in the year of 2015! It is fitting that her work focused on repairing problems emanating from the gender divide.

Since it has been difficult if not sometimes impossible for women to gain access to the ‘top’ professions, in terms of pay and social prestige, they have often opted to enter the ‘semi-professions’ of a helping nature. Nursing until recently was considered an exclusively female domain; occupational therapy, physiotherapy, osteopathy, audiology, massage therapy, music and dance therapy, all boast a disproportionate number of women ‘professionals’ working in them and earning above-level incomes –however not the astronomical earnings reported of physicians and surgeons. As more pressure is exerted on the traditional institutions of law and medicine, including their schools, one can expect to see more vacancies of elite positions opened up to both genders equally, if only to preserve the highest level of professional quality, in an age which increasingly clamours for greater transparency in institutional and executive decision-making. This is clearly more valid, the more open and liberalized the society. The converse holds true. Given the choice, a woman would be better off to be born and raised

in, for example Denmark, Sweden or Switzerland, than in Bangladesh, Iran or Burundi –the data in the UNDP's Little Book on Gender, (2014) compared to the data provided by Transparency International (2014) indicate that a strong connection exists between increasingly equal participation by women in positions of high socio-economic status, and a country's reputation for transparency, and the converse –its reputation for corruption (Lehrer, 2015).

4. Women in Expressive and Performing Arts

Expressive Arts include writing, painting, sculpture and musical composition. The 20th century Canadian Emily Carr needed and managed to combine three careers, two of them in the Arts, the third to put bread on the table! Her most memorable was a pioneering depiction of aboriginal symbols, esp. totems, in her art; for which she was (belatedly) accorded an honorary position as sole female artist, among the illustrious Canadian 'Group of Seven' –the most recognized artists of the great Canadian landscape. Less well recognized was her ironic and self-deprecating style of literary writing, as exemplified in her autobiography: 'House of all sorts.' (Carr....) Since she earned very little from the sale of her early paintings, she was dependent on her third career for sustenance –she ran a rooming house in Victoria for many years, and had to put up with all the ignominies of a small landlord/lady trying to enforce her rights against mostly semi-indigent males –an unenviable occupation for any person, but compounded by her eccentricity and her lack of male muscle. (Landlords as Scapegoats –Lehrer 1991). The need to supplement low income from expressive and performing arts by other work is as familiar to the current generation as it was in Emily Carr's time –not exclusively a female phenomenon, but disproportionately so, as evidenced in the UNDP's Little Book on Gender.

Women seem to be remarkably rare among the world's recognized and respected musical composers. However, this phenomenon might reflect more on the devaluation of women's creative abilities by societies dominated by men, than by women's objective abilities in this area. Once again the "–isms" can be seen to compound one another: the Mendelsohn family provides an interesting illustration of the interweaving of two "–ism" strands, spanning past and contemporary history in European and N. America.

Felix Mendelsohn was a well-recognized German composer, though perhaps less praised than others due to his well-known Jewish roots (His music was banned during the Nazi era). As a matter of history, his grandfather Moses Mendelsohn founded the liberal/reform movements of Judaism ("haskalah" = "Enlightenment"). (Altmann 1998). This has given rise in the current generation some 2 centuries later, to a wholesale acceptance of female Rabbis among liberal, progressive and more recently conservative Jewish communities. Many more are accomplished cantors –breaching the traditional divide of cantorial "Chazanut". Many accompany themselves on musical instruments,

especially guitar, re-introducing into the liturgy some of the 'folk music' roots of early ecstatic Chasidism, (Kaplan 2001). Some of these female Rabbis and Cantors have been awarded top leadership roles in major synagogue centres, at least in N.America –progress through the prism of the two principal "–isms" which have been the focus of attention, and arguably also the third "–ageism", since they are all on average far younger than their male counterparts (Nadell 1999).

In nineteenth century Germany, however, renowned at that time for its progressive and enlightened culture, Moses Mendelsohn's grandson Felix still found it expedient to convert to Christianity in order to further his musical career. His baptism did not totally dispense with the anti-semitic prejudices of the period, but Felix's sister Fanny was far worse off: she faced the combined prejudices of gender and ethnicity. To some now her work represents a higher quality of musicianship than that of her brother, but it is still played very little, and in all probability much of it was not transcribed into musical manuscript. How much found its way into Felix's compositions is also not completely known, but would have offered some degree of creative outlet for Fanny's undoubted talents. She lived in a time and place which was considered highly enlightened; yet it was not a society which supported her empowerment. (Todd 2003). Similarly with Clara Schuman, wife of the famous composer Robert Schuman (Geck 2012). In both cases, the women were praised for their supportive role as pianists, performing the creative works of their male family members/"masters". Only in quite recent times has their real contribution been properly recognized.

