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**Through the Lens of Gender. Sites of Gendered
Representation and Discourse**

CONFLICTING “TRANSLATIONS” OF THE WOOLFIAN TEXT

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The contemporary cultural stage is generally described in terms of a highly controversial term: *postmodernism*. It appears in a wide range of texts and contexts, carrying numerous connotations. Its all-encompassing nature partly defines the multitude of changes that our world has recently witnessed, and partly demands an elitist interpreter to penetrate its deepest philosophy. Unless one is tempted into using it as an umbrella term for everything that makes today a unique and challenging mixture of clashing worlds and perspectives (from fashion and advertising to visual arts and literary theory), it has to be looked upon as a term in the making, as expressing a break, a fissure in the flow of tradition in all domains.

Seismic transformations have taken place and we are confronted with cultural events derived from previously unheard of phenomena: new viruses (including electronic ones) resisting antidote, cloning, journeys into space, portable communication facilitators - to name just a few. Consequently, if we agree to describe our age in terms of postmodernism, we are forced to take into account the multifarious aspects it presupposes and deal with it as complex, involving a multidisciplinary effort. Among them, the most noteworthy (involved in a close relationship with the literary stage) seem to be: globalization, identity politics, and economy of reproduction, media capitalism, computer hyperreality, fragmentation, high technology and life imitating art.

Nevertheless, despite its diverse and eclectic nature, “postmodernism can be recognized by two key assumptions: [...] that there is no common denominator – in ‘nature’ or ‘truth’ or ‘God’ or ‘the future’ – that guarantees either the One-ness of the world or the possibility of neutral or objective thought [and] that all human systems operate like language, being self-reflexive rather than referential systems – systems of differential function which are powerful but finite, and which construct and maintain meaning and value.” (Craig, 1998: 587)

Postmodernist literature is the perfect common ground for the marriage of opposites and the interplay of diverse positions. In its obvious enterprise of building worlds (other than, parallel to, but similar to ours), it allows for the freedom of choice, opinion and

imagination. Using words to represent worlds, it denies THE referent, THE signified, questioning unity and directing the text/signifier towards a liberating plurality. Literature itself has become yet another manifestation of the world as text, of that which we now accept as the “textuality” of the contingent, whose “texting” (reading, rereading and misreading) is a universal practice and therefore a globalizing factor.

Governing today’s text is a poetics of fragmentation and non-representation which is also at work within all other aspects of the contemporary situation. The decentring of the centre (as point of presence, fixed origin, but also as artistic norm, literary past, cultural imposition) has allowed for the shifting of interest and emphasis from the organizing principle of a structure (text) to the free play or to the playfulness functioning within that structure. The patriarchal authority associated with that centre has been dismembered so as to make way for plurality, openness, polyphony and manifestations of otherness. The system of thought that was built on hierarchized oppositions allotting women a secondary, subjected status (“Superior/Inferior. Myths, legends, books” (Cixous, in Lodge, 1988: 287)) has itself undergone modifications if not total reformulations. The typically postmodern conflicting “translations” of everything and everybody may also be observed at the level of the mutual contamination between literature and reality; a case in point is the *Mrs. Dalloway syndrome* – involving both the illness of being and the fictional cure.

Virginia Woolf’s literary texts, innovative and experimental, have reached their contemporary audiences with difficulty – mostly arising from the prejudice and inertia of traditionalist reading practices. In time, the public has become increasingly familiar with the idea of literary avant-garde and now accepts and praises the subtle, unsettling or simply different, the other in and of literature being what catches the eye and feeds the imagination of the cultivated reader.

There has remained, however, the problem of global time and space. Time allows fewer and fewer people to sit back and enjoy a novel, the result being that we are now witnessing an outburst of audio, video and electronic versions, readers and abbreviations of great books. Space brings about a much more intricate problem: that of crossing cultural barriers together with the geographic ones, and therefore of the necessity of translation.

Another aspect to be considered is that of “rewriting” the Woolfian text, either by having it used as subject for discussion and essay writing within the educational environment, or by having it turned into a starting point for newer literary texts.

From Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to its cinema version (available on video cassette also), its translation(s) into different languages, its being taught at pre- and university level worldwide, and to a novel like Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, itself undergoing the same process of mediation (see the 2002 Oscar-nominated homonymous film: screenwriter - David Hare; director - Stephen Daldry), the distance between text and reader has grown. The metamorphosis of the reception – one that necessarily presupposes the voyage back and forth to(wards) Bloomsbury – implies a discussion on the contemporary “crossroads” where modernism melts into postmodernism and subjectivity is replaced by textuality.

Woolf's feminine fiction, focusing on the silenced and repressed, on that which is marginalized by the ruling social and/or linguistic order (Moi, 1987) has been accused of frailty and transparency, of lacking the precise contours outlining fact and of contributing with little but incidental refinements of method and manner to modern fiction. If this is true, whence the great success of her writing, the novelty of sensation and the profoundness of thought to be encountered in her work? The answer could lie in the fact that, besides trying hard to reinvigorate the rhetoric of the novel, she places her own self (as woman and artist) at the core of her subject matter, in a subtle attempt at fighting back against preconceived, authoritative patterns of thought and behaviour.

Sharing experiences with Woolf has never been an easy task. Her method has got in the way as an unconsciously built up barrier allowing freedom of expression and simultaneously offering the badly needed protection against a terrifying THERE. Through free indirect discourse, the writer intrudes in and detaches herself from her text, invites the reader to make choices whose correctness remains impossible to confirm or verify in a relative context within which meanings are adrift, like the person who is hesitantly trying to pin them down.

She “renounces the narrative persona as a sort of privileged extra character testifying to indubitable mental and physical events and evaluating their significance. She shifts the significance to the act of mediation itself as a primary subject to be investigated. The focus is on perception itself, the field of consciousness in flux, abstaining from selection between trivial or intense states of consciousness”. (Davies, 1989:37)

Utterances seem to float in mid-air and are seldom directly answered, acquiring an extra-personal significance. The narrative voice acts only as an agent of interruption, marking and breaking the rich flow of thought-content which motivates, explains, undermines or contradicts what is being said. Speech is what counts: it is a sort of

digression from the major business of life, reversing the traditional emphasis of the novel, where meaning is generated by social or personal exchange. This is obvious at a first glance over the text because the pauses, interruptions and transitions involved are felt as familiar by the reader, whose mind is immediately affected by numerous links, connections, thoughts and memories drawn out of his/her own life experience:

Was Evelyn ill again? Evelyn was a good deal out of sorts, said Hugh, intimating by a kind of pout or swell of his very well-covered, manly, extremely handsome, perfectly upholstered body (he was almost too well dressed always, but presumably had to be, with his little job at Court) that his wife had some internal ailment, nothing serious, which, as an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway would understand without requiring him to specify. Ah, yes, she did of course; what a nuisance, and felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? (*Mrs. Dalloway*, 1996:4)

Language, thought and demeanour are interwoven and a complete portraiture achieved. For instance, ... *what a nuisance, and felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat* offers details regarding Clarissa's feelings (What a nuisance to be ill most of the time! or What a nuisance this man can be!), her feminist rage (Why should women have to suffer and bear the burden of giving life to little those who will one day have to pay the heavy price of having entered this world, when men are left with the bright side of things and actually do not care?) and feminine, aesthetic preoccupations (Did the hat she was wearing suit her? Was it the right one for that time of day? Did Hugh like it? Should she feel ridiculous because of it?)

Though not explicitly mentioned, her worries, beliefs and aspirations permeate the lines she writes, blurring distinctions between outer and inner events, between reality and fiction, making the reading cumbersome at times, but all the more so inviting, because resonant with voices long silenced in life and literature alike.

All this profound richness of experience and complexity of expression finds fewer and fewer readers to address in today's world of simulacra, dominated as it is by the imperialism of image and sound, where the mechanisms of fictional image production within the broader cultural and economic context of globalization have to be considered with a view to explaining the obvious intertextuality at work within the world as text.

Along these lines, one must agree with Baudrillard (1983;1990), that: simulation has banned reality for good and all we are left with is appearance; there is no longer a 'real'

external world to which signs can refer; there has been an ‘implosion of image and reality’; everything is obscenely on display, moving transparently and literally superficially across a surface where there is no control or stabilizing depth; all real events become unreal because televised, media events or spectacles (like the Gulf War: a war without the symptoms of a war).

Consequently, looking into the transformations of a literary model, besides being much like attempting to read meanings into the conflicting “translations” of a source text or deciphering the traces left on a cultural “mystic writing pad”, resembles also an incursion beneath the successive strata of artifice, the denaturalizing practices and techniques, along the frontier separating reality from fiction. The *Mrs. Dalloway syndrome*, having penetrated the contemporary stage, takes an almost tangible shape there, despite its initial literary formulation; its “translations” keep it alive today, no matter how many filters have interposed themselves between a novel of the past and the reader/consumer of the present.

One of these translations is due to Michael Cunningham – novelist, journalist, political analyst and professor at Brooklyn College English Department – awarded the 1999 Pulitzer Prize in Literature for *The Hours*, a novel inspired from Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. It introduces meditations on normality/insanity or abnormality in the presentation of the intertwined stories of three women: of Virginia Woolf herself, as writing her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, entertaining guests (her sister Vanessa and her children) and, later on, as (re)committing her famous suicide by drowning; of Laura Brown, a pregnant housewife who, in 1951, is planning a party on her husband’s birthday and who, under the influence of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the novel she is reading, is suddenly made aware of the routine and emptiness of her life (domestic, monotonous, devoid of personal fulfilment and happiness, despite the apparent success of her marriage/existence); of Clarissa Vaughan, an emancipated, liberal minded woman of the late twentieth century, whose intention of having a party organized for her dear old college friend, now suffering from AIDS (Richard, a writer who has been awarded a literary distinction/prize) keeps her busy throughout the day.

As the writer himself suggests (in an interview with Elizabeth Farnsworth) *The Hours* is a book about creativity, about the highs and lows of the creative impulse, featuring three women thinking they have failed, three stories of love that goes wrong, as Kodak moments are dismissed (we can manage happiness on our own) and replaced by the darkness that we all fear or need support in handling.

Starting from the central symbol in Virginia Woolf's novel – that of the window – Cunningham builds layer on layer of fictionality (or is it reality?), operating smooth transitions, but maintaining the governing theme of death in association with women who choose to go against the grain. Reminiscent therefore of the literature by and/or about women of the previous century, *The Hours* openly discusses the situation of extraordinary women, both from the point of view of the depression confronting them when awareness of their actual situation is achieved, and with regard to the slight and therefore unsatisfactory, improvement in the way in which society as a whole has become more accepting of their full presence.

The Woolfian window of death, that Septimus uses in his final act of bravery and suicide, and that Clarissa sees herself reflected in (the last pages of the novel clearly implying a flirtation with death in the meditation on the old woman silently going to bed in the total silence and loneliness of her room across the street from Clarissa), is taken up in *The Hours*, suffering transformations which illustrate on the one hand the general human condition – caught between frontiers, hiding behind masks and having to surmount more barriers than patience or physical ability can put up with, and, on the other, the numerous obstacles deliberately imagined as standing in the way of the acceptance of otherness.

Laura Brown's window separates her from her son (the Richard of another layer of the novel, the link, the autobiographical character) the moment she decides to leave her husband and her child to commit suicide in a hotel room. The same window suggesting life and death, or, better still, death in life, stands between herself – the domestic creature she has become after giving up education, career, friends, to become a “happily married” woman – and the world at large, the place where freedom lies. Cunningham's “Mrs. Brown” finally avenges the homonymous character in Woolf's essay by bravely opening the window and crossing over (abandoning her husband and two children and moving to a distance, to earn a living by working as a librarian and only returning on her son's death).

Clarissa Vaughan's window is, very much like Clarissa Dalloway's, a mirror for the soul, a symbol for death, especially as she watches Richard, like Septimus, throw himself out of one just before the party in his honour (which also says a lot about a writer's – Cunningham's – opinion of prizes and honours). Her window is also an invisible one keeping her apart from her daughter, whom she cannot communicate with (and, again, there is much owed to Woolf's text) and her female partner (involved, as she is in a lesbian relationship). Last but not least, the glass separates her from Laura Brown, Richard's

mother, whom she eventually meets at the funeral, and whom she tries hard to understand, although she unconsciously associates her own rebellious attitude with the older woman's.

Virginia Woolf's window is one that haunts her constantly, one whose obsession she manages to free herself from by writing about it and thus turning its reality into a fiction, but also by liquefying it until it becomes an inviting, slippery, watery surface she, like Carroll's Alice, penetrates and disappears into the moment she fills her pockets with stones and plunges into the River Ouse.

The window plays numerous other roles at the heart of both the novels in question. It may be seen as a window of the house of fiction, as a textual symbol standing for narcissistic practices, for the metafictional critique on mimesis in fiction and as a cultural symbol standing for the screen on which parallel, simultaneously real and unreal, lives unfold.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998) put forward formulations of the sacredness of the ordinary, emphasize the idea that books feel like things that have happened to us and bring to our attention the constants and variables in the reconstruction in and of fiction. The two novels offer a game of mirrors, reflecting and refracting all this, from which there arise images of the self and the other, in connection with text and context, femininity and masculinity and poetics and politics.

On plot or recreating patterns of existence:

One single life, with its disruptions, fragmentariness and alienation (as focused upon in Woolf's novel) is translated into three successive ones, implying an endless, repetitive cycle (in Michael Cunningham's book).

On setting or the world shifting on its axis:

Clarissa Dalloway's London, with its particulars standing for different structures of authority (Big Ben – the authority of time, The Houses of Parliament – the authority of law, Westminster Abbey – the authority of the church) is replaced by Laura Brown's Los Angeles and Clarissa Vaughan's New York (with the authority of other, newer (?) institutions: marriage, career, the media), to which Virginia Woolf - the character's Richmond is added.

On characters or the writing cure:

Mrs. Dalloway features the multifaceted Clarissa Dalloway, who is an embodiment of Virginia Woolf herself, at the heart of a clearly autobiographical novel, and whose different roles/tastes/attitudes are mirrored by three male characters as reflectors (Richard

Dalloway, Peter Walsh and Septimus Warren Smith). *The Hours* centres around three unilateral women, three crippled selves, making sacrifices: of Laura Brown – the housewife who abandons motherhood; of Clarissa Vaughan – the career woman who abandons personal life; of Virginia Woolf – the artist who abandons tradition; added is a feminine male character, Richard Brown – bringing reality and fiction together by embodying both Virginia Woolf and her characters (Clarissa, Richard, Peter and Septimus).

On time or zooming in on chronology:

The twenty-four hour span (June, 1923) of *Mrs. Dalloway* (during which Clarissa Dalloway is born, lives and dies spiritually) is reiterated four times in *The Hours*, as similar June days: in 1921 and 1941, when Virginia Woolf gives birth artistically then dies physically; in 1951, when Laura Brown gives birth physically and dies spiritually, and in 2001, when Clarissa Vaughan is no longer fertile, no longer capable of dying, simply witnessing Richard’s death and thus fertilizing her spirit.

