CONTEMPORARY AUSTRIAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE:
FEMINIST STEREOTYPING AND LITERARY
SELF-EXPRESSION

by

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the images of women in selected texts written by the Austrian authors Elfriede Jelinek, Barbara Frischmuth and Brigitte Schwaiger and to illustrate the relevance of gender stereotyping in their works with regard to bring about social change.

The study begins with an examination of the images of women throughout patriarchal history and shows that these images are generated by men to ensure their subjugation and reinforced by women through their largely unconscious collaboration with partriarchal norms. It then proposes the necessity to arouse women's awareness to this situation and suggests that literature is an effective way of doing this.

The study then investigates the stereotypes the authors employ to highlight the myths attached to them and to challenge the status quo. The different styles and perspectives of the authors are examined and implicit and explicit criticism is identified. The nature and function of the stereotypes portrayed in the texts are evaluated and the reactions of the central characters analysed in order to ascertain the degrees to which the effects of gender stereotyping are detrimental to women's sense of self.