Interestingly if one shifts focus from classical to other musical genres, one witnesses more female participation and recognition –albeit more contemporary. Bessie Smith was a Blues legend, followed by many others –Cleo Laine, Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald, all of whom made it on to the world musical stage. And they were all Black (not all African American –Cleo Laine was a star in the U.K.! They also all combined expressive with performing art!) (Kernfield 2002 - New Grove Dictionary of Jazz). As argued below, oppressions (e.g. racism and sexism) and liberations (e.g. suffrage and independent employment) tend to compound each other, from each divide. Empowerment in one area can be a potent force towards empowerment followed by leadership in another!

Performing arts would include all forms of dance, song, circus, theatre, film and TV/video. It would be hard to conceive of any of these flourishing without the presence of the female. In classical ballet women as well as men have been provided with leading roles (Swan Lake, Les Sylphides, The Nutcracker etc.) However, performances in artistic endeavours do not guarantee to women leadership roles. It might in fact lead them into being used as 'sex symbols' for audiences which have historically either been primarily male, or whose custom has been paid for principally by males, including the cost of their consorts. Scantly clad women on elephants and on trapezes may indeed display high levels of

skill and daring. Their value to the entrepreneur will lie in their ability to 'wow' the audience. This is not to go to the extreme of saying that in most performing arts the woman's body is a commodity, as Hobsbawm (1962) might presuppose. However, it is to suggest that the empowerment of women in performing arts as a whole hinges on the liberation of men from any obsession of images of women as sexual objects –work hard to accomplish in the face of an entertainment industry addicted to using female sexual imagery as one of its primary marketing tools. By extension a large proportion of the marketing industry as a whole can be argued to make wholesale capital out of a manufactured obsession by males of the female mammary glands (arguably rooted in human milk deprivation in early infancy, and aided and abetted by the multi-billion dollar global powdered milk industry.)

It is hard to wean men off their well-cultivated obsession with breasts, but not impossible: Gabrielle Roth created a new genre of dance performance, which she labelled the 5 Rhythms (Roth 1997), and which has gained acceptance from both genders as a dance form which promotes liberation of mind and spirit, as well as body. It is taught by accredited practitioners of both genders; the classes are attended likewise by both genders, with no divide; the quality of a dancer's performance is, as with yogic philosophy, subsumed under the emotional and spiritual enlightenment which may be facilitated by the practice. 'Showing off' by either gender in performance is discouraged. As with many non-mainstream performing and therapeutic arts, Gabrielle Roth devoted her life as a professional practitioner, moved thousands of souls through hard to better lived lives, and provides a role model of leadership and empowerment through creative art form. She lived into this century.

More mainstream and more universally enjoyed are the performances of Cirque de Soleil, which has expanded from its base in Quebec, to become a world-wide circus/dance arts phenomenon. It is not known to exploit the sexuality of its women performers, although it does push all its performers –male and female, to their limits –another example of liberation through the performing arts (Babinski, 2004).

The power of the written word -leadership via the pen: mightier in the long run than the sword?

Writing has been a medium available for women's empowerment since antiquity, because it could be (and has been) camouflaged as work produced by men. George Eliot (e.g. 'Middlemarch', 1872) maintained her 'nom de plume' in the face of discrimination and prejudice in 19th Century England, and succeeded in getting her art widely acclaimed. A sign of evolutionary progress has been the lack of need, in contemporary Western societies, of women hiding their gender identity, in order to have their books published. However, it remains a moot point as to whether women writers are as quick to receive universal accolades, as their male counterparts: Doris Lessing wrote her most famous books (the 4-part Golden Notebook) in 1962. The books wrote of topics considered taboo for discussion, for

millennia: women's orgasms, menstruation, frigidity, their need for and right to equality in men-women relations, all of which provided grist for the mill of the Women's Lib movements of the 60s and 70s. Yet not until 45 years later did she receive the ultimate recognition of a world-class author –she was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2007, at age 88. She died six years later.

The Bronte sisters contributed to our understanding of the (suppressed) domestic and family status of women in 19th century England (e.g. *Wuthering Heights*). A less well-known work by Charlotte, called 'Villette', depicted the status of an unmarried woman (a 'spinster'!) not in England, but in France, where her heroine chose to courageously 'escape' to, in order to be free from the strictures of Victorian society. Sadly, she spent her life as a low-paid private school tutor of English –one up from a governess, but little different to what her socio-economic status would have been in her home country. Charlotte knew from first-hand experience, of what she wrote. Yet her writing empowered her and lives on, to empower current and future generations –of women, but also of men, in helping transform their 'mindscape'.

