

## Summary

This dissertation is focused on female literary characters whose actions exemplify the transgression of social and moral norms, as well as gender roles. An analysis of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's short stories from *She-Devils*, Alexandre Dumas' novel *The Three Musketeers*, Jean Anouilh's drama *Medea* and Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical novel *She Came to Stay*, serves to support the hypothesis that crimes and intrigues were emancipatory strategies. Women, whose freedom and possibilities for self-determination had been restricted by the patriarchal system for centuries, reached for radical means to regain power and agency over their own destinies.

The dissertation consists of two chapters. The first, the theoretical one, focuses on presenting the situation of women in the patriarchal system and showing how this system was oppressive and how the misogyny that accompanied it contributed to the establishment of stereotypical images of femininity – the gentle Angel-Woman and the demonic *femme fatale*. The chapter presents numerous examples of women transgressing the designated gender roles, also through criminal behavior. It cites works by theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Julia Kristeva, and Maria Janion, which help to justify the thesis that women often become criminals because they refuse to submit to social pressures related to their gender.

The second chapter consists of four subsections, each being the analysis of one literary heroine: Hauteclair Stassin from Barbey d'Aurevilly's short story, Milady de Winter from Dumas' novel, Medea from Anouilh's and Euripides' dramas, and Françoise from Simone de Beauvoir's novel. Although each of the women has a different story and is driven by different motivations, they are united by their disagreement to pursue roles imposed by society. As part of this disagreement, they transgress boundaries, taking actions that go against the stereotype of their gender.

The dissertation attempts to answer, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the question of how crime and intrigue enable women to regain their (diversely understood) freedom and the possibility of self-determination.

**Keywords:** crime, intrigue, woman, emancipation, patriarchy, evil, gender