On style, theme, narrative technique or from the literary to the cinema and the way back:

<p style="text-align: center;">Virginia Woolf, <i>MRS. DALLOWAY</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Michael Cunningham, <i>THE HOURS</i></p>
<p>Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. (1996:5)</p>	<p>There are still flowers to buy. Clarissa feigns exasperation (though she loves doing errands like this)...(1998:9)</p>
<p>For having lived in Westminster – how many years now? over twenty... For it was the middle of June. The war was over... (1996:6)</p>	<p>It is New York City. It is the end of the twentieth century. The vestibule door opens onto a June morning...(1998:9)</p>
<p>What a lark! What a plunge!... (1996:5)</p>	<p>What a thrill, what a shock to be alive on a morning in June. (1998:10)</p>

“Good morning to you, Clarissa!” (1996:7)	“Why, hello Mrs. Dalloway!” (1998:10)
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The free indirect style is preserved, both Clarissas being centres of consciousness that fertilize the page and hold the novels together. The cinematic devices employed offer glimpses into fictionalized reality and real(ized) fictionality; the flashbacks (and later flashforwards) broaden the scope and create an otherwise impossible sense of freedom. Anticipated are the classical themes of love, death and creativity, here moulded in keeping with contemporary patterns of thought and behaviour into illicit love, suicide and intertext.

Addressing reading elite, Michael Cunningham constructs his text so as to be resonant of Virginia Woolf’s, in a way that presupposes allusive, oblique, subtle intertextuality. Using Mrs. Dalloway as an incentive, it places itself at the heart of the chain of literary tradition and speaks to the contemporary reader, in contemporary terms, about the modernist past – thus cultivating values which are, more often than not, neatly placed on dusty shelves to be read some time in the future.

A paradoxical, puzzling conclusion to all this might be that, in the boundariless, all-encompassing world of today, where differences seem to be in the process of being levelled down, where distinctions (personal, cultural and religious) are no longer relevant, strangely enough the inert assumptions regarding the status of women have not changed. That is why, a cultural event like the publication (and favourable reception) of a book like *The Hours* seemed worth taking into consideration in relation to the power of literature to influence the real, to the same extent to which the real has always been seen at work inside the universe of fiction.

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**A MALE WORLD IN FEMALE EYES - *TITUS ANDRONICUS* BY WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE AND THE FILM *TITUS* BY JULIE TAYMOR**

AGATA DABROWSKA

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Feminist literary and film criticism of William Shakespeare's dramas

For a long time, research on William Shakespeare's work was limited either to textual analysis, taking social and historical conditions into consideration, or to interpretation of the dramatic characters. However, the late 20th century saw the advent of feminist criticism of literature and film, which scrutinised relics of the patriarchal order and the cultural stereotyping of women. Although it might be charged in its early version with the overinterpretation of Shakespearean words, it became one of the most fruitful methods for analysing his plays with reference to their artistic creations and receptions in postmodernist environments. Feminist criticism seeks out evidence of the interplay of ideologies of gender, and thereby creates a new interpretation. Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney writes that feminist Shakespearean criticism can be divided into three kinds (1998:99).

The first, the pioneer, appeared in 1970s, and was initiated by Julie Dusinberre's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (1975). Others of this wave, such as Carolyn R. L. Schiff, Gayle Greene and Carol T. Neely (*The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, 1980), focus on "masculine heroines", who, although members of a patriarchal world, are able to resist male domination. They are not delicate ladies; instead, they are malicious and intelligent women who do not obey imposed rules but create their own. However, this wave of criticism was itself strongly criticized. Its representatives limit their analysis to character descriptions, passing over the historical and social contexts of the play.

The second kind of feminist criticism treats the Renaissance as a patriarchal period. Its proponents, such as Kathleen McKluskie, believe that the literary output of the dramatist of Stratford supports patriarchal structures. This wave largely failed to meet the high expectations many had of it. It was attacked for oversimplification, and for a somewhat facile identification of patriarchy with a male dislike of women. Some critics have not agreed with these strictures, showing that only two of Shakespeare's male characters hate

people regardless of their gender: Timon of Athens and Iago. Although there are other Shakespearean heroes who do not accept females at first, they often become their advocates as the play progresses.

The most contemporary trend in feminist criticism, begun by Lisa Jardine's *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (1983), is based on poststructuralism, New Criticism, and myth criticism. Its representatives analyse patriarchal laws and orders with the help of structuralist theoretical frameworks. They criticise the past ways of encoding the differences between genders in film narrative for being chauvinistic. That is why they focus on multiple perspectives in defying sexual and ethnical identities (Jardine, 1983).

Researchers analyse the above discourses, taking the female influence on film interpretation of literary work into consideration. Recently much critical controversy has been caused by the representation of gender politics in the successful adaptation of Shakespearean tragedy *Titus Andronicus*¹ by Julie Taymor². Her production is probably one of the most spectacular and original interpretations of this play. The director applies there all kinds of feminist approaches to film and theatre combined in the way, which makes it very unusual. In the film Taymor defines the differences between male and female perceptions of the world presenting also how in cinema and theatre gender is combined with race, class and descent. Focusing mainly on such things as female spectator, female look and female subjectivity, she invents a new kind of feminist methodology based on postmodernism and androgynous ideas.

Female images in *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare and *Titus* by Julie Taymor

The film *Titus* is an incisive portrait of patriarchal society seen from a female perspective. As opposed to Shakespeare who analysed in detail the religious, social and cultural aspects of female roles in the 17th century, often revealing how their position was determined by the requirements of their fathers, brothers, husbands and lovers, Julie Taymor takes a different approach. She places female protagonists in the centre of action. Her heroines, such as Tamora (Jessica Lange), Lavinia (Laura Fraser) and the Nurse (Geraldine McEwan), are more vivid, determined and cunning than their theatrical counterparts. They live in a male world over which they exert considerable control.

Tamora - *femme fatale*

The main protagonist of the tragedy is Tamora, a mature and very sensuous woman of about the same age as Gertrude in *Hamlet* (Charney, 1990:25). Her unique beauty has a great impact on Romans and arouses their curiosity. Saturninus, the Emperor of Rome, describes her as “the stately Phoebe 'mongst her nymphs” (I.i)³.

In the film adaptation Taymor also highlights Tamora’s beauty. The Queen, played by Jessica Lange, emanates mature femininity and life experience. During formal presentation in court she moves with grace and self-confidence. Tamora utilises her charm, knowing that pulchritude is one way in which women control men. Dressed in a golden outfit emphasising her shapely breasts and waist, she gains the attention of all the guests gathered in the throne room. The viewer almost feels the tension her gaze produces. Tamora’s efforts yield results, for even the Emperor admires her. In the movie her beauty is further enhanced by make-up which hints at a magical allure approaching that of immortal gods⁴.

Shakespeare also portrays the Queen as a very complex, rich and opaque personality. His heroine is a strong woman ready to defend her rights at all costs, but she is also a tragic character who is not able to use and develop her talents for the sake of her own sex. Men see her as a woman from whom they require humility and obedience. However such behaviour is unknown to her because she comes from the matriarchal world, where women dominate men. That is why Rome and its inhabitants are a traumatic shock for her. Tamora is taken captive by Titus Andronicus and brought to the Empire as a hostage with Chiron, Demetrius and Aaron. In the tragedy all the men try to subordinate the Queen to Roman laws, Titus Andronicus especially claims that in the civilised world she is not a sovereign any more, but only a weak person who should accept her current position and obey male rules:

Now, madam, are you prisoner to an emperor;
To him that, for your honour and your state,
Will use you nobly and your followers. (I.i)

The general chooses Alarbus, Tamora’s oldest son, to be sacrificed rather than her, although she has the highest position in the royal family.

The cinematic version of Tamora is presented in a different light, and sometimes it is difficult to find any similarities between the movie and the drama’s protagonists. Taymor’s

heroine is not as determined and resourceful as Shakespeare's, instead, she is a weak and suffering woman unable to cope with her awful predicament. For the first time Tamora appears with her sons and slave in the cage on the arrival of the winning army of Titus Andronicus. The Queen, dressed in an animal skin symbolising her uncontrollable nature, behaves like a terrified doe taken captive. Titus Andronicus treats her badly and shows little respect. He informs her ironically in detail what will happen with her son, Alarbus. However the general underestimates the Queen. She plays the role of the unhappy mother kneeling in front of Andronicus and begging for Alarbus' life to be spared until she realises that her pleas are pointless. After the execution she refers to Titus with contempt. In the movie the feeling of hate between characters is demonstrated in a very artistic way. In one particular scene Tamora and Titus stand near a bonfire watching each other very carefully. The leaping flames reveal their mutual dislike. In the distance one sees the dismembered body of Alarbus flying through the air.

After the tragedy of losing her son the Queen becomes a monster with a stone heart. Even Lavinia's pleas for help when Chiron and Demetrius want to rape her do not make any impression on her. She even encourages the boys to become more brutal:

Hadst thou in person ne'er offended me,
Even for his sake am I pitiless.
Remember, boys, I pour'd forth tears in vain,
To save your brother from the sacrifice;
But fierce Andronicus would not relent;
Therefore, away with her, and use her as you will,
The worse to her, the better loved of me. (II.iii)

That feature is one of the main attributes which attracts Saturninus, who proposes to her. However their marriage is not based on love or desire. It is more like a relationship between mother and son than husband and wife⁵. Tamora commits herself to take care of Saturninus in the solemn oath:

And here, in sight of heaven, to Rome I swear,
If Saturnine advance the Queen of Goths,
She will a handmaid be to his desires,
A loving nurse, a mother to his youth. (I.i)

The Queen very quickly dominates her husband who behaves according to her rules and wishes. She treats him as a capricious boy punishing him for his mistakes and rewarding him for proper acts.

Taymor also indicates the uniqueness of this royal marriage. First of all, the Queen is much older than her husband. She is a mature and experienced woman while he has only just entered the world of sex and politics. The director illustrates in detail Tamora's motherly attitude to Saturninus. In one scene she cuddles him like a baby, stroking his head as she promises to help him. Another potent scene is when Saturninus breaks down while Lucius attacks Rome. With watery eyes, he pleads for help from Tamora, who hugs him, kisses him and swears to solve all problems:

Then cheer thy spirit: for know, thou emperor,
I will enchant the old Andronicus
With words more sweet, and yet more dangerous,
Than baits to fish, or honey-stalks to sheep,
When as the one is wounded with the bait,
The other rotted with delicious feed. (IV.iv)

Moreover, the Queen's dominance and power is also shown by means of symbols. Over the Emperor's throne hangs a wolf head, which seems to embody his wife. Tamora cares about Saturninus, as did the ancient she-wolf about Romulus and Remus. The wolf head underlines the character of the film heroine who is even more insatiable and hungry for revenge, love and desire than a wild animal.

Tamora loses as a wife and lover, but wins as a politician when she becomes Empress of the most powerful country in the world, compared to Olympus by Aaron.

Now climbeth Tamora Olympus' top,
Safe out of fortune's shot; and sits aloft,
Secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash;
Advanced above pale envy's threatening reach.
As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,

Gallops the zodiac in his glistering coach,
And overlooks the highest-peering hills. (II.i)

Taymor takes these words and turns them into an image. Tamora dressed in a golden outfit including a crown climbs the stairs to the royal palace. She carries herself proudly, smiling triumphantly because she regains her position. Now the Empress is ready to take revenge on her enemies.

Lavinia – virgin beauty

The second female character of the tragedy is Lavinia, Tamora's opposite. The only daughter of Titus Andronicus is a very vivacious and bright young lady. All members of her family adore her, especially her brothers, who are ready to do anything to protect her, which we see when Mutius revolts against his father who tries to force Lavinia to marry Saturninus: "Brothers, help to convey her hence away / And with my sword I'll keep this door safe" (I.i). Yet Titus Andronicus cares more for the girl than his sons calling her "his cordial" (I.i). Lavinia treats him in a very unusual way, putting him on a pedestal. For her he is a paragon of honesty and decency, and she always addresses him with respect and admiration:

In peace and honour live Lord Titus long;
My noble lord and father, live in fame!
Lo, at this tomb my tributary tears
I render, for my brethren's obsequies;
And at thy feet I kneel, with tears of joy,
Shed on the earth, for thy return to Rome:
O, bless me here with thy victorious hand,
Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud! (I.i)

However, the relations between the general and Lavinia are rather formal. They usually keep each other at a distance. Their behaviour reflects typical family relations in Renaissance England, where the daughter was often treated as a form of property by her parents. Her only duty was to find a respectable and rich husband who might give the

whole family a social rise (Kujawińska Courtney, 1995:155), a duty Titus implies when he thanks to Rome for his dutiful daughter whose virtue is the pride of the Andronice family.

Kind Rome, that hast thus lovingly reserved
The cordial of mine age to glad my heart!
Lavinia, live; outlive thy father's days,
And fame's eternal date, for virtue's praise! (I.i)

In the first scene of the film Lavinia is also introduced as an obedient child and sister, welcoming Titus by kneeling before him. However, as opposed to Shakespeare, Taymor reveals less formal relations between Lavinia and the general. Titus takes the kneeling girl in his arms and hugs her tightly. The director shows a deep emotional bond between these characters, a bond which is written into their expression.

Shakespeare's Lavinia, as Carolin Asp notes, in her essay "Upon Her Wit Doth Earthly Honor Wait: Female Agency in *Titus Andronicus*", is shy, weak and obedient, having no choice but conform to a role set by her masters. She is a helpless lady whose main duty is fulfilling her father's will (1995:340). Titus arranges her marriage without asking her. The moment when she is given to Saturninus is like a signing of a business contract. Both men enumerate the advantages of the match, without considering the feeling of the bride. Saturninus says:

Titus Andronicus, for thy favours done
To us in our election this day,
I give thee thanks in part of thy deserts,
And will with deeds requite thy gentleness:
And, for an onset, Titus, to advance
Thy name and honourable family,
Lavinia will I make my empress,
Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart,
And in the sacred Pantheon her espouse:
Tell me, Andronicus, doth this motion please thee? (I.i)

Lavinia agrees without protest to be sold as a good to a customer, although she is engaged to Bassianus, who also refers to her as to his chattel:

Rape, call you it, my lord, to seize my own,
My truth-betrothed love and now my wife?
But let the laws of Rome determine all;
Meanwhile I am possess'd of that is mine. (I.i)

Katherine Rowe in “Dismembering and Forgetting in *Titus Andronicus*” says that Lavinia does not have the ability to realise her dreams and expectations, that she cannot exist as an individual person (1994:295). But the film *Titus* shows the girl in a completely different way. She is a more complex person than her dramatic predecessor. From the first scene we are aware of her volition, for we can see that her heart is set on Bassianus not on Saturninus as a future husband. She stays on his side from the moment of Titus’ arrival in Rome. The general reads her heart too, which is why the Emperor’s proposal arouses his dislike and dissatisfaction. A sharp cut from shocked Titus to an agitated Lavinia proves that he is not accepted by either of them, thus though our memory of these looms, Andronicus' final speech about honour will be understood as cynical and insincere:

It doth, my worthy lord; and in this match
I hold me highly honour'd of your grace:
And here in sight of Rome to Saturnine,
King and commander of our commonweal,
The wide world's emperor, do I consecrate
My sword, my chariot and my prisoners;
Presents well worthy Rome's imperial lord:
Receive them then, the tribute that I owe,
Mine honour's ensigns humbled at thy feet. (I.i)

In the movie Lavinia subordinates to her father but is not willing to do so. Her face expresses contempt while kissing Saturninus’s ring. To his question “Can make you greater than the Queen of Goths / Lavinia, you are not displeased with this” (I.i), she answers with irony “Not I, my lord; sith true nobility / Warrants these words in princely courtesy” (I.i).