Shifting to the mid-late 20th century, women writers start to abound. Often their work is morbid. At a personal level Sylvia Plath's poetry reflected her deep despair, culminating in suicide. (Plath.....). At a philosophical/sociological level Arendt's work (e.g. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*) suggests an equally deep despair concerning the ability of the human race to manage its public affairs with any sense of the triple message of the French Revolution, from two centuries before. Both were acclaimed writers, whose gender did not prevent them from getting their quite different but powerful messages published and immortalized globally. The fact that neither was sanguine about the future of humankind might have more than a little to do with their ethnic background, (both were Jewish –both lived through the era of the mechanized slaughter of the 6 million Jews by the Nazi Reich, 1933-1945) (the Holocaust.....); which leads us to consider the links between the '-isms' of sexism, racism and, to a lesser extent, ageism.

The 'stickiness' characteristic of sexism and racism (and ageism)

Those involved in social justice and liberation work would normally attest to the way that one 'ism' tends to collude with, and to be compounded by a second and/or a third.(e.g. Harvey Jackins, founder of 'Re-evaluation Counselling'-Jackins 2009). 3 of the most basic social prejudices: sexism, racism and ageism, seem to straddle societies from East to West, from North to South, and despite Marx's (1867) brave predictions, to straddle classes within societies too. Oppressions created by one '-ism' seem to buttress and support oppressions maintained by the other two. And conversely: societies which have managed to recognize and then systemically reduce the inequalities revolving around sex, sexual orientation, transgender issues and the like, tend to be the same societies which have done similar work in recognizing and reducing inequalities and inequities around

age and race/ethnicity. An ethos of inclusion would arguably serve to facilitate the liberalization of attitudes, mores and values, and these will be reflected in the legal framework. Empowerment and leadership can then more easily arise from any group previously oppressed –through class, gender, sexual orientation and age (at either end of the spectrum) and of course race, ethnicity and religious conviction. One might posit that the greater the inequality in one area, the greater the potential for inequality in other areas. Work on the empowerment of women may move a society towards greater egalitarianism in the other areas of oppression cited.

Women at work: level playing field or glass ceiling?

Potentially both! In small-scale enterprises women have shown remarkable entrepreneurial flair, especially in the less developed countries. BRAC has fostered and built on this, not just in its home country of Bangladesh, but increasingly in Africa and other parts of the economically under-developed world. Millions of women have been empowered to transform their lives, from totally dependent and indigent status, to that of independent entrepreneur, and in many cases to relatively high economic status, which has washed over into a transformed and much elevated social status (BRAC, 2013). In Western economies, women have also managed to find niches where their service, helping, care-taking and therapeutic expertises have provided an edge, even in the competitive field of larger-scale activity. Lulu Lemon has been a success story, by focusing on service and caring, within the yoga attire industry. Its major designer was Shannon Wilson, who has followed in the footsteps of Elizabeth Fry, in leveraging her own economic good fortune to become a renowned philanthropist. Her non-profit *imagine1day* was set up to attain 80% literacy for all children in Ethiopia – a heartening example of women's leadership activities reaching out to a highly disadvantaged ethnic and age group.

On the other hand, at the board room level of level of existing, successful multinational enterprises, women are still under-represented. Those who do manage to break through the 'glass ceiling' complain that they have to be incomparably smarter, more hard-working and talented than their male counterparts, in order to attain high-level organizational promotions, and be accepted as part of what has traditionally been considered a 'boys' club'. To the extent that this is still the organizational reality for large-scale enterprise, the transnationals are losing one of the most valuable sources of revenue-generating wealth, into which they can still tap (Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, New York Times 2015). The leading academic institutions have (belatedly) recognized this, and women have increasingly found their rightful place in universities under a policy of more or less 'affirmative action'. Yet they are still under-represented at the highest levels of President -26% of college presidents in the U.S. are women, despite female students representing more than 50% of total college registrations (Laporski, Forbes, 2014).

5. Women and Political Power

As with other areas, women have often been 'the power behind the throne'. Chinese dynasties have owed much to first, second, third and fourth wives, who have found it expedient to collaborate, rather than succumb to the humiliations of sexual competition. But closet power has been replaced increasingly by overt and institutionally recognized power. Perhaps even more telling has been the role of women in Opposition, where their power is volatile and not always welcome, whether or not it is institutionally recognized. Presently in S.E. Asia, two of the most outspoken Opposition Leaders are the now world-famous Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who like Nelson Mandela spent much of her adult life in gaol or under house arrest, for daring to challenge an authoritarian, repressive and violent regime; and who finally was powerful enough to challenge the authority of the entrenched Government. Less famous at a global level, but made of the same mettle is the current Opposition Leader to the Government of China –not the PRC but the pugilistic island of Taiwan, whose current government has lost some of its pugilism vis-a-vis its behemoth neighbour. Tsai Ing-wen has her roots in the study of law, and currently uses them to uphold the Weberian principles of the rule of law, (Weber, 1949), in addition to challenging the bona fides of mainland China. Her Facebook page of 14/2/15 was quoted in the newspaper *The Nation* of Thailand, as follows: "We should create an era in politics that truly belongs to the people, a new politics of transparency, cleanness, participation, tolerance." Her message possesses the power of credibility, coming from such an author.

