

**The Feminine Consciousness and Destabilisation of History: An Analysis of
Alice Borchardt's *The Raven Warrior***

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary world's interconnection might call into question long-held ideas of national or regional history. Global viewpoints and transnational narratives may arise, emphasising the linked nature of historical events and the significance of interpreting history from different perspectives, which might characterise historical destabilisation.

Alice Borchardt's views on feminism serve as the foundation for the historical conflict that takes place within its pages. It is worth noting that this contest is directly related to the novel's topic. As a result of reading the work, one is reminded of history as the inheritor of man's old vices, as being midway between monsters and people, and sometimes sharing the nature of both. Thus, in addressing history, Alice Borchardt exploits the feminine subject to destabilise it. One must accept that Alice Borchardt's analytical discourse develops a feminine awareness set against the backdrop of historical configurations. While discussing history, she manipulates gender to express a new reality. This new reality is the constructed new subject, inexorably tied with humanism.

Keywords: Feminine Consciousness, Historicity, Culturality, Historical Configurations

"Feminine consciousness" generally pertains to the understanding, viewpoints, and encounters that are linked to femininity. The concept includes a variety of characteristics, such as empathy, nurturing, intuition, connectivity, and emotional intelligence. However, it is important to emphasise that these characteristics are not limited to any certain gender. Feminine consciousness is frequently juxtaposed with male consciousness, which tends to prioritise qualities such as assertiveness, independence, and analytical thinking. When discussing feminism and gender studies, feminine awareness frequently examines the influence of cultural norms, expectations, and power systems on women's experiences and identities. It encompasses the process of recovering and honouring traditionally feminine attributes while also questioning and addressing prejudices and inequities.

The interconnectivity of the contemporary world can pose a challenge to conventional concepts of national or regional history. The destabilisation of History may be defined by the

emergence of global views and transnational narratives, which emphasise the linked nature of historical events and the significance of interpreting history from many viewpoints. The werewolf status is formed by the historical narratives of men who are closely associated with history. Alice Borchardt use the legendary picaresque as the central premise to articulate her perspective on life. *The Raven Warrior* chronicles the picaresque escapades of several characters. Alice Borchardt explores the progression of life, firmly grounded in the notion of adventure. However, the occurrence of the Divine or supernatural intervention serves as a clear example. Subsequently, there is the progression through a series of hardships, the meeting with the Divine, and the deceased as sentient observers.

The Raven Warrior, once more, from its modest origins, immediately proclaims the purpose of existence. Guinevere is confronted with several terrifying challenges in her life, as she is tasked with rescuing her people from the deceitful Saxons. Hence, Alice Borchardt designates her with speed, as she writes, “Despite our many struggles, we moved with almost unbelievable swiftness toward the south and the forts of the Saxon shore. On the tenth day, we arrived at the mouth of the river that sped through the farmlands. Ten days of moving in the heaving, pitching sea” (5).

Guinevere is likewise subjected to the horrors of existence. Occasionally, she experiences profound sadness due to her shattered sense of self. She has the title of monarch on the Dragon Throne. She bears the burden of life’s responsibilities. She meets with resistance from her own camp as “it had fallen in with my plans to go to war on the Saxon raid eve” (6). As a woman, naturally to the Saxons, Guinevere is nothing but the relegated other. Hence, they have some thoughts as to, “what did a woman, a child, as yet, know of warfare?” (7). As Karl Marx writes:

In the social production of their life men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of them to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. (425)

It is important to view historical characters as significant historical figures who engage with readers through enlightening tactics of historical representation. Furthermore, they symbolise a complex system of cultural materialism deeply rooted in historical context. *The Raven Warrior* presents a triangular paradigm. There are three main storylines in the text. The first one follows Guinevere as she tries to save her people from the Saxons. The second storyline focuses on Black leg’s transition into adulthood, which involves interacting with a water spirit. The last storyline is around Uther and Morgana as they work together to build a kingdom, with the help of Merlin and Ingrain’s magic.

The Raven Warrior is not a singular event, but rather a cohesive manifestation of the perpetual conflict inside humanity. While *The Raven Warrior* is not associated with a specific location, it does represent a distinct cultural aspect of history. One can encounter a distinct array of historical events, easily accessible as specific historical expressions of human civilization. For example, Guinevere ventures into the realm of non-human beings as her sense of self is shaped by her ceaseless conflicts. However, Black leg, the form shifter, provides clear evidence of troubling societal adaptations in cooperation with the water spirit. Guinevere

and Black leg represent the enlightened aim of establishing a global normative system to enhance human potential.