In the tragedy the protagonist is also presented as one of the most desired women in Rome. Her fidelity and virginity are so highly prized that no man can resist the temptation

to seduce her. Chiron and Demetrius are even ready to fight to the death over her. They reckon that they are allowed to woo her because she is only a weak woman unable to remain faithful to her husband. But desire and lust lead them to a dark crime. Lavinia is mutilated and brutally raped⁶. Rather than describe that crime in detail, Shakespeare reveals it through a conversation between brothers:

DEMETRIUS: So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,
Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravish'd thee.

CHIRON: Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,
An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe.

DEMETRIUS: See, how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.

CHIRON: Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands.

DEMETRIUS: She hath no tongue to call, nor hands to wash;
And so let's leave her to her silent walks. (II.iv)

Some feminists accuse the dramatist of focusing on analysing male pain and passing over Lavinia's feelings in silence, a silence which, Derek Cohen ironically notes, is enjoined by the cut tongue. The male relatives disguise outcomes of the crime and try to discover the identity of the rapists. But they are not interested in Lavinia's loss and pain, they are only after vengeance (1993:85).

Unlike Shakespeare, Taymor not only analyses the reasons and outcomes of the crime but also presents the mental condition of the victim. The rape scene appears in the movie only once. Taymor uses animal allegories to portray cruelty and brutality. Lavinia, dressed in white with the head of a doe, symbolising innocence, is attacked by Chiron and Demetrius in the form of tigers. In the distance one hears a wild animal roar and a bloodcurdling scream. The director also compares the girl to the weeping willow, which personifies virginity. Wearing shreds of the white dress with twigs instead of palms, Lavinia "grows" alone in a swamp. There are no other trees near her. The forest has been destroyed as has her chastity. She suffers in solitude and only her pained movements illustrate what has happened to her. She seems to be so delicate, bruised and fragile that even a weak gust could snap her in two. Torrential rain and dark clouds echo the apocalypse which has befallen Lavinia.

In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare demonstrates a typical Renaissance attitude to rape. At that time a sexually abused woman had few rights, because she had lost the most precious

attribute – virginity. Shunned by society, she was condemned as a sinner who brought shame on her family. Only the death of the girl could bring honour back, which is why rape victims often committed suicide (Charney, 1990:67). In the play Titus kills his daughter explaining that:

A reason mighty, strong, and effectual;
A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant,
For me, most wretched, to perform the like.
Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;
Kills LAVINIA
And, with thy shame, thy father's sorrow die! (V.iii)

In the film the death of the heroine is not as inhuman as in the tragedy. The director shows how devastating the rape was. Lavinia changes from a shy, delicate and lovely girl into a suffering woman who finds solace in death. Titus takes his daughter's life with her own consent and this readiness for death he disquietingly sees when he meets her after the rape. The actress wears a white dress but her face is hidden behind a black veil. That combination of colours and the way Titus looks at his daughter foretells new disaster. The general takes her in his arms and breaks her neck.

The Nurse – racist nanny

The last female character is the Nurse. She is only a supporting figure and appears in the tragedy only once in Act IV, scene iii. The Nurse assists the Queen during her delivery. In the Shakespearean drama she is a herald of bad news. By order of Tamora, the Nurse brings the black child to Aaron asking for his help: "O gentle Aaron, we are all undone!/Now help, or woe betide thee evermore! (IV.ii). She seconds the Queen's demands for the death of the child. Her compassion is not suppressed because she is aware that the child threatens the position of the Queen, who has cheated on Saturninus with her slave:

O, that which I would hide from heaven's eye,
Our empress' shame, and stately Rome's disgrace!
She is deliver'd, lords; she is deliver'd. (IV.ii)

Her words spoken to the Moor reveal her racist ideas

A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue:

Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad

Amongst the fairest breeders of our clime:

The empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,

And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point. (IV.ii)

The Nurse is a very determined, strong woman, qualities she puts unquestioningly at the service of her master. Asked by Aaron if the child must die, she firmly answers that death is Tamora's demand. For the Moor, she is not to be trusted, and he calls her "A long-tongued babbling gossip" (IV.iii). And it is this weakness for gossip which leads her to her own death.

In the film *Titus*, the Nurse is an old lady with grey hair, white overalls and a bonnet. She looks more like a sweet nanny who tells fairy tales than a bloodthirsty woman, though appearances are deceptive. At the beginning of the film she behaves like a nervous old maid worried about the future of the Queen, but she very quickly reveals her true intentions. She is afraid only for her own life, which is why she insists on killing the baby.

Taymor's Nurse is not as self-confident as Shakespeare's. She is not cunning enough to decode Aaron's warning that he is going to kill her

The empress, the midwife, and yourself:

Two may keep counsel when the third's away:

Go to the empress, tell her this I said.

He kills the nurse

Weke, weke! so cries a pig prepared to the spit. (IV.iii)

Until the end she believes in the Moor's good intentions. While she is planning to come back to the Queen, Aaron stabs her with a dagger.

Conclusions

Titus Andronicus is a gory tale about love, sex, murder, rape and betrayal, and was a great success in Elizabethan times. Although critics have been denouncing it ever since for

cruelty and a lack of sophistication, it is considered to be a mine of information on British patriarchal culture. In this play the author portrayed a world without moral principles, where power and lust were overriding goals. In such a grim and stark reality lived three women Tamora, Lavinia and the Nurse. Shakespeare described them in opposition to each other. The daughter of Titus is virtuous and pious, the Nurse a bloodthirsty lady, while the Queen of Goths a beautiful and immoral female. These heroines are strong but do not have any possibilities to develop their talents and dreams for the sake of their own sex. Men decide on their life and death.

Shakespeare's vision of the world is reviewed by Julie Taymor in the film *Titus*. Her work is not a transliterated but a freely adapted Shakespearean tragedy. Taymor interferes with the text in order to create a unique mix of filmmaker and playwright's work. Although she updates the tragedy for a contemporary audience she retains the original atmosphere of the drama.

The film *Titus* is a great study on both sexes from the female perspective. The director, inspired by feminist conceptions, tries to overcome binary thinking in interpretation of the gendered world, a world where everything is divided into two groups (active and passive), in which the weaker, powerless and negative oppositions correspond to females. Taymor believes that binary systems are the cement, as it were, for the construction of the patriarchal world so often described by Shakespeare. That is why she places female protagonists in the centre of action. Her heroines live in the patriarchal system but are not fully dominated by it. Actively fighting against rules limiting their freedom, they shape their surrounding reality. The film versions of Tamora, Lavinia and the Nurse go beyond patterns of female behaviour typically presented in cinema. They are resourceful, intelligent and far-sighted. Moreover, they have the same personal and professional skills as men, which is why they are not treated as opposite poles but as equal and independent human beings. The men are not able to contain their power, thus they kill them. Tamora is stabbed by Titus Andronicus, who also breaks the neck of Lavinia. The Nurse is killed by Aaron. These women die also in the play, however, in the film their death has a deeper meaning. Taymor's characters are stronger, in some ways, than they are in the drama, and their death only seems to confirm that strength.

Notes

¹ *Titus Andronicus* (1590?) is an early play of William Shakespeare. It is a story about the great Roman general. He returns home victorious from a long war in which he lost twenty-one sons. During their funeral

he decides to sacrifice one of his captured enemies to satisfy the Gods. He chooses Alarbus, the oldest son of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Tamora and her two remaining sons Chiron and Demetrius vow vengeance, which is the cause of suffering for all protagonists. The Queen gets revenge on Titus for killing Alarbus by encouraging Chiron and Demetrius to rape Lavinia and kill Bassianus. In response to which Titus Andronicus bakes a cake of her sons' bodies (Charney, 1990: xii-xv).

² Julie Taymor is one of the most famous female theatre, opera and film directors in the USA. She has received numerous awards for her works all over the world (e.g. her musical *The Lion King* was rewarded for best direction and for the original costume designs). In 1999 Taymor made a debut as a film director adapting *Titus Andronicus* by Shakespeare.

³ All quotations for *Titus Andronicus* come from the edition: Shakespeare, William, *Titus Andronicus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁴ Taymor seems to refer to the Greek theory of the creation of the world, which says that beauty was born simultaneously with the world. At that time, Gods ordered chaos, set up four seasons, days and nights and rules for people to live by. The outcome of these actions was an order, namely the Universe. The reflection of the divine harmony was also the beauty of the human being, the miniature echoing the cosmos. Make-up, symbolising a godlike perfection was supposed to overcome chaos, wildness and the demonical (Michera, 1995-98:28).

⁵ Some critics believe that the prototype of Tamora was Queen Elisabeth I. Her romance with the Earl of Essex resembled the relations between Tamora and Saturninus; she was also much older than her lover (Wynne Davies, 1991: 146).

⁶ The episode of the rape is based on the legend of Philomela. She was raped by her brother-in-law, who cut off her tongue to prevent the truth coming to light. However, she revealed the name of the rapist by weaving a tell-tale tapestry (Miola, 1983:59-61).

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**STEREOTYPES IN FICTIONALIZED INDIA - A FEMINIST
AND POST-COLONIAL READING OF E.M. FORSTER'S *A PASSAGE TO INDIA***

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Post-colonialism and feminism are related bodies of thought concerned with fictional representation of the marginalized 'Other' (colonized subjects and women). The stereotype image of the colonized seen as genderized into women due to the association with weakness, irrationality, passivity and disempowerment is present in many colonial writings *A Passage to India* among them. Nevertheless, common issues of discussion and analysis have also created points of divergence between the two theories, including the problematic history of the 'feminist as imperialist', the colonialist employment of 'feminist criteria' to reinforce the appeal of the colonizers' 'civilizing mission' and the figure of the 'third world woman'.

The novel to be discussed thus covers both the similarities and the issues of disagreement between feminism and post-colonialism. The characters of Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested share the connection with the white, male, imperial subject, the relationship between Adela and Aziz is a typical representation of gendered as much as colonial power. The community of the Anglo-Indian women in the novel can be read and analyzed in terms of 'feminist as imperialist' as well as 'the appeal of the civilizing mission'. Even if not in so many words, Indian women and the institution of *purdah* are also present and their figuratively and literally veiled presence raises the issue of 'the third world woman'.

The two approaches - feminist and post-colonial - will be later completed via the analysis of women characters in the novel and their relationships with the male characters. Moreover, since there is no such concept as 'Woman' but rather 'Women' in the text, a consequent hierarchical treatment needs to be discussed as it may also absolve Forster from the too-often articulated accusation of misogyny and prevent the comfortable reading of the text as a mass condemnation of women as gender.

Among the other women characters in the novel Mrs. Moore is generously singularised by Forster as a means of exploring fundamental issues about Good and Evil, Truth and Reality. She also embodies the idealistic belief in the intrinsic friendliness of Nature and the Universe. Her voyage to India is initially viewed by male British colonists (e.g. her son) as a natural process of familiarisation with colonial practices in the subjected territories and hence the acceptance of racial segregation. East becoming a question of culture - and presumably an inferior one - is a concept that denominates a certain Indian ontology also legitimising racial difference in the same manner in which statements on women's ontology have legitimised sexual difference. Nevertheless, confronted with the immensity of India - not only in terms of geography - Mrs. Moore rejects assimilation into

the contradictory and oppressive text of colonialism and decides on a spiritual, transcendental journey instead. Her intuitiveness serves as a bridge towards the oriental Aziz whose 'Otherness' perceives the displacement she experiences among her own people. However, this mutual understanding arises only after Aziz mimics, in spite of inverting, the ambiguous enunciation of colonial authority, with its exclusionary codes of gender, custom, race, religion, nationality: "Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes, this is a holy place for Moslems." (Forster, 1979: 14). Mrs. Moore's relationship with her son is almost a colonized-colonizer one, with the male imperialist as an obedient, cool-minded British official, trained to "do justice and keep the peace" (41) and the female character derogatorily diminished to an "ageing" (42), naive woman, unable to comprehend the loftiness of the civilising enterprise.

Mrs. Moore fails to conform to the stereotype image of the Anglo-Indian women expected to find fulfilment via club meetings, theatrical performances and colonial gossip. Forster depicts her as the 'humane' British colonist who, because of the final and brutal revelation of the futility of the civilising mission, abandons the arena of the social to become part of the universal. In spite of this apparent withdrawal and failure she does become almost a deity for the Indians - 'Esmis Esmoore' - and spiritually continues to live through her daughter Stella who possesses the same sense of unity and communion with the immensity of the Universe.

Adela Quested, the other main female character in the novel, offers an equally complex reading in feminist and post-colonialist terms. Accused of suffering from a 'form of sexual hysteria' (Stone, 1962) that creates the illusion of rape she is rescued by feminist critics and her actions therefore justified via a 'first cause' of patriarchal authority. Thus, Adela's hallucination is explained by her contemplating the consequences of committing herself to a loveless marriage, accepting the gender role derived from the very institution and agreeing to become legally 'rapable'. The fracture between Adela and the community of Anglo-Indian women is noticeable from the very beginning of the novel. Forster opposes the emancipated women of England (from where Adela has just arrived) to the patriarchal frame in which the Anglo-Indian ones are expected to perform, also implying that the very access of the English woman to colonial power is denied. Furthermore, the gender-justified powerlessness and the submission to a domestic stereotype are both reinforced by the obligation to assume the Anglo-Indians' racist assumptions about the Indian natives.

Nevertheless, throughout the whole novel, Adela hesitates between acceptance and rejection of colonial and patriarchal rules. After agreeing to marry Heaslop she briefly steps into the realms of the Anglo-Indian mentality that leads to her tactless inquiries about Aziz's polygamy as they are just about to enter the cave. Her divided mind already reveals the tensions between the Anglo-Indian woman's double positioning in colonial discourse - as the inferior sex but superior race - and the haughty demand to ignore and disregard the natives' social customs. Moreover, the very accusation of rape reinforces and consolidates the identity she would otherwise deny, that is she reconfirms the colonizer's racist assumption that, if circumstances allow it, the native would return to his barbaric ways. Rape as a discourse of power may signify the unifier or the barrier between men and women in the colonies. Since colonial women and colonized men can be equally objectified by means of rape ('legalized' or not), Aziz can be seen as also raped by the accusation of rape; or if one considers the post-colonialism-feminism issues of divergence, the defenceless, colonized male is socially outcast and crucified by the baseless accusations of a vile woman colonizer. Adela escapes colonial 'labelling' when she declares, during the trial that Dr. Aziz never followed her into the cave. Innocence stated officially undermines the racist assumptions underpinning an official discourse that builds anticolonial insurgency as the savage attack of barbarian natives on innocent women.