From Opposition leaders to some of the more notable female political power incumbents: Golda Meir, Gandhi (the woman, unrelated to the man, who never held formal political office!), and Thatcher (nicknamed the Iron Lady, out of rancor but respect), all left their marks on the world stage in the turbulent aftermath of the two world wars of the twentieth century. A reasonable question to pose is whether they in fact exhibited leadership or management qualities. In the political arena formal leaders have little choice but to juggle both. Each did. In earlier eras, Queens Elizabeth First and Victoria were formidable heads of State, and their State was arguably the most powerful world power during their reigns. In modern times, an increasing number of women have attained the ultimate position of political power, as prime minister/president. The most powerful head of State in Europe presently, and for some time now, is a woman (Angela Merkel). She is not known as a push-over. Some might say her obduracy reminds the contemporary political world of the Thatcher era.

In trans-national political institutions women are (again arguably quite belatedly) being given office at the highest level. The Secretary General (=Director) of Francophonie, which represents some 57 States and half a billion

French-speaking people around the world, most in under-developed countries, is a woman, herself originally from Haiti, one of the poorest and most oppressed countries in the world. Not a household name, unlike the Pope or the US. President, she nonetheless is highly thought of in international political spheres as competent, energetic, courageous and feminist. Michaëlle Jean, prior to taking up her new position in January 2015, was Governor General of Canada. In that august post, representing the Queen in Canada, she garnered much publicity, many would argue notoriety, by choosing to champion the cause of indigenous Canadians of the Far North, by publicly participating in their centuries'old tradition of the annual seal hunt. Some environmental groups took exception to her stance. Powerful women must be prepared to face the consequences of their controversial leadership behavior. This cuts across the grain of the traditional behavior of submission and subservience. It is an essential step in the evolutionary process towards universal female empowerment.

One recent historical irony has been manifested in the generally considered macho culture of Latin America. It has spawned a disproportionate number of female presidents, (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica), some of whom are still in office. How many attained their positions independently of a male sponsor is a controversial question. It may go to the root of some of the male-female power issues with which we grapple, at a personal and at a societal level! At least the current Chilean and Argentinian Presidencies are not synonymous with violence, torture and 'desparacedos', as were the dynasties of their male presidential predecessors. One could posit that, despite Shakespeare's values-enhancing literary theme of the evil and violence of women in power (Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth et al.), women in actual power have exhibited less lust for blood and violence than their male counterparts—one could suggest this as part of their general socialization as caring and co-operating, rather than self-aggrandisement, competition and aggression, which have been suggested as hallmarks of male socialization for generations. Whatever their failings might be or have been, it is difficult to conceive of Merkel, or even Thatcher, unlike Hitler and Stalin, consolidating their power bases through a Holocaust and systemic State terror, slaughtering tens of millions, as was perpetrated only a couple of generations before!

A final word on political power. Despite the ethos of democracy, political institutions tend to exhibit a fairly strong concentration of power at the 'strategic apex' (Mintzberg, 2007). To the extent that the most powerful political institutions in the world are hierarchical, and still run primarily in a top-down manner, one could argue that the most profound transformations regarding liberation and empowerment of the female world still awaits their becoming heads of at least the following six entities: 1. The Catholic Church ('la Mama' as a change from El Papa); 2. The PRC Head of State; 3. The President of the U.S.A.; 4. The President of Russia; 5. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and 6. The Head of the World Bank. From

these pinnacles of power, women would no longer need to demand change via a 'bottom-up' approach, as has heretofore been the rule. Whether a world filled with female plenipotentiaries would augur a kinder, gentler and more humane universe for our children, has yet to be seen! Gray's thesis of men being grounded in Mars, whilst women are grounded in Venus, is an optimistic hypothesis, still to be proven.

6. Conclusions

This paper has necessarily been a discursive attempt to touch on some of the issues confronting women in their progress towards greater empowerment, and hence leadership. That progress will be facilitated by men being able and willing to transform their mental and emotional constructs, in order to share a deeper communion with those who, for the imminent future at least, may remain their most intimate partner in life—a change of thinking from 'Divide and Rule' to co-operation. Sharing of power and wealth (of all sorts) often leads, ironically, to the creation of greater power and wealth, across all divides. An era of male breast-beating and apologism would seem have less social value, than an ability, already detected in the younger generation if not the older, of men shedding age-old skins of belief in their own inherent superiority.

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