Alice Borchardt's portrayal of sexuality sheds light on the concept of enlightenment as a tangible existence, similar to how beauty exists within the context of postmodern anarchy. Alice Borchardt's novel, *The Raven Warrior*, embraces the idea of postmodern architecture, which emphasises the value of information. The book aims to revive the forward-thinking principles of postmodernism in the context of the development of life. The text, by fixing itself in history, diminishes the barriers of time and space so that, as Johann Gottfried von Herder puts it, "The chain of culture and enlightenment stretches to the ends of the earth" (51).

What one witnesses in *The Raven Warrior* is that the world is a nursery of murderous ill will and conflicts. As Herder puts it:

Man, from his very Nature, will clash but little in his pursuits with man, his dispositions, sensations and propensities, being so infinitely diversified, and as it were individualized. What is a matter of indifference to one man, to another is an object of desire and then each has a world of enjoyment in him, each a creation of his own. (59)

King Clovis of the Franks provides loans to the Saxons and further augments his wealth by plundering expeditions on the British Isles. In addition, he compensates the Huns to launch assaults on the Burundians. Consequently, these unsuspecting individuals are subjected to rampant theft from many sources. As Alice Borchardt writes:

This sort of treachery prevailed all of society. Local lords were happy to allow brigands use their lands as a base of operations, provided they raided only their enemies. The emperor in Constantinople paid off barbarians who threatened them, sending these tribes to attack the kingdoms of the west. (34)

Guinevere had the immense duty of not only restoring kingdoms but also recovering the essence of femininity embodied by the dense woodlands of Wales. Alba and the deep forests of Wales are created by a unique system of hegemony "vested in their women . . . like Morgana" (45). However, "a woman can be forced and the earth ruined, and both happened when the Romans came" (45). The Romans are projective of sadomasochist anarchy. Again, they are the personifications of the configurations of cultural stupidity and greed. Yet, the dragon people of the deep forests of Wales and the painted people of the forest forge an alliance to reinhabit nationhood. In perfect communion with Nature and hard work, they draft a new world. In the novel:

. . . the Painted People exploit the rich fisheries of the cold, gray sea, where whale, ling, cod and walrus abounded. . . they also sailed south into the blue Aegan, the lands of honey, oil, and wire . . . traded with the Egyptians. . . and the distant city states. . . at the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. (46).

As against the Saxons, Guinevere proceeds to pit her battle, though she feels, "what I was doing, or rather going to do, was dangerous. I don't know how dangerous" (53). Guinevere reaches the place "that once held houses" (54) and she tries to avoid looking to her right as she feels:

It gave me chills to think that my summoning the dead might make one of the bodies swinging from a rotten rope break free and try to seize me. But when I turned toward the house posts, I found the wind was to my face. I couldn't smell them, and I could feel only emptiness where they were. (54)

Guinevere wonders at the kind of manslaughter these Saxon warlords indulge in. A boy killed by the Saxon evinces a terrible psychic trauma in her. As the novelist writes:

He [the boy] died, but didn't know how or why and didn't even resent that he had. All he knew was that one moment he had been warm, sleeping snugly between his parents with his brothers and sisters. And the next, a confused impression of shows, the stench of the thick smoke, and then the knowledge that he was part of dark, cloudy water and would be for some indefinite time. (55)

Alice Borchardt describes a brutal historical event including the massacre of innocent people, which occurred on King Uther's journey to London to protect his subjects. This occurrence is particularly significant because the unscrupulous Roman Saxon rulers are able to skillfully use fragmented power systems, resulting in a complex state of lawlessness imposed upon the unsuspecting masses. Furthermore, it represents a novel expression of interpersonal connections instigated by the female protagonists. According to Sherry B. Ortner, "Women tend to enter into relations with the world that culture might see as being more like Nature immanent and embedded in things as given" (82). The travels manifest the cultural anarchy of the historical times. Also, the travel with which almost every character is engaged with, serves to position the critical scrutiny of the historical text. Also, travels lead one to those terrible historical human right violations. For instance, from the novel:

.., their favourite way of propitiating the gods directly is burial alive. When victims were intended to be placed in the divine presence intact, not used for entertainment, the way condemned criminals are, fed to bears, forced to fight as gladiators do, the Romans buried them alive and left them to suffocate in stone chambers underground. (56)

This is an epistemic mode that extracts a current state from a previous state. The tale with Uther, Guinevere, and Black leg, in contrast, claims to accurately portray real events that occurred during a certain era in history. Epistemology suggests that historical events are depicted. In contrast, the enigmatic and eternal purity of Nature reigns supreme over all the historical events depicted in the story.