Aziz's contemptuous attitude towards Adela objectifies her more than Anglo-Indian patriarchy does. As a woman she fails to pass the Chandrapore and Calcutta brothels tests which have built Aziz's aesthetic criteria for assessing feminine beauty. "Angular body" and freckles make Adela almost hideous to Aziz. Moreover, "she has practically no breasts" (Forster, 1979:131). Showalter in her article 'Forster's Sexual Politics' argues that Aziz's reaction to the accusation of rape is largely the effect of "outraged sexual pride". The reader is left with the impression that had Adela been beautiful and possibly "with breasts like mangoes", Aziz might have stood the accusation better. However, the doctor, the sexual snob who failed to comprehend and value the unconditional love that his own wife generously bestowed on him, can hardly be expected to see beyond physical beauty. Moreover, since Aziz is implicated in the oppression of Muslim women, this must have some bearing on his attitude towards Anglo-Indian women.

Adela Quested does not belong to the category of the young, innocent girls who travel to faraway places - preferably colonies - to acquire an imperial consciousness and a husband. She does, nevertheless, acquire that particular consciousness that requires her to

leave India and without a husband. In tracing her destiny like this, Forster may even be considered to have written one of the most feminist novels ever, implying that the often criticized pattern of a wife and mother are not necessarily the unique accomplishments of womanhood. It is true, Adela does disappear anonymously, somewhere in England; it is also true that the character may be read as a mere device to depict more complex relationships in the novel - as the one between Aziz and Fielding - but her ultimate, discreet destination, also wrapped in financial generosity (she gives money to Ralph so that he can visit India) unequivocally embodies the feminist belief that there are more ways than one in which a woman can live and demonstrate her womanhood.

Forster is rather harsh on the other female characters in the novel and treats them with contempt, thus rationalizing them. Labelled either as elements of disturbance and heavier colonial tasks by the English men or viewed as “haughty and venal” by the Indian men (Forster, 1979:8), the Anglo-Indian women make a deplorable category in the novel. Showalter argues that their disempowered state finds its correspondence in the natives who are equally disempowered. Gender and race receive similar treatment from the master race and gender, but it is to be remarked that victims are capable of victimizing. It is perhaps the pre-ordained gender submission that dictates the Anglo-Indian women’s unsympathetic attitude towards the natives as an attempt to escape their own subjection. In order to avoid seeing themselves mirrored in the ‘subject race’ they have to construct a superior status and act haughtily towards the Indians, so that they can gain some reassurance.

The figure of the ‘feminist imperialist’ - like that of the third world woman - is a point of divergence, a fracture between post-colonial and feminist scholarship. In analyzing the problematic issue of the ‘third world woman’ in *A Passage to India* one almost approaches an absence or, at most a shadow-like presence. There are only three distinct moments in which they appear or are mentioned: at the Bridge party intended to be a fruitful encounter West-East but in the end a lamentable failure; then Aziz’s late wife is visually recollected by means of a photograph and finally, in the decision of some Muslim women to let themselves die of hunger if there is a negative trial verdict. All these moments are relevant for reinforcing the idea of complacent superiority and even contempt with which their very existence seems to cause in their white counterparts - the Anglo-Indian women - and also in the native males - the most representative being Aziz.

At the Bridge Party the Indian women are shown to demonstrate infantile behaviour when interacting with the same gender but different race. “Tiny gestures of atonement or

despair at all that was said” (Forster, 1979:34), uncontrollable giggles and movements invite a critical look from the Anglo-Indian women but only to a certain extent. The native women are required to exhibit their colourful ‘difference’ and when there is not so much of a difference to be exhibited (as some of the Indian women speak the colonizers’ language) they are confronted with unmasked reserve coming from the same gender but different race: “Her manner had grown more distant since she had discovered that some of the group was westernized and might apply her own standards to her” (34).

There is only one Indian woman who achieves an individual voice and is worthy of being mentioned. However, this elevated status occurs after her physical disappearance. Aziz, the husband, deplors the fact that “she had died soon after he had fallen in love with her” (45). Her greatly prized quality seems to have been an inner ability to humour and love her husband unconditionally, patiently, with a resignation and submission that was obviously dictated by the institution of *purdah* (a form of slavery responsible for widespread ignorance and disease, women’s apartments were deliberately kept dark and airless). Aziz’s performance in the novel directly relates to his support of *purdah* and its construction of women as possessions, albeit prized ones; that a woman is exhibited to her husband’s friends is one more sign of her subjection. Aziz’s theory that *purdah* can go when all men are brothers resides in men only; he cannot conceive that the need and custom to enslave women must be fought against before brotherhood can be achieved.

The very last mention of Indian women is the decision of some of them to take a vow and starve to death if the rape accusation against Aziz is not withdrawn. The right to die is not questioned but appears as a futile and pathetic attempt to impress public opinion and influence it to support Aziz’s case. Ironically, the attempt comes from those who are already perceived as dead because not seen. ‘Disquieting’ is the epithet Forster employs to describe the possibility of the mass suicidal intention becoming reality and the same word can be used to describe his representation of the Indian women characters in the novel. In ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ Gayatri Spivak mentions that “between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (Spivak, 1988:306). *A Passage to India*, as well as Spivak’s essay seem to argue that the ‘gendered subaltern’ (or the ‘third world woman’) disappears because we never hear her speak about herself and supporting her own cause.

In depicting the characters of Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, Forster can be said to have expressed his animosity towards the aggressive myth of both imperial and nationalist masculinity. The caricatured Anglo-Indian women and the almost absent but, nevertheless infantilized, victimized Indian ones can be read as a critique of a system of oppression which destroyed individualities and proclaimed homogeneity in the negative understanding of the word. But Forster's genius resides in the fact that he does not explicitly criticise. There is subtlety in his approach, for *A Passage to India* is not a political novel but a novel about personal relations. According to Forster, the solution to human misunderstandings and occasional opacity lies in human nature, not political institutions; it lies in man's (and woman's) ability to transcend human differences to break down barriers by developing the heart and the imagination. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore are saved. They reached positive rebellion and escaped levelling, to paraphrase Forster, they cannot be and they were not 'labelled'.

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ENIGMATIC FEMININITY IN R. L. STEVENSON'S STRANGE STORY

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Like such mythopoetic figures as Frankenstein, Dracula, and, even, Alice in Wonderland, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has become, in the century following the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novella, what might be called an autonomous creation. "Jekyll and Hyde" has become part of the contemporary consciousness and language, appearing in dictionaries as referring to the type of personality made renowned by Stevenson. A science-fiction story, a thriller, a psychological or scientific story, the fragmented narratives are unified by the idea of evil hiding behind/ inside a respectable appearance, the idea of evil penetrating the very British conventionalism symbolized by the tea scene. The feminine presence in Stevenson's story may be said to be located at both the level of language choice and propositional content and also at a higher discourse level.

We may speak about femininity in terms of language choice, in terms of enigmatic agency because as the structure of the novel points out, there is an aura of uncertainty and unknown surrounding the story. The idea of agency is very much exploited in the case of Dr. Jekyll; central to our approach to femininity is the notion that women are often portrayed as passive and as acted upon by a male agent. The plot is focalised upon one male protagonist, whose "strange case" the reader becomes acquainted with from narratives which are rather disparate, yet share a strange experience. The very structure of the novel is not cast entirely as a first-person narration, as it would have been possible to tell the story in the manner of a confession from Jekyll's point of view. Stevenson preferred a discursive treatment in three distinct parts. The structural and linguistic devices employed by Stevenson create an unusual atmosphere surrounding the story, bringing with it the idea that language is a network of formal and functional operations in which certain patterns are more or less involved in the realization of particular areas of potential meaning.

The novel represents the outcome of a collaborative narrative effort: different narrative voices giving the fragments of the story they know. This cooperating effort will never provide a secure perspective on events, but a confusing amalgamation of gazes and voices. All Gothic novels employing this narrative device share an almost obsessive concern with documentation and they exhibit a sinister mistrust of the not-said, the hidden, and the silent. As in many other cases, the layered narrative structure lacks the narrative of the monster, defined by Michel Foucault as "that being in which two kingdoms are combined" (1999:74). As Fred Botting asserts "the different but connected parts of the same story compose a whole, whose immensity [...] remains obscure" (1996:147). Nevertheless, the

fragmented narrative – its various components narrated by different voices – suggests perhaps the loss of authority of the text, just as this depicts the heroes' loss of authority over their own consciousness. Peter Schwenger's view of the masculine mode is that writing about certain aspects of one's man life means changing it. This is not the case in Stevenson's narrative, where Jekyll's writing is not intended to change anything.

Responsible for having triggered the story, Utterson is urged by the same Frankensteinian ambition to know the origin of life and death, just like Dr. Jekyll, to disembody what has been created and amalgamate fragments so as to make them coalesce into a corpse-like version of his own. This tendency to imitate the act of creation "placed under the negative sign of decreation" (Turcu, 2002:153) can be remarked on every level in Gothic writings and it always involves rebellion against and annihilation of the creator.

Like in a grotesquely reversed version of the Pygmalion story, Dr. Jekyll fears that Mr. Hyde, whom he has meant to be what his name connotes - his mysterious and obscure "other self" - might appear unexpectedly when he is in the process of writing down his confession and take control of the story. Creating a self within the self, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* constructs a depth to subjectivity, and the novel may therefore be read as a description of the conflict between man's inner and outer being.

The interest in psychology, in the analysis of an individual's psyche is a mark of femininity. The setting of the story evokes a Gothic image of the city: "a certain *sinister block of building* thrust forward its gable on the street" (Stevenson,1994:10), "... and bore in every feature the marks of *prolonged and sordid negligence*" (11). As in most Gothic novels, the gloomy, often dilapidated condition of the hero-villain's estate is itself an accurate reflection of the protagonist's psychological state. *Urban Gothic* has its roots in the close connection between architectural structure and the psychological experience of characters in the earliest Gothic literature.

Richard Lehan, in his *The City in Literature. An Intellectual and Cultural History*, sees the rural and natural landscapes as related to religion and myth while the city is viewed as a force that destroys the sensitive soul (*apud* Versluys, 2000:230). In Gothic writings the city is seen and felt as uncanny, constructed by people yet unknowable by the individual. Mr. Enfield has in his mind "a very odd [+ Strange] story connected with that *sinister* [+ Strange] *block of building* that *thrust* [+ Violence] *forward its gable* in the street" (11). The action of his unusual story takes place during the night [+Darkness], "at about three o'clock of a *black* [+Darkness] *winter morning*" (11) and has a protagonist who "trampled

[+ Violence] *calmly* [+Lacking Disturbance] *over the child's body and left her screaming* [+ Suffering]" (11). He is depicted as "*a man who was without bowels of mercy* [+ Evil]: a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, *a spirit of enduring hatred* [+Evil]" (20), his bearing leads to confusion in the minds of those who see him: "There is *something wrong* with his appearance; *something displeasing, something downright detestable*. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be *deformed somewhere*; he gives a *strong feeling of deformity*, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an *extraordinary-looking man*, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment" (15). In the same way in which the building where Hyde is supposed to live is and is not very clearly positioned ("And *yet it's not so sure*; for the buildings are so packed together about the court, that *it's hard to say* where one ends and another begins" (14).

The lexical sets emphasized so far come to place the atmosphere as "a projection of subjectivity" (Net, 2000:48).

Sex-role psychology has long categorized certain qualities as masculine and others as feminine. In such studies the feminine pole tends to be identified with a long list of predictable characteristics including lack of aggression, lack of independence, emotionality, subjectiveness, submissiveness, passivity, illogicality, indecisiveness and lack of confidence. They are to be found in Stevenson's writing starting with the very presentation of the atmosphere. Enfield embodies the elusiveness and mystery needed by a stone to start and involve the rest. Mr. Richard Enfield is "the well-known man *about town*" who recounts what happened when he was coming home "from *some place* at the *end of the world* about three o'clock of a black winter morning" (11). Indefiniteness is retained in the semantic traits of the modifiers *about town, some place, at the end of the world*. Indefiniteness and a staggering mood define Enfield's narration: repetitions (*Street after street*, and all the folks asleep – *street after street*, that state of mind when a man *listens and listens*), and similes (*all lights up like a procession, all as empty as a church*) point to a confused state of mind somewhere on the verge of imagination. The key-words *procession, church, lights*, together with the remark "that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman" refer to psychic conditions created by the unknown. Mention should be made here of the presence of the words sharing the semantic feature [+Mysticism]: *procession, church*.

A sense of uncertainty and bewilderment, specific to Gothic writings surrounds the whole story: "And yet *it's not sure*; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that *it's hard to say* where one ends and another begins"(14), "... and yet *I scarce know why... I couldn't specify* the point ..., and yet *I really can name nothing* out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it" (15).

Stevenson's writing is not at all masculine in that it is rich in excess ornament and that the pace of writing is far from being imperturbable and with no variations in speed. We can distinguish feminine traits such as the emphasis on emotion and sensibility, on feelings, the ability to convey feeling not by omitting it (as is the case of a masculine style, such as that of Hemingway) but by gradually and systematically emphasizing it. Hyde represents the creature meant to generate terror. His presence causes distress and presentiments: "It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend." (18) The parallel clauses contain an interior gradation (*already bad enough – worse*) intended to highlight the progressive change of Mr. Utterson's disposition. He is tormented by the strange person he met: "It was a night of *little ease* to his *toiling* mind, *toiling* in mere darkness and besieged by questions" (19), "The figure ... *haunted* the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it *glide more stealthily* through sleeping houses, or move the *more* swiftly, and *still the more swiftly*, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes." (20) Together with the metaphors defining Mr. Utterson's torture – *night of little ease, toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness, the figure... haunted*" (whose tenor point at the effortful struggle), there appear features of repetition and gradation (realized through adverbs in the comparative of superiority degree) on the account of his bewilderment: *glide more stealthily, move the more swiftly, still the more swiftly*.

He is not the only person in distress; Dr. Lanyon and Dr. Jekyll also suffer much: "He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face. The *rosy* man had grown *pale*; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly *balder* and *older*; and yet it was not so much these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify some deep-seated terror of the mind... But

Lanyon's face changed, and he held up a trembling hand." (41), "...but his thoughts were *disquieted and fearful*" (44), "The man's appearance amply bore out his words; *his manner was altered for the worse*; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face" (47), "It was but for one minute that I saw him, but *the hair stood upon my head like quills*" (51). The antithesis (*rosy-pale*), the metonymical description of Dr. Lanyon (effect for cause) – *had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face, tokens of swift physical decay, Lanyon's face changed, held up a trembling hand* –, the metaphors – *death-warrant written upon the face, froze the very blood, his blood ran cold* – are completed by the direct note of his state of mind – *deep-seated terror*. Both the thoughts of Mr. Utterson and the expression of Dr. Jekyll and of his two visitors share a common feature: terror.

