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### Rosa Mayreder Themes, Fiction and Nonfiction

There are several themes which are encompassed in the works and ideals that are presented by Rosa Mayreder that are also true to much of Vienna and its history. Vienna right before and during the early decades of the 20th century, in its revolutionary course, birthed many ideals. In looking back to when the new liberal society started its era of decadence we can extract themes common to much of history.

I will cover a few themes that are presented in Mayreder fictional and nonfictional works.

- Revolution - support of the movement.
- Art/ Aesthetics- Rosas fiction and plays offer entertainment and views.
- Poverty- “poverty of ideals” for the movement of women, and social status of women in various economic status.
- Modernization- simple put, the modern woman
- War- “Mayreder private and published writings, the article outlines her responses to the war, which she condemns from its outset. The main focus of her criticism is the failure of the intelligentsia, which is all the more hard-hitting because Mayreder, as a lifelong liberal, placed her faith in people as individuals.” ()
- Diagnosis- stating and writing about the problem of society. I would say her main diagnosis is that social norms is the reason for unequalness in all aspects of life.
- Emotionalism- the study women and their cultural experiences by Ethnography “to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study.” ()
- Society- the main focus of her ideas pivot on the functionality of society discussing its ability to be degenerative toward women.
- Human rights- equal rights in the form of the individual
- Liberalism- change for the current social norms.

Rosa Mayreder, focused on the equality of man and women. Feminism is how she is categorized and her life was dedicated to activism pushing for women's rights. However she not only focused on oppressed “feminine” aspect of culture she was more open minded and more inclusive with her works. A large number of her works included ideas on “self-cultivation”, in which Rosa “encourages individuals to be true to their personality traits, no matter to what sex these traits are traditionally ascribed”. Her various works show the expanse of themes, so many that many more can be pulled from her ideals. We will see how her main focus on feminism will bolster her idea that “social constructs, not physiological ones” are what truly separate men and women.

Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit (1905) (Criticism of womanhood or Femininity) - These eleven essays were, as far as it is recorded, the first “critique of femininity”(). They were in sense

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a stepping stone for a 47 year old Rosa Mayreder. It is these essay that she first present here dearest ideals on how women are oppressed and their social status degenerating. Mayreder gives in the Preface of her compilation of essays an explicit description of the themes he believes are present in feminism which become the overall outline of her argument. Mayreder tells us the movement is “due to three different causes, and has three different aims”, all covered in her essays: economic, social, and ethical-psychological(). As she “criticizes the roles of men and women” we she large focus on possible method for social reform and “emancipation” of women as an individual (rather than “political rights”).

I will briefly cover the focus of few of her essays

- *Grundzüge* (Basics) (Essentials): “defies the ideas held by her contemporaries that feminine and masculine traits result from physiological differences between men and women.” () [ Heine, Goethe, Nietzsche, Hippel, Schopenhauer, Havelock Ellis, Pope, and Mobius]
- *Frauen und Frauentypen* (Women and type of women): Mayreder argues against two ladies “Uura Marholm (1854-1928), Ellen Key (1821-1884), and Lou Andreas-Salom<sup>^</sup> (1861-1937) for substantiating the premise that women are defined by their ability and willingness to be victimized”. Mayreder describes two different type of women “primitive and differentiated”. Only the differentiated will change the social norms and allow for the free female [ primitive femininity, the primitive woman, has no desire to strike out on her own and remains either under her parents' or her husband's care. The differentiated woman, characterized by differentiated femininity, strives to become independent from any dominating power in order to define her own lifestyle.]
- *Perspektiven der Individualitdt*, (aspects of the individual). In this essay she “ She applauds Friedrich Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* (1799) for transcending sexual difference”. () The man and the women in the novel expimlify Mayreders goal of men and women to gain “equal opportunities to develop unique personalities”

*Permutations of the Third Sex: Sexology, Subjectivity, and Anti Maternalist Feminism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by Kirsten Leng. In this article Kirsten explains Synthetic human being was another topic of Mayreder views. The idea that a human that can escape the limitations and ideals of sex is essentially the synthetic human being. For women it was to be more masculine, in Rosa’s sense, more intellectual. Like much of her work she draws influence from her childhood in which she claims that being a women limited her abilities. “Nature, you have given me talents, manifold and many;—but you made me a woman—and I know what a woman’s job entails. If I would be a man, I would have probably become the most important person in my Fatherland with these talents.”<sup>12</sup>.

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- Abhorred homosexuality, in which other masculine feminist claimed was apart of their masculine transition. Mayreder believed “hermaphrodisism” was not apart of the masculine process.
- Mayreder however did support the understanding that women that were more masculine led feminist movement. “teleological limitations of the sex”: namely, motherhood.

A focus on fiction: Some critics conclude that her fictions do away with the independent woman and that the end up “falling short of their aim to criticize society”. () Mittnik, a female critic’s analysis concludes that the women must give in or resort to “resignation” in her stories. Le Rider and Mittnik conclude that Mayreder fiction portrays the "truth of the bourgeois women's real identity” — a truth which was still quite distant from the ideal proposed in her theoretical texts.”

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Jane Sokolosky the writer of *Primitive or Differentiated?* argues against these critics explaining a close reading not only shows “characters who accurately mirror the bourgeoisie of fm-de-siecle Vienna” but also the themes that indeed to show her intent through fiction.

[Sein Ideal- offers the most detailed example of Mayreder primitive woman whose life is dominated by either the law of the father or of the husband.]

“ Mayreder cleverly criticizes the inadequacy of girls' and women's sex education, when she has August confront Emilie with the notion that her ailments might be associated with pregnancy. Emilie rejects this idea outright and only later accepts the truth with regret and disappointment.”

- “Through sarcasm and blatant anti-emancipatory commentary it challenges the reader to reconsider the state of both women's and men's education and upbringing.”

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