Guinevere's reputation is influenced not just by her confrontation with masculinity, but also by her capacity to create a new form of humanism inside a male-dominated environment. Arthur is symbolically associated with Guinevere's difficulties and challenges. Merlin the wizard symbolises a male-dominated environment characterised by chauvinistic attitudes. He consistently contradicts King Uther's beliefs as well. However, he engages in magnificent magical spells that profoundly influence the awareness of the other characters. Alice Borchardt used the wizard Merlin to enhance her futuristic portrayal of truth. Similar to many magicians, Merlin often appears in a manner that is easily misunderstood, since he emanates qualities of a sadomasochist, driven by his own mystical beliefs, and marked by malevolence and sensuality. Alice Borchardt skillfully showcases several instances of magical events that reveal profound insights into the universal truths that transcend human understanding. It would be rather astonishing to discover that Merlin is actually extracting profound life strategies, if one were to use Merlin's magic as a metaphor for complex life.

The design of *The Raven Warrior* is drawn from Arthur's futurist vision as "he now knew that even in his mother's womb, he had been a King" (248). Arthur, like Guinevere is aware of the burdens of leadership. Hence, he has chosen "to confront the difficulties, "small, segmented societies faced in their settlement of this corner of the planet (248). Arthur, at the

same time, does not want to repeat the tyranny of the Greek monarch who “became too overbearing and so their political authority was withdrawn” (248). He is fully cognizant of the historical reality that the Roman monarchy abolished the kings after they had established their territorial limits. The Saxons were not exempt from this phenomenon. Yet, the Saxons realized the potential creditworthiness of the old primitive order as “they all knew, and however they might flout their ancient code, they understood that in the end, it must prevail” (249).

Alice Borchardt’s perspective on history suggests that she believes it distorts or misrepresents feminine ideas. The artist’s role is to engage in the historical discourse, leading to a reevaluation of the prevailing notion of history. The majority of the subsequent chapters focus on the feminist struggle against historical narratives. The narratives depicting Guinevere’s mediations serve precisely the purpose of this female competition. Simultaneously, it becomes evident in which direction the novelist’s thoughts and opinions tend to favour. The work does not only revolve around King Arthur, but rather includes only a portion of its content related to him. While commending his acts, which closely align with the conduct of Guinevere and the water spirit, it is necessary to identify the undesirable aspects of the political components in a constitutional monarchy. Alice Borchardt skillfully utilises the three figures, Guinevere, King Arthur, and the water spirit, to effectively convey her divergent perspective on mythology. As the following passage illustrates:

I but illustrate an art that now is vanishing and being forgotten even among the painted people. And families no longer care that once that sat and ate, made love, worked and lived with their lives surrounded by the women records of those who brought their families into being, tilled the earth, fished the sea, fought and loved the ages until they created the times, we live in. (325)

The historical context depicted in the novel is based on the author’s deliberate focus on feminism. It is worth mentioning that this contest is directly relevant to the central theme of the novel. Therefore, once completing the narrative, the reader is prompted to reflect on history as the successor of mankind’s age-old flaws, existing somewhere between the animalistic and human qualities, and occasionally embodying characteristics of both. In this regard, it is worth quoting Michael Barrett who observes that the “twin images of woman as, on the one hand, the sexual property of men, and on the other, the chaste mothers of their children” (45). Guinevere is a metaphor of freedom. While Guinevere attempts to subvert history, Arthur attempts to reorient humanity. Thus, by apparently writing history, Alice Borchardt rewrites history. This is Foucault’s perception of “effective history” as he writes:

Effective history . . . deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations . . . the forces operating in history are not controlled by testing a regulative mechanism, but respond to haphazard conflicts . . . they always appear through the singular randomness of events. (154)

The Raven Warrior exemplifies the duality inherent in historical monarchical patterns, subtly alluding to the well-known monarchical pursuits of avarice and desire. Alice Borchardt strategically uses her fictional materials to challenge the institution of monarchy due to its broad impact on humanity as a whole, with a special emphasis on its effects on women. Therefore, Alice Borchardt employs the feminine subject to disrupt and unsettle history while actively participating in its exploration. Alice Borchardt’s analytical language effectively evokes a feminine awareness within the context of historical circumstances. When discussing

history, she skillfully incorporates gender to present a fresh and accurate perspective. This emerging reality is the fabricated new topic, intricately connected to humanism.

Consequently, one might consider calling *The Raven Warrior* as post history. As Brannigan writes, “since it replaces one grand narrative of historical progress with another grand narrative of power” (217). *The Raven Warrior* flourishes towards “the proliferation of histories--women’s history . . . the history of madness, or of criminality [as] . . . it tends instead to narrate the history of successive dominations” (217).

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