As Robert Hume pointed out, "One of the most prominent concerns [of the Gothic] ... might grandiosely be called a *psychological interest*. As early as Walpole (1764), there is a considerable amount of concern for interior mental processes" (*apud* Napier, 1997:2).

Characters that are often overcome by emotion, and especially terror populate Stevenson's novella: "*Dr. Jekyll grew pale to the very lips and there came blackness about his eyes*", "*I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange – a very strange one*" (27), "*Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick...*" (35), "*you must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am chief of sufferers also*". (42) One can remark several lexical sets which illustrate the state of mind of the characters: that of shock, of terror and menace, expressed through inversion ("So great and unprepared a change..."), antithetical parallel constructions ("*The less* I understood of this farrago [+Confusion], *the less* I was in a position to judge of its importance", "*The more* I reflected, *the more* convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease [+Insanity]). The verbal and nominal phrases sharing the semantic feature [+ Shock], [+ Dread] – *could not believe his eyes, looked with involuntary terror, was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, faces of dreadful expectation, crushing anticipation of the calamity, biting his finger, a fresh terror struck upon my soul* (62) – together with repetition combined with the accumulation (*a very strange – a very strange one, This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale*) are instrumental for the aura of mystery and terror created around the whole story. The amalgamation and excess of figures of speech ascertain the truth expressed by Henry James when he referred to Stevenson's style: "There are writers who present themselves

before the critic with just the right amount of drapery that is necessary for decency; but Mr. Stevenson is not one of those – he makes his appearance in amplitude of costume. His costume is part of his character ... it never occurs to us to ask how he would look without it.” (*apud* Halberstam, 1995:61) In terms of Gothic writing, literary language in general is described in terms of its “amplitude”, its excess. According to Judith Halberstam, Gothic is characterized by the “amplitude of costume”, and “The feminine guise which is worn by an author, plays homosexual to the healthy and appropriately heterosexuality of realism... Gender and genre here, and genre and sexuality, slide into each other as plasticity of form comes to define gender, genre, and sexual identity.” (1995: 61)

As Peter Shwenger asserts in “The Masculine Mode” (1989:110), “to think about oneself is to become less masculine oneself. It is well-known that one of the most powerful archetypes of manhood is the idea that the real man is the one who acts, rather the one who contemplates”. Jekyll is therefore depicted through language as being a more feminine presence than Hyde as long as he reflects on the nature of the individual as a divided product of both reason and desire, metaphorically defined as follows: “I sat in the sun on a bench; *the animal within me* licking the chops of memory; *the spiritual side* a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin” (82), “I was still cursed with *my duality of purpose*; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, *the lower side of me*, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for licence” (82) – he is subject of obsession, self-gratification as much as reasonable, responsible codes of behaviour: “The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified” (75)

The situation of Dr. Jekyll is described as “some *dire catastrophe*” [+Ineluctable terror], (59) and it is associated by him with destiny: “With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery *I have been doomed* [+Ineluctable] to such a *dreadful shipwreck*” [+Ineluctable terror] (70), “it was the *curse* [+Ineluctable] of mankind that these incongruous faggots...” (71), “I have been made to learn that the *doom and burthen* [+Ineluctable] of our life is *bound for* [+Ineluctable] ever on man’s shoulders” (71), “...late, one *accursed* [+Ineluctable], [+Hateful] night, I compounded the elements...” (72), “That night I had come to *the fatal crossroad* “[+Ineluctable terror] (74), “that *insurgent horror* was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his *flesh* [+Ineluctable], [+Hateful]...” (86). The semantic features indicated above are

illustrative of the impossibility of avoiding the inevitable terror, conceived as a curse or doom. Repetition combines with metaphoric simile (*closer than a wife, closer than an eye*) in order to create a gradation that will culminate in the linguistic representation of the principle of horror interiority through the metaphor *lay caged in his flesh*. The curse results in the demonic manifestation of another hero, who is doomed to be continually shadowed by his fearsome, seductive Other.

The existence of Dr. Jekyll is marked by *equivocation*, another feminine feature: “I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired.” (71). The heads and the modifiers by means of which his life is described (*trembling* [+Unstable] *immateriality* [+Incorporeal], *the mist-like* [+Unstable] *transience* [+Impermanent]) point at the lack of security and certainty of his situation. Beside the semantic feature [+Unstable], the modifiers also include the feature [+Vague], calling attention to the indeterminateness governing Jekyll’s life, whose cause might be that *impatient gaiety of disposition*.

The key word set of distress and disturbance is carried out by an important number of metaphors with an emotive ground: *night of little ease, shudder in his blood, the gloom of his spirits, he is in deep waters, heavy heart, painfully situated, streaming tears, went down my spine, stupidity of wonder, fatal crossroads, dreadful shipwreck, startle ... to frenzy*. They all refer to the torment and anguish of the protagonists.

The sense of doom apparently lies at the basis of all abnormal events; the non-human, the abnormal strike as other. We should take into account the function played by the evocative background, a sinister atmosphere suggestive of dangerously explosive energies.

Jekyll’s strange “case” is not in his body but in his soul, a soul that splits against itself. According to Foucault, if the body is no longer the object of punishment, then something else must take its place – the soul. The soul becomes thus in Foucault’s words “the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (*apud Halberstam, 1995:73*).

The Gothic text is plastic in the Greek sense of “moulded” because it makes monsters by means of language and monsters are made texts. The delight in reading of monsters consists in their ability to represent and give form and meaning to fear. A genre that has been theorized to be re-emerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises, the

Gothic, present in its *fin-de-siècle* version is centrally concerned with the horrific re-making of the human subject, with a general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety caused by scientific discourses which were favourable to the demolition of conventional concepts like that of “human”. The Gothic of this period did more than throw into relief and negotiate a crisis in the epistemology of human identity: it invented new representational strategies by which to imagine human (or not entirely human) realities.

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UNLUCKY GIRLS IN KINGSLEY AMIS’S *LUCKY JIM*

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Feminist criticism has always been opposed to the objectivity of the New Criticism with its insistence of the 'impersonality' of author and reader. Feminists, who take gender as a fundamental issue of interpretation, are rebuked by orthodox, male dominated critical schools, which sanctify the male author as an impregnable author-ity, asserting that the author's personal life and ideology are not relevant to his impersonal literary structures. These claim that their representations of women and men are completely impersonal characterizations reflecting the diversity of human types. However, this argument fails to consider three important aspects of literary texts that go beyond the mere representation of sexist attitudes. Firstly, the characterization usually involves the use of stereotypes of both genders. Secondly, the point of view (or the implied author) governing the narrative will inevitably represent an overall ideology or world-view that could be patriarchal. Thirdly, the role of the reader is significant to the author's representations. Using Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1961) for analysis this paper attempts to argue that the male author's representation of women goes beyond impersonal characterization: in fact, female stereotypes are the embodiment of male fantasy and patriarchal ideology.

The novel is known to be written for a male audience; the text not only constructs the reader's experience from a male's viewpoint but there is also an assumption that its readers can easily identify with Jim Dixon, having the same archetypically male viewpoint and adventures. For the male reader the text serves as the meeting ground of the personal where women are viewed as if they came from a different planet, and beings about whom very little is known or worth knowing. This kind of ignorance does not prove to be a kind of deficiency that has to be worked on but rather a kind of male bond that unites friends and enemies indiscriminately on the common ground of judging women. Dixon shudders at the mere thought of the "awful business of getting on with women" (10) feeling completely helpless against female dominated relationships where men - in order to survive - are supposed to lie about their feelings or about the true nature of the relationship. Being an innocent young lecturer it seems inevitable that he is "drawn into the Margaret business..." and allows himself to be seduced by Margaret, a female colleague higher in position, in order to conform to the established university traditions. The unwritten laws of social conduct in the department are made explicit in the texts:

It seemed only natural for a female lecturer to ask a junior, though older, male colleague up to her place for coffee, and no more than civil to accept. Then suddenly he'd become the man who was 'going round' with Margaret..." (Amis, 1961:11).

This kind of approach to unconventional gender roles stresses the absurdity of the inverted male-female tasks. In traditional roles women are supposed to be the passive objects - the "sign" - of institutional and ideological representation by a male cultural establishment thus ensuring the stability of the patriarchal society. In the form of comedy Amis can best describe the consequences of changing nature's divine order where men are made the objects, the "sign" of female authority.

Dixon, being deprived of his traditional gender role submits himself to Margaret and takes the role of the silent sufferer. Although the thought of changing his position by marrying Margaret has crossed his mind before Christine appears on the scene he brushes it aside as long as he is a beneficiary of the secure partnership and lukewarm comfort provided by Margaret.

He is gazing upon Margaret who is singing away happily about love and kind affections at the madrigal, wondering that "he [Dixon] had never 'looked for' any of these from Margaret. Perhaps he should: after all, people were doing it all the time. It was a pity she wasn't better looking. One of these days, though, he would try, and see what happened" (Amis, 1961:37). While he lacks the manly qualities of resolution and confidence, Margaret, who seems to possess them all, takes him under her wing and tries to protect him from getting into trouble. Dixon feels safe "with Margaret at his side" (40), where he can turn to Margaret for aid. She - unlike him - knows the rules of proper social conduct and is someone whom he respects and hates at the same time for the authority and intellectual superiority she possesses. She also has a refined way of non-verbal communication and a sophisticated style that only a few can master:

Margaret looked at him with lifted chin as if ready to reprove some indiscretion, but to her any sort of adverse remark about anybody was, unless they were alone, indiscreet enough. (46).

Obviously she indulges in this maternal role where she can keep him under control. She is much ridiculed in her maternal role and at least as much pitied when she tries to act her "traditional role" as a woman, a seductress. From an intellectual authority figure she is transformed into a naive, infantile being whose silly questions like "Do you like coming to

see me?" or "Do you think we get on well together?" can best be ignored. Margaret in her role of a mother or a silly little girl is a taboo for male sexual desire. Having failed the test of male gaze she is not a strong candidate to fit the category of a *sex object*, therefore her status is limited to an *object* the strangeness of which is described in the fit of a hysteria episode with vivid details. She is not simply crying but "making a curious noise, a steady, repeated, low-pitched moan..." which alternated with "a series of high-pitched, inward screams" where she has no tears but "moisture creeping through to his chin" (Amis, 1961:159). It is the point when Dixon distances himself from this mysterious creature he cannot and does not want to understand.

It is not only Margaret who is acting strange, and whose behaviour puzzles Dixon but women, the freakish creatures of nature whose acts and reactions are determined by their different psychic and bodily functions, and who are differentiated from men as the 'Other'. However different male characters are in their social position or in their relation to each other they all judge women from the same male perspective with the same disbelief mixed with disdain. Dixon is plotting to secure for his class three pretty girls who - to his disappointment - all seem to have a literary taste different from men. Michie, the busybody student cannot hide his contempt for them when airing his judgement on women: "I think the feeling of the ladies is that the reading is a good deal on the heavy side. I don't myself think it is: as I said to them, a subject like this requires considerable background knowledge if it isn't to be quite meaningless. But I'm afraid they were not very convinced. Being women, they're of rather more conservative temperament than ourselves" (97).

Bertrand, Dixon's main rival, in his attempt to keep Dixon away from Christine resorts to male bonding and male logic when explaining the nature of his relationship with Catherine, which he, similarly to Dixon, refers to as "business".

'The business between Christine and myself,' Bertrand said, fiddling with his beard, 'is a serious business, unquestionably...I don't want to get married yet awhile, but it's distinctly on the cards that I might marry Christine in a couple of years or so. What I mean is, it's a long-term affair, quite definitely. Now, Christine is very young, younger even than her age. She's not used to having individuals abducting her from dances and inviting her to off-the-record tea parties in hotels and all the rest of it...' (1961:207)

And he adduces his achievements in the “Catherine business” with undisguised pride: “I’ve had quite a time straightening her out already; I don’t want to have to start all over again” (207).

Catchpole and Dixon’s conversation in the pub when Catchpole enlightens Dixon about the missing mosaics of Margaret’s suicide attempt over a drink is another example of male solidarity and understanding. Catchpole reinforces Dixon’s observations on women’s strangeness when describing Margaret’s absurd behaviour: “Quite soon I realized that she was one of these people - they are usually women - who feed on emotional tension” (235).

Women, who have to be “straightened out” in order to be acceptable companions for men, have their own peculiar vocabulary that sounds infantile if not bizarre to a man’s ear.

It always amused him [Dixon] to hear girls (men never did it) refer to ‘Uncle’, ‘Daddy’, and so on, as if there were only one uncle or daddy in the world, or as if this particular uncle or daddy were the uncle or daddy of all those present (Amis, 1961:50).

Oddly enough, Margaret never gets a nickname, but her full name is not known until the second chapter, while Christine is referred to most of the time as “the property of men like Bertrand”, or “Bertrand’s girl”, “the Callaghan girl”, or “his girl”, and finally called Christine Callaghan as she becomes Dixon’s “girl”. She has been a sexual object from the start (being somebody’s object makes her more alluring) and later she becomes a product of male gaze, meaning his (Dixon’s) own property. Whether a woman is an object, a sex object or a product of male gaze depends on the physical representation of the body, which explains the importance of looks in the narrative.

The female characters are prepared to be the objects of male gaze. As Mary Evans claims in one of her studies on feminist literary criticism:

...What feminism has taught us is that women’s appearance, indeed our very identity, is constructed for a male gaze and may be far from expressing any real independence or autonomy (Evans, 1977:125).

Due to her unfavourable looks Margaret is not the centre of male attention and is far from being a desired object. “Margaret Peel, small, thin, and bespectacled, with bright make-up, glanced at Dixon with a half-smile...What a pity it was, he thought, that she

wasn't better looking " (163). Her effort to look beautiful and gain male approval is only too obvious.

When he [Dixon] came back she was still sitting on the bed, but had evidently put some lipstick for him. This pleased him, more from the implied compliment than from the actual effect; indeed, he was beginning to feel really good again... (1961:57).

Christine, as opposed to Margaret, who has a "combination of fair hair, straight and short cut, with brown eyes and no lipstick, the strict set of the mouth, the square shoulders" (39) needs no make up or specially designed clothes to compensate for her lack of sex appeal. Margaret's sweaty effort to look feminine is not left unnoticed. Her "arty get up" evokes Dixon's slight irritation, attributing this to her manipulative attempts to blur the "genuine" picture of male gaze. Nevertheless, Margaret, who is aware of her limited chances in the men hunting process is an object of scorn, and lectured by Dixon, who is now speaking from a confident male superiority position.

...she did not read the articles in the three-halfpenny press that told you which colour lipstick went with which natural colouring" (Evans, 1977:186).

People who wore clothes of that sort oughtn't to mind things of this sort, certainly not as much as Margaret clearly minded this thing. It was surely wrong to dress, and to behave most of the time, in a way that was so un-prim when you were really so proper all the time" (1961:77).

...Dixon moved closer and saw that her hair had been recently washed; it lay in dry lustreless wisps on the back of her neck. In that condition it struck him as quintessentially feminine, much more feminine than the Callaghan girl's shining fair crop. Poor old Margaret, he thought, and rested in a gesture he hoped was solicitous, on her nearer shoulder (76).

Although Dixon tries to resist the practices of "womenfolk" he inevitably falls into the trap of his sexual drive evoked and manipulated by the female body. Christine is not much less of a manipulator than Margaret is, just more successful. Nevertheless, it is not only Christine's young body that tempts him but also a barmaid, whom he "studied" while having a date with Margaret, and "who was large, and very dark with a narrow upper lip and rather close-set eyes" (25). For most feminist readers Dixon is at least as much a

victim of Amis's laughter as Margaret. He is unable to interpret signs and he is out of touch with social conduct throughout the novel. His incompetence is a result of his ignorance about women, who are aware of being the objects of male gaze and act accordingly. It is only too obvious that they do not have a choice but to adjust to our male-centred world.

Whether this fiction is written for a male or a female audience is mostly a question of interpretation, which takes place from a specific, inevitably gender-biased perspective. Different approaches produce different readings. Even though the narrative structure defines women as objects rather than subjects, laughter feeds upon strange male stereotypes at least as much as upon their definite female counterparts. After all to pass the test of male gaze is only a question of luck whereas to pass the test of fairness or impartial judgement is a question of character. Whether it is Dixon who is lucky or the "womanfolk" who is unlucky is a puzzle to be solved. The key is left between the lines.

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**“THE INTERTEXT ON LOVE SHE INHERITS”: THE IDEOLOGY OF THE
ROMANCE IN MARGARET DRABBLE'S *THE WATERFALL***

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Narrative in the most general terms is a version of, or a special expression of, ideology: representations by which we construct and accept values and institutions.
(Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending*)

The text I investigate, *The Waterfall* (1969) by Margaret Drabble, raises several questions concerning various aspects of the genres of the novel, the romance and the *Bildungsroman*. It tells the self-in-the-making process of a female poet, Jane Gray, who having driven away her husband gives birth to her second child and starts an adulterous love relation with her cousin's husband, James. This love affair ends with an accident after which Lucy, Jane's cousin and alter ego and James's wife takes back her husband, and Jane starts her new life as a woman who has created and experienced her womanhood in its rich fullness first in the pleasures of motherhood and then in the bodily sensations of sexual experience.

On the textual level, the novel consists of constantly oscillating first- and third-person narrative parts - with identical narrators, the female protagonist - which inevitably implies shifting positions from which the female narrator can articulate her subjectivity. The third-person sections construct a wished-for romance story, in which Jane tries to play the part of the heroine. The first-person parts, on the other hand, are reflexive, and comment on the validity of the romance story even by the intertextual references to nineteenth-century novels by women writers such as *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by George Eliot and primarily *Emma* (1816) by Jane Austen. By the end of the novel, the third-person parts gradually disappear and the text ends in the first person. The two narrative strategies can be differentiated on the basis of genres as well. Whereas, as indicated above, the third-person parts write a romance story (making the protagonist resemble nineteenth-century heroines), the first-person sections constitute a *Bildungsroman* (a story of integration into society). The question needs to be answered: How do these genres function in the process of self-in-the-making?

Here I set out to analyse the genre of the romance - primarily on the basis of *Emma* by Jane Austen - as a means of ideological coercion within the system of suture in *The Waterfall* by Drabble. (Suture is a process of identification in the course of which the subject identifies with certain subject positions - signifiers - offered by various discourses, but any of these apparent identities are temporary and this constant identification game throws the subject's subjectivity into process.) Daniel Dayan was the first theoretician of suture to use the concept of suture to examine ideological coercion. In his view, suture effects this coercion by persuading the viewer/reader to identify with certain images as a reflection of his/her subjectivity, and it can happen because this process takes place transparently without revealing the apparatuses of enunciation (Silverman, 1983:215).

I use the term 'ideology' in the Althusserian sense as Kaja Silverman does in *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983), and will found my argument on the claims that "[w]hat is represented in ideology is [. . .] not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (Althusser, 1971:164-65) and that literary genres are also means of relating one to the relations of the world in an imaginary way.

To detect the means of ideological coercion one has to establish the link between the concepts of genre, narrative, subject position and ideological coercion itself. Like any social convention, each genre with the corresponding narrative "suggests sequences of action and response, the meaning we give these, and ways of organising experience by choices, emphases, priorities" (DuPlessis, 1985:4), thus relates us to the world as we *imagine* it. Silverman also highlights several times the importance of narrative or story - she uses the two terms synonymously - in the process of suturing as it can serve as a means of ideological coercion. The characters which have been traditionally associated with these narratives offer certain subject positions - ideologically determined representations - to the reader with which s/he can identify in the course of suturing, but by this identification s/he becomes subject to the ideology communicated by the text.

This investigation should be seen as part of a comprehensive study that explores the means of ideological coercion in *The Waterfall* from the twofold aspect of the romance and the *Bildungsroman*. In the case of both genres I investigate this coercion in the intertextual relationship of *The Waterfall* and the nineteenth-century novels mentioned above, *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Emma*. I explore the role of these genres in all the three intertexts - all can be seen as romances with various attempts at the *Bildungsroman* - as

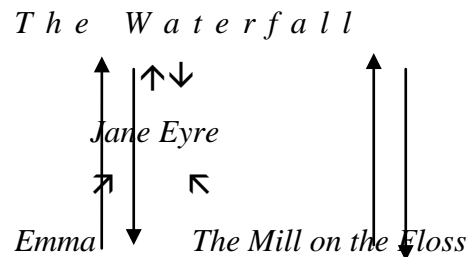
means of ideological coercion. This investigation poses the question: What are the roles of these two genres in the self-in-the-making process of the female protagonist of *The Waterfall* who temporarily identifies with subject positions offered by these nineteenth-century intertexts? What ideology is coerced in the course of these identifications? This partial analysis now tries to answer the same questions by examining the intertextual relationship of Drabble's and Jane Austen's texts, and due to its limited length it can focus only on the genre of the romance.

The presence of these nineteenth-century intertexts demands not only this generic investigation but a strong focus on *The Waterfall's* textual complexity as well. *Emma* and *The Mill on the Floss* exemplify the two possible endings of nineteenth-century romances: marriage and death. Emma, who does not cross the limits of proper femininity, after a period of relative independence, is rewarded with marriage, while Maggie Tulliver, whose boyish adventures and sensuous femininity cannot be reconciled with social expectations, ends up in death. Naturally, these two romance endings call attention to the fact that romances should not be considered as representatives of a uniform genre. In accordance with it, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* should be considered in the same way, since the novels of the first layer exemplify two kinds of attempts at the story of development: the "voyage-out" and the "voyage-in". I use the term "voyage-in" in the sense Abel, Hirsch and Langaland use it: the opposition of the story of the masculine way of integration into society without any conflicts between individual and socialisation, autonomy and social norms. This simplified relationship of these two intertexts highlights the tendency that not all kinds of romances and *Bildungsromans* can be contained within one narrative, thus they should be investigated with special attention to their unique features without levelling their differences.

This disparity of these narratives, at the same time, points to the fact that these various representatives of the romance open up the homogeneity of the genre which leads one back to the very essence of suture: all endings provided by suture only *seem* to be final but, in fact, are not. Due to this variability, it is possible for the subject to go against power and ideology, as the generic "gaps" offer a place for resistance. Thus, in this position, the "subject-in-process" can negotiate with discourses and ideologies interpellating him/her, which results in the emergence of new narratives.

The third novel in this intertextual complexity which, in a sense, synthesises the previous two texts is *Jane Eyre*. If one accepts Gilbert and Gubar's suggestion that Berha

Mason is Jane Eyre's double (1984:360), then both romance endings with the corresponding story of development are present in this narrative: Bertha goes on the "voyage-in" and finally ends up in death, while Jane attempts at the "voyage-out" and, having lost her improper double, gets married.



The Waterfall enters a dialogue with these intertexts in two ways: the female protagonist of the novel, Jane Gray, argues with her literary predecessors, the romance heroines one by one, and the text struggles with the intertexts as constituents of the female literary tradition, and argues with its generic predecessors, the romance among them, and as a result of this double negotiation, the protagonist can take up various, sometimes coerced, sometimes resisting subject positions in her relation to the coercive power and ideology implied in the genre.

The Romance and Jane Austen's World of Manners and Morals

... the intertext on love that she inherits ...

(Jane Wyatt, *Reconstructing Desire*)

I am much mistaken if Emma's doctrines give any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life.

They only give little polish. (Jane Austen, *Emma*)

Women and romance: both in literature and in popular culture these two terms seem so intricately intertwined that hardly do they seem to need any explanation. We tend to take the "inherent" link between love stories and femininity for granted: "[w]omen and romance are constructed within the male order and the established tradition of prose fiction that

grows out of and upholds that order; they are constructed as marginal and secondary in order to secure the dominance of men and novels". For this reason, the romance can be defined as the novel's other, "whatever the novel (hopes it) is not" (Langbauer, 1990:3). This loose definition seems convenient not only for its feminist logic, but also because the genre of the romance has had so many variants in the course of its long history in English literature, that it is hardly possible to supply a definition that describes all types of romances properly. The nineteenth-century intertexts in *The Waterfall* also exemplify this variability of the romance, a feature which opens up the genre to its own deconstruction.

However, to define the focus of investigation it is necessary, as a starting point, to provide a set of criteria according to which one can tell apart romances from all the other genres. The original opposition between the novel and the romance, which resulted in turning the romance marginal and historically prior to the novel, was settled by nineteenth century. Romance elements could not be easily banished, as they remained alive and well not only on the margins but "in the heartland of the nineteenth-century realist novel" (Radford, 1986:12). The romance as a genre of "popular" literature as opposed to the novel of "high" literature, however, is traditionally also differentiated from other popular genres that have also gender implications but can rather be called masculine/male-oriented genres. Here I resort to John Cawelti's approach. He identifies the following features of the romance: (a) the centrality of love relationship with adventure/incident as subsidiary elements (whereas in the thriller/adventure story, incident is central and love elements become subsidiary); (b) in women's romance, the major relationship is between the heroine and the hero (whereas in male-directed genres it is between the hero and the villain); (c) most contemporary romances have a female protagonist (whereas most adventure stories centre on a male protagonist); (d) romance depends on a special relationship of identification between the reader and the protagonist (Radford, 1986:11).

By its nineteenth-century intertexts - *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Emma* - Drabble's text is embedded in the female literary tradition, and is inevitably linked to the various types of romance. These intertexts insert *The Waterfall* into the interplay of the romance and the *Bildungsroman* as they all show the features primarily of the romance but make attempts at *Bildung* as well. But as the romance and the *Bildungsroman* could not coexist, and be integrated for the heroine at the resolution, to overcome the contradiction between love and quest in these narratives, nineteenth-century women writers came forth with an ending in which one part of the contradiction, usually *Bildung* is set aside or

repressed, either by marriage, or by death (DuPlessis, 1985:3-4). These two resolutions are the two ends of one scale, as DuPlessis calls them the "euphoric" pole and the "dysphoric" pole.

The "euphoric" pole, with its ending in marriage, is a successful integration into society through being related to a man, a husband, in which the gain is both financial and romantic success in the "heterosexual contract"; the "dysphoric" pole, with an ending in death, is a betrayal by male authority and aggression. (DuPlessis, 1985: 4)

Jane Austen's novels focus on the heterosexual contract as they elaborate on love and finally, after the heroine's flirtations with a villain-like figure, end up in the heroine and hero's marriage. Her novels are primarily classified as novels of manners but, according to Radford, these novels - including *Emma* - conform to Cawelti's criteria of romances in almost every aspect (Radford, 1986:12): in *Emma* love relationships are central; the major relationship is between the heroine (Emma) and the hero (Mr Knightley); and the protagonist is female. The fourth criterion - the reader's identification with the protagonist - provides the basis for the identification process that occurs in *The Waterfall*. Its female protagonist - Jane Gray - relies on her reading experience in her identifications which provide her only with apparently final subjectivities because the oscillation between these apparent identities and the generic gaps throws Jane's subjectivity into process which is the essence of suture. In this never-ending game of identification *Emma* offers a kind of subjectivity that proves temporary for Jane in accordance with the definition of suture.

Although in the beginning I have defined the romance by a criteria-based approach, I must turn to the historical understanding of the genre to interpret the means of ideological coercion in the intertextual relationship of *The Waterfall* and *Emma*. Both Gillian Beer and Jean Radford highlight the fact that the romance has been bound up with a complex, always evolving historical situation. Beer traces the origins of the romance back to the Middle Ages and follows its history up to its reconciliation with realism. She also emphasises the importance of distance in time because

[t]he romance gives repetitive form to the peculiar desires of a community, and especially to those desires which cannot find controlled expression within a society. This is another reason why works which read like realistic fiction to the audience to whom they were first addressed, read like romance to future generations. (Beer, 1970:13)

Though Beer describes the romance as wish-fulfilment literature (1970:1), she fails to call attention to the fact that from their very origin most romances have dealt with transgressive love relations. The medieval romances of either Guinevere and Lancelot or Tristram and Iseult - the romances *par excellence* - focus on a transgressive love relation: adultery. When Jane Austen draws the proper romance pairing for us, Emma and Frank Churchill, she follows the tradition of presenting transgressive love relations in romances (now adultery), but by the end she sets aside this line, and obeys the moral requirements of her own age by providing a well-polished cover story.

Due to its intricate intertwining with the novel of manners, the romance does not exist in an ideological vacuum. The novel of manners is explicitly an ideological construct and, since the romance exists in and by it in the case of Austen, the romance itself has strong ideological potential as well. The decorous surface of manners present in Austen's *Emma* is nothing more than the representations of an imaginary relationship to the world that one lives in.

In the game of identification Jane Gray refers to Austen emphasizing especially the ideological constructs of manners and morals and, as an undercurrent, identifying with her ironic, comic subversion. "Both my father and my mother came from such genteel middle class descent that Jane Austen herself could have described their affiliations with ease" (Drabble, 1969:54), remarks Jane Gray in *The Waterfall* when she talks about her family background. However well her family affiliations suit Jane Austen, this family background exemplifies an oscillation again: this family background is seemingly identical with the genteel middle-class families in Austen's novel but, at the same time, it is their caricature. In Austen's texts fathers tend to have wives from relatively poorer but decent middle-class families, but here, it is Jane's mother who can take pride in her two brothers, a barrister and a clergyman. "Marriage and family warmth are so important,' [her mother] would say, 'and happy homes like ours so rare,' - she, who flinched from any physical approach, whose eyes grew white with alarm when my father touched her shoulder or her arm" (Drabble, 1969:55-6). Coming from a family like this, Jane should have learnt to distinguish what people say from what people do, but she claims she is "unable now [. . .] to distinguish between falsehoods rendered true by passion, and truths made false by duplicity" (1969:55).

Talking about her mother's judgement on James's mother, Jane Gray refers to Austen again: "Morals and manners: I leave it to Jane Austen to draw those fine distinctions." (1969:58). Given the importance of the imaginary relationship of decorum and all its implications, it is easy to imagine on what moral basis Jane's mother could judge Mrs Otford's "gay social whirl" (1969:58).

Like Austen's characters Jane's parents are obsessed with notions of class and rank: "With them, awareness of rank is a disease: it seems to be the core of their existence, it has displaced any of the significant centres of life, it eats them up, it devours them" (1969:59). Class and rank, and middle initials on letters and suffering for a 'G' instead of an 'H' are exactly the manifestations of patriarchy that Jane Austen ridicules below the ideologically informed imaginary relationship of propriety, as what she "asks us to laugh at most often are the power structures of her world - wealth, social status, patriarchy" (Fullbrook, 1987: 42).

These are the cornerstones of the value system of Jane Gray's parents, the things she herself hates: "my own parents were hypocrites, [. . .] their social attitudes were dishonest, [. . .] the solid virtues to which they paid lip-service were as nothing to them compared with the vain honours and titles and glories which, at every speech day, they solemnly denounced" (1969:55).

Good taste is also a key concept in Austen's world. Jane Gray has been reared in "the Jane Austen distinctions of refinement and vulgarity, of good and bad taste" (1969:93). Thus her parents' genteel, middle class origins include the distinction of good and bad taste which also contributes to the "proper" behaviour according to the decorous surface of propriety. Thus value judgements in Austen's and Jane's parents' world are based not only on morals but on the sense of good taste as well, because, as Edmund Burke puts it, "[m]anners are of more importance than laws [. . .]. They give their whole form and colour to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them" (quoted by Monaghan, 1980:3). In the world of Jane Austen's novels, manners are often more important than morals, or, rather, morals are highly influenced and strongly governed by manners. However, this kind of morality can easily turn into insincerity as in Jane Gray's mother's case: "My mother was thought, generally, to be a charming woman: she was pretty, flattering, gracious: and yet I would hear her in private savage, relentlessly, the antecedents of those very people she took such pains to charm" (1969:55).

Jane senses the metaphorical cracks of the imaginary relationship of manners not only in family issues but in love relations as well.

How I dislike Jane Austen. How deeply I deplore her desperate wit. Her moral tone dismays me: my heart goes out to the vulgarity of those little card parties that Mrs Philips gave at Meryton, [. . .] to Lydia at fifteen gaily flashing her wedding ring through the carriage window, to Frank Churchill, above all to Frank Churchill, lying and deceiving and proffering embarrassing extravagant gifts. Emma got what she deserved, in marrying Mr Knightley. What can it have been like, in bed with Mr Knightley? Sorrow awaited that woman: she would have done better to steal Frank Churchill, if she could. (Drabble, 1969:57-8)

The clear references to *Emma* remind the reader of the heroine, who has “the power of having rather too much of her own way” (Austen, 1994:5), and has to find out that she has been manipulated as a pawn in Frank Churchill’s game, and finally gives up her relative independence, realises her own marital interests and marries Mr Knightley. Thus she returns to the feminine sphere relying on her modesty, reticence and patience, qualities that are considered properly feminine.

In the quotation above Jane Gray mentions Frank Churchill as the greatest deceiver, thus the most original figure. He knows the rules of propriety, so he can successfully manipulate others as he seemingly obeys the rules defined by manners but, in fact, transgresses them. Rosalind Miles suggests that “the orthodox ‘romance’ pairings are carefully drawn in for us - Emma and Frank Churchill [...] - in order precisely to illustrate their inadequacy and to invite us to reject them as possibilities” (1987:44).

Jane Gray’s interpretation works exactly in the opposite way. She does not see this “orthodox ‘romance’ pairing” as something inadequate. She considers it to be a more original pairing and less governed by the rules of decorous behaviour than the final pairing of Emma and Mr Knightley. His name already suggests to Jane Gray the quality of this knightly relationship: governed by the morals of manners, both partners living up to the surface of moral expectations, which is ironic already in Austen. This ironic knighthood points at the possible origins of the transgressive ironic romance which Austen writes. Jane Gray considers Emma and Mr Knightley the precise embodiment of the cover story she hates, a proper pairing that can perpetuate only these surface values of ideologically informed imaginary relations. The question of “What can it have been like, in bed with Mr Knightley?” is the voice of outspoken sexual desire that has become absolutely impossible

for Emma by resigning to the “proper” feminine role and choosing Mr Knightley. As there is sexual attraction between Emma and Frank Churchill, Emma’s desires are silenced by choosing Mr Knightley. That is why “sorrow awaited that woman” in her marriage, and for this reason Jane thinks that it would have been better if she had had Frank Churchill.

This question is not of secondary importance for Jane Gray as she tries to understand the desires of the female body. Through her choice, Emma decides to join the patriarchal society which, after her relative independence and autonomy, can guarantee nothing the like only mastery over her. After marrying Mr Knightley she has no choice but to live up to the decorous surface, behave in a ladylike way and give up her attempts at any kind of *Bildung*. Thus “[h]er proper negotiation with class and gender makes a heroine from an improper hero” (DuPlessis, 1985:7). The story of a hero - the “voyage-out” - is denied Emma because of her gender and the only possible place for her is that of the heroine who finally marries the hero. In this way, the story fits into the tradition of nineteenth-century romances, because, as Miller remarks, “[...] female *Bildung* tends to get stuck in the bedroom” (quoted by DuPlessis, 1985:4), or, rather, in church, since getting stuck in the bedroom would imply transgression instead of the containment of the romance in the ideological network of (the novel of) manners. This resolution in *Emma* is considered highly problematic by Jane Gray as well.

The ideologically informed decorous surface of propriety, in my opinion, is closely related to what Gilbert and Gubar call ‘the cover story’ (the story told by the narrator), but there is always a marked distance between the cover story and the narrator, a discrepancy from which Austen’s comic subversion stems. The same is true of Drabble’s cover story and narrator: this discrepancy of the two is present in the heteroglossic nature of the novel that results from its double narration and the constant use of intertexts.

This is Austen’s finest comic subversion - presenting a nicely polished “all’s-well-that-ends-well” cover story in an ironically distant narrative voice - that Jane Gray senses. In the course of her self-in-the-making process she identifies not with the decorous cover story and the “proper feminine” subject positions offered by it, but peeps under the surface through the cracks and would identify with a “misbehaving” romance heroine who - temporarily though - does not follow the route of patriarchy, but is on the verge of entering an improper love relation with Frank Churchill. Refusing the ideologically informed cover story, Jane Gray refuses the role of the Austen heroine. She does not find it a satisfactory role to be caught up in that patriarchal society. In the end, Emma does not risk her manners

and morals, rather joins Mr Knightley who, ironically enough, does not resemble the knights of medieval romances in his conduct towards women. Instead he is a handsome nineteenth-century caricature of these original knights, who entered adulterous love relations with married women and were not brother-like good friends of young ladies. It is for this reason that Jane Gray finds the original romance pairing of Emma and Frank Churchill a more perfect match since in that relationship no cover story would distort and control their behaviour. Jane Gray considers Emma a hypocrite in the sense she considers her parents too, as none of them dares to behave according to their desires, but rather behaves under the cover of ideologically acceptable, or even advisable manners and morals. This is the reason for Jane Gray's aversion from manners, morals and good taste - and her parents' life on the whole - because all the three promote an imaginary relation to the real conditions of the world one lives in.

In the course of her self-in-the-making Jane Gray evades ideological coercion proper: she does not identify with the cover story, she does not become a "proper woman", she does not obey patriarchy. Instead of welcoming the mainstream ideological coercion, she identifies with the undercurrent: she willingly embraces the subversion of ideological coercion proper, as she identifies with the "misfits", the metaphorical cracks of the ideologically informed cover story, she enters an adulterous transgressive love relation, and maps patriarchy by testing its limits. In this sense, the genre of the romance does not condition Jane Gray to what the reader supposes at the first sight: she is not conditioned to patriarchy. "Once upon a time, the *rightful end*, of women in novels was social - successful courtship, marriage - or judgemental of her sexual and social failure - death. These are both resolutions of the romance" (DuPlessis, 1985:1; emphasis added). Although most romances communicate these two means of women's integration into society *Emma* has an undercurrent that comes from the original narrative of the genre of the romance which is highlighted by the narrative voice. In this way, the genre of the romance works in a surprising way in the intertextual relationship of *The Waterfall* and *Emma*: it is coerced inside out, and, ironically enough, goes against patriarchy.

The game between Drabble's text and Jane Austen's novel is a step in the multiple attempts at suture: what Austen does with the cover story and the narrative voice is much more emphatically present in Drabble's text, since it multiplies this ironic relationship of the cover story and the narration by the use of the first- and third-person narration and the constant play with the intertexts. This multiple game results in multiplying gaps in the text

between genres, generic variants, (cover) stories and narrative voices which necessarily assume the impossibility of a stable subject position from the very beginning since the “subject-in-process” position is constantly shifting from gap to gap.

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Body and Textuality – Writing the Body

**CLEANLINESS AND SUBJECTIVITY IN JANICE GALLOWAY'S *THE TRICK
IS TO KEEP BREATHING***

NÓRA SÉLLEI

Janice Galloway, a contemporary Scottish woman writer, has written a novel about a 28-year-old female drama teacher, living on the outskirts of Glasgow. She undergoes a psychic crisis following the death of her lover, Michael (still married to another woman at that time), while they are on an “illegitimate” holiday in Spain. Whereas Michael’s death is obviously just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Joy Stone, the protagonist’s psychological disorders, it obviously triggers off the development of her diverse symptoms that range from anorexia to schizophrenia, from neurosis through obsessive rituals to phobias and repetition compulsions that result in her being hospitalised. Yet, as is almost usual in stories of women and madness, healing does not come from the institutionalised system, but much more from a very slow process of recovery carried out by the subject, and resulting in a sense of self.

In this paper I will investigate only one aspect of this process: how cleanliness/purity functions in the process of Joy Stone’s creation of her subjecthood. Whereas I do not claim that cleanliness is the exclusive metaphor that is related both to her psychic disorder and healing, I do state that the notion of cleanliness is of central significance: the text abounds in long and detailed descriptions of her cleaning her house, her own body (both its external and its internal surfaces - the latter via her anorexic “cleansing”), and in her desperate attempts to fend off any trace of filth even from her interpersonal relationships - she does not allow anyone to come close so as to avoid any opening up anything that threatens her with “defilement”. Her major point, in this sense, is to make her “whole surface sing [...]” (Galloway, 1991:46).

Joy Stone’s attitude to her “surface” - in another way, to her boundaries of self - changes in the course of the text. In my view, whereas, at the beginning, what we can see is the insistence on impeccable cleanliness, as the text proceeds Joy Stone is more and more capable of accepting some necessary “filth”, she can integrate it into her sense of identity, and instead of literally and metaphorically sweeping it under the carpet, she can even display certain signs of potential “filth” related to her body, like her dustbin or her washing line. Furthermore, instead of strengthening her ego boundaries (which she obviously aims at by her obsessive cleaning rituals), her initial and extreme insistence on cleanliness functions paradoxically: as a result of the compulsively repeated cleanings carried out by applying great force, both her body and her surroundings start decaying. In

this way, instead of keeping both her literal body and her more indirect “vessel”, the house together, the cleaning rituals themselves contribute to Joy’s fragmentation and disintegration. Furthermore, these rituals create their own “filth”, or, to use Julia Kristeva’s phrase, their own abject.

By applying Kristeva’s concept of the abject and abjection (Kristeva, 1982), I can shift the interpretation of cleanliness in this text to another level, and claim that Joy Stone’s varying attitude to cleanliness and filth is the indicator of the changes in her subjectivity. In her concept of the abject and abjection, and their relatedness to the subject and subjecthood, Kristeva relies on various anthropologists’ and psychoanalysts’ investigations of how in the binary systems of diverse cultures secular filth becomes sacred defilement as the result of the purification rituals carried out to defend the subject from the archaic experience of the undifferentiated – unclean - body. In this sense, as she claims, “defilement is the translinguistic spoor of the most archaic boundaries of the self’s clean and proper body” (1982:73). The subject, thus, comes about as a result of abjection - the simultaneous exclusion and containment of what is rejected by the symbolic order -, put it more poetically: “[a]bjection [is] the journey to the end of the night” (Kristeva, 1982:58).

The “unclean” is related to taboo in Freudian theory as well: “the taboo [...] is ‘sacred, consecrated; but on the other hand it means uncanny, forbidden and unclean’” (Freud cited in Kristeva, 1982:59). Defilement, however, is not constructed in accordance with universal laws; rather, the cultural construction of defilement “constitutes a *classification system* or *structure*” (Kristeva, 1982:65). The human body, as parcelled into “clean” and “unclean” is the obvious territory of abjection. Kristeva poses the question: “Why does *corporeal waste*, menstrual blood and excrement, or everything that is assimilated to them, from nail-paring to decay, represent - like a metaphor that would have become incarnate - the objective frailty of the symbolic system?” (Kristeva, 1982:70). She gives the explanation that corporeal waste is either literally (in the form of excrement or menstrual blood), or symbolically, related to corporeal orifices (1982:71), which constitute the border between the subject and the object, between the internal and the external, furthermore, they are related to the maternal and the feminine. Thus, what is at stake in the process of abjection is not only the division between the subject and the object, but also sexual difference - the sexuality of the female body in the case of Galloway’s protagonist, Joy Stone.

In Galloway's text, Joy has to traverse a long way to gain any sense of identity, to create her subjectivity. At the beginning, her sense of self has two basic characteristics: partly it is utterly fragmented, very far from any unity, even if that unity can always be only imaginary, partly, on the other hand, it is characterised by an erasure which is the effect of abjection: discursively, she is created as filth. In the text, healing functions at these two levels as well: the novel is a narrative of creating a unity and a kind of an order as opposed to the dissembled fragments, and parallel with this, we can see her establishing a balance between her own subjecthood and the object and the abject.

Fragmentation is due to the complex mechanism and effect of the sometimes contradictory discourses, and is also expressed and literally visible at the typographical level: italics are used for memories and dreams, there are passages that meander and flow over the margins, sometimes we encounter blank pages, the compulsive and repetitive use of triple Os - 000 - (interpretable in various ways), free-verse-like editing or dramatization - features on the basis of which Galloway is often discussed by critics in connection with Alisdair Gray and James Kelman, i.e., "the context of astonishing revival of fiction in the West of Scotland" (Gifford, 1997:607); Gavin Wallace, in turn, categorises her within the wider, radical experimental fiction of the 1970s and 1980s: within the concept of the *nouveau roman*, postmodernism and metafiction (1993:3); and, in a more specific way, Cairn Craig treats her under the heading he calls the "typographic muse" of radical experimentation in typography and textuality (1999:192-197).

Fragmentation, however, is relevant at the narrative level as well: there is a constant oscillation of the narrator between referring to her narrated self in the first person and the third person, a feature that directly relates the problematic existence of the subject, to the lack of even imaginary unity. Not only is the narrated self dislocated by this oscillation, but temporal and spatial dislocation also characterises the text from the very beginning:

I can't remember the last week with any clarity.

I want to be able to remember it because it was the last time anything was in any way unremarkable. Eating and drinking routinely, sleeping when I wanted to. It would be nice to remember but I don't.

Now I remember everything all the time. You never know what you might need to recollect later, when the significance of the moment might appear. They never give you any warning.

They never give you any warning.

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I watch myself from the corner of the room. (unnumbered page-7)

This multiply-split, fragmented, schizophrenic sense of self - if we follow the chronology of the story - has come about after the memorial service of Michael where she is not even mentioned by the minister, which she experiences as her erasure from public and dominant discourse, her annihilation from what is containable within the symbolic order (and what can be more symbolic than a memorial service which goes against the ultimate uncanny experience: death). This is how Joy understands this discursive process:

1. The Rev Dogsbody had chosen this service to perform a miracle.
2. He'd run time backwards, cleansed, absolved and got rid of the ground-in stain.
3. And the stain was me.
4. I didn't exist. The miracle had wiped me out. (Galloway, 1991:79)

This "miracle" can be read in terms of Kristeva's abjection: several of its elements fit the pattern how anthropologists describe the emergence of binary cultural structures on the basis of defilement. Joy as "the stain" is the uncontainable element of this culture by her transgressive sexuality, which, in addition, leads to the untimely death of her lover. Yet, inevitably, this uncontainability keeps haunting and threatening the margins of culture - that is why the memorial service is needed to fend "it" off: her physical but unnamed, unmentioned because unmentionable presence at the service is the indicator of this complex discursive process.

The first response of the protagonist-narrator to this cultural erasure, or abjection is the utter loss of sense of self, or rather, the multiply-split, fragmented, schizophrenic sense of self, followed by a strategy by which she wants to reinsert herself into the discursive order. Properly, as her erasure is metaphorised by the "stain", i.e. defilement, the reverse strategy is cleanliness, purity - in several of its manifestations. Paradoxically, however, her own cleaning or cleansing rituals can be read as the obsessive repetitions of the erasure that the Rev Dogsbody's "miracle"-ritual has performed: it is turned into a self-erasure ritual by which Joy keeps obliterating the "stain" on herself, or, rather, herself as "stain".

In the text, cleanliness and purity can be interpreted in a number of ways, ranging from the most concrete to the most abstract, which, at the same time, are in an intricate relationship with each other. The notion of purity, in general, is related to femininity in an

“essential” way as it evokes notions of virginity and sexual purity, which is obviously meaningful in the context of the novel as Joy’s sexuality (as the illegitimate ex-lover/mistress of Michael) is socially transgressive. In this way, the erasure of herself as “ground-in stain” performed by the miracle of the sermon (a gesture in which the concrete, the abstract, the symbolic and the discursive are present at the same time) is a purification ritual and the reconfirmation of femininity as purity - or as non-existence.

This initial gesture of the Rev Dogsboddy, however, is obsessively repeated by Joy in various ways which include her bathing rituals, her anorexic body (a kind of “internal” cleaning of the body), her cleaning the houses, and her abstaining from relationships that would require an opening up of herself, which she experiences as potential “defilement” of her self and body. Whereas all of these are notions clearly related to cleanliness, which, in a system of binaries has positive connotations, the text contextualises cleanliness in an ambiguous way: partly as a defence mechanism that keeps “stains” - or, as we will later see: further wounds - away, partly, however, by the very enforced self-containedness and self-control, this cleanliness also means on the one hand only a superficial cleanliness, on the other hand an internal erosion and corrosion that seems to demonstrate that a sense of self and identity that is artificially kept together and meant to be excessively homogeneous - an identity that wants to erase the heterogeneity caused partly by its past and its complex interaction with various others in the present, partly by the process of abjection - is an identity that, paradoxically, annihilates and erases itself.

Bathing rituals are obviously birth and revival rituals - here, they can be read as the (re)creation of a precarious self:

The bathwater must be hot: warm isn’t enough. I wait till the water is scalding and run the bath as evening falls getting rid of the day’s clothes: standing in the steam, acclimatising.

I pour oil into the scalding water. My skin gets creaky and dry as I get thinner, like tracing paper: the oil will make me smooth. I step into the water, careful because of the heat. The mirror cuffs off my head as I sit and steady my lungs, feeling the flesh under the surface turn raw. When sweat breaks on my upper lip, I can’t see the mirror for steam. The Scent of the oil is lost among the clouds.

On the white bath rim, the wash glove
the soap.

The glove is made of matting, knotted in rows. I dip it once into the water and pass it over the soap: only once so the hair doesn’t coat flatten out against the cloth.

When I finish, the skin sizzles: my whole surface sings. (Galloway, 1991:46)

The purpose of this revival and rebirth, nevertheless, is not the creation of J/joy's body, but to make it absolutely self-contained and in control of all possible excess, and also, paradoxically, to make it for *his* purposes. For this reason, in no way can it be interpreted as the recreation or rebirth of Joy's desiring body: rather, it is offered as a self-contained object for *his* desire, for *his* consumption/consummation. Accordingly, the creation of *this* body is utterly informed by consumer culture, and I can draw a parallel between Susan Bordo's conceptualisation of the slender body and the extremely controlled cleanliness of Joy's body. As Bordo claims, "the moral - and, as we shall see, economic - coding of the fat/slender body in terms of its capacity for self-containment and the control of impulse and desire represents the culmination of a developing historical change in the social symbolism of body weight and size" (1993:191). In her monograph, she decodes "the contemporary slenderness ideal so as to reveal the psychic anxieties and moral valuations contained within it - valuations concerning correct and incorrect management of impulse and desire" (1993:187). All we have to do is replace terms related to body shape and size in these quotes, and they become perfectly applicable to the cleaned, pampered body that is free of all its potentially threatening and abject "corporeal waste" that Joy Stone removes at the bathing rituals; a process which is, furthermore, related to her excessively controlled self, or lack of desires, repression, even erasure of her sexuality as stain.

A further element common with Bordo's discussion of the slender body in terms of production and consumption (that is, two apparently contradictory terms) at the same time (1993:199) is Joy's bathing/pampering rituals which are deeply implicated in our culture of consumption as well. Ironically, Joy can offer her own desirable but undesiring body as an object of desire on the basis of a double, and apparently contradictory mechanism: controlling her body by pampering demonstrates her willpower, energy and control over what is "natural" in her (her body), whereas, at the same time, pampering itself implies that the desires of her body are channelled into economic consumption: so as to produce a desirable and clean (i.e., socially acceptable) body, she obsessively buys the women's magazines that offer "guidelines" for the creation of this body, and also, she obsessively buys and uses all the products of the cosmetics and beauty industry as is evident from the passage finishing the description of the bathing ritual:

I stand up in the bath draining away the ordinariness that floats with the scum on the water, rinse myself with fresh water from the taps. The cold water runs on while I sit and soap each leg in turn, then lift the razor, checking the edge is keen. It gives a better finish slicing upward, against the hair: it severs more closely. I have to be careful it doesn't catch or draw blood. That would be unsightly. The water runs down each foreleg while I shave, carrying the shed animal hair away down the black hole under the taps. Fleeced, I turn off the taps and step out to rub my skin hard with the flat loops of the towel till it hurts. This makes me warmer. Then I stoop to wash my hair over the basin, pouring lukewarm cupfuls till the water is clear again. Twice. I wrap the damp hair in a towel and wipe a place in the misted mirror.

Boxes and bottles on the bedroom floor: creams, fluids, cotton and paper. Moisturiser. To keep in juice. Glutinous stuff for my elbows, knees and knuckles in case they're rough. I pluck my eyebrows, the single hair on my upper lip. Nail-scissors to make my pubic hair neat. Perfume for my ears, my neck, my wrists and navel; the flat space between my breasts, tips of my spine, between the toes. I file my nails, hand and feet with emery and pumice, pushing back the cuticles, defining whiteness with chalk. I paint my toenails. The radio mutters a play under the fallen bedspread. I paint them again. Then each fingernail in the same way. I leave my armpits free from chemical interference: deodorant matts, it tastes bad. This is my token naturalness in case this is what he prefers. I stand and pad on some talc from a canister instead, dripping white dust onto my knees and belly, puffs of smoke across my chest. I put on my prettiest underwear: net lace and satin, ribbon straps. Black. I wear a lot of black.

[...] I sit on the bedspread and spread out the things for my face. This has to be subtle; just enough makeup to make the eyes seem more, the lips rounder, bleach out the circles and lines growing like a web under the lashes. I have to tint my face because I am pale in cold weather, powder blue. This is unappetising and nothing to do with kiss. I tint myself Peaches and Dream, stain my eyelids lilac, brush the lashes black. I smear my lips with clear wax from a stick (red is too vivid and leaves marks, so may make him cautious). I am to be entirely inviting in case. (Galloway, 1991:47-48)

This unusually long quote, the extended description of such an everyday and apparently single act as taking a bath and applying a makeup may indicate the significance of creating a proper and neat body by cleaning and pampering, which, as a further step, is a clear attempt at creating a sense of selfhood, which, characteristically, is based on the rejection of any previous, appropriated sense of self. The passage closes with the following

comment of the narrator: “I test a smile in the mirror; it is difficult to pull the thing together, to see all of the offering and not a jumble of separate parts. [...] I smile at the woman in the mirror. Her eyes are huge. But what looks back is never what I want. Someone melting. And too much like me.” (Galloway, 1991:48) Bathing, that is, cleaning herself is, thus, cleaning the surface only to keep it neat and tidy, or rather, to cover the lack of even any imaginary unity of self, the lack of any meaningful existence that is related to her temporal existence as well. In this sense, by bathing Joy repeats the erasure of the sermon which constructs her as “stain”, as abjection, as the metaphor for her transgressive sexuality.

The cleanliness of the surface of the body is parallel with the internal cleanliness of the body, with Joy’s attempts at purifying her body by anorexia. Not eating is a sign of her power in her powerlessness. This paradox can be resolved on the basis of the following two claims: on the one hand, eating is a coded expression of power (Parker, 1995:349), whereas, on the other, the anorexic exerts extreme self-control and will-power which is self-destructive, and never offers a social solution. Anorexia, both as a social and psychoanalytical phenomenon, has several aspects relevant to cleanliness and purity as the anorexic considers food as contamination; consequently, not eating is purification, even at the cost of giving up food as functional food (food consumed to keep the body functioning as opposed to food consumed to find pleasure in eating). As a side-effect, the anorexic gains the feeling of an ecstatic, disembodied, controlled body.

At this point, anorexia clearly offers parallels to Joy’s experience of bathing: as a critic claims, “anorexia is a structure of facades constructed to hide a central hole of non-being” (MacSween, 1993:247), whereas, at the same time, this extreme purity and the resulting powerlessness is the “caricature of patriarchal culture’s image of femininity” (Waugh, 1989:183) - of a self-erasing, self-annihilating femininity. A further parallel can be drawn on the basis of MacSween’s insight, which claims that starvation is the end of not only appetite but also of desire; what is more, it can be read as the elimination of any intrusion into the body, thus brings about a closed body (1993:250).

That Joy Stone is anorexic is more than obvious for any reader of Galloway’s text. All she occasionally has is coffee and water, and should she for a moment enjoy food, she throws up right away: fat is a “conspiracy [...] to undermine your self-control” (Galloway, 1991:85). Ironically, however, the more she clears her stomach and bowels, potentially the more self-destructive it becomes: just as in bathing and shaving there is a danger of

destroying her skin, the very surface she wants to “sing”, digestive acids eat her tooth enamel (Galloway, 1991:87), her hands and nails chip and are in decay, her gums bleed (Galloway, 1991:90), her skin breaks, she even imagines that the decay of her teeth will produce a hole in the brain (Galloway, 1991:184). This metaphor establishes a clear link between the mental and the bodily wholeness of Joy: in her imagination, her mind is taken over by the very void and hole that best characterises both her physical and metaphysical existence: “there is no substance, nothing under the skin” (Galloway, 1991:175).

Cleanliness as covering the hole, and covering what is physically and psychically uncontainable – abject - in the surface order is also evident in Joy’s regular and compulsive house-cleaning before the health visitor arrives. Cleaning the house resembles both her bathing rituals and her anorexic self-purgations: it affects the visible surface only (she literally carries out the metaphor, and sweeps broken glass, e.g., under the carpet); and just like the breaking of her skin and teeth by excessive washing/vomiting, the cleaning fluids that are meant to preserve the impeccability of the surface actually do destroy these very surfaces. Typically, Joy uses the most abrasive detergent: VIM, which leaves scars and streaks on the surface of the kitchen table (Galloway, 1991:91).

In this way, cleaning the house - her home, less direct “body” - is far from “healing” and recovering a sense of self: rather, it symbolically leaves the signs of her trauma untouched, and by destroying the surfaces of the house, it can only reproduce debris, litter - the abject. The confluence of cleaning the house and the body is clear from the image of her hands, nails and skin chipping and tearing *when* she cleans the house (Galloway, 1991:92). Indeed, the conscious aim of cleaning the house is the same as cleaning the body: to make it whole, self-contained, look desirable, uncontaminated and pure: to make its surface sing.

It is, however, significant that cleaning the house is limited in other ways as well: cleaning never goes beyond the walls: she loses both the dustbin and the washing line from the outside - thus, cannot ultimately get rid of her psychic/symbolic “contamination”. In this way, the walls enclose both her cleanliness/purity and their binary opposite, the abject as related to the feminine body: as she says, “I am walled in like an adulterous nun” (Galloway, 1991:36). This ambiguity is a reason why those walls and surfaces of both the house and the body (from the inside and the outside) have to be kept self-contained and on the defensive: her existence as abject, as stain, has to be erased as it is erased by cultural discourse.

Nevertheless, covering and erasing herself as “stain” (and all the potential stains and contamination of her body) can only temporarily hide what is behind the singing surface: all kinds of blisters appear on her face (Galloway, 1991:27), and fungi endanger the whole structure of the cottage (Galloway, 1991:64), threatening it with collapse – as Joy’s inability to face her traumatic experience threatens her with an ultimate mental collapse. Her extremely self-contained and defensive existence can be interpreted as both a result and cause, related to the discourse of purity the protagonist is created by and creates. Instead of her obsessive insistence on cleanliness, instead of this homogeneous, single, pure, uncontaminated voice what is needed for her healing is a new stage, a new strategy, an opening up, symbolised by opening up the very skin that at the beginning functions as the covering, singing surface: “But you learn despite yourself: the names by absorption, the temperaments by feel. *Through the layer of the missing skin*” (Galloway, 1991:145; emphasis added). At this point, her skin, which used to function as defensive armoury, is opened up, which obviously makes her vulnerable to the others, to penetration, to interpersonal relationships; yet, instead of being walled into her self-defensive, fixed, “purified” – erased - identity she can take up various subject positions.

As a symbolical act, she removes the filth - the abject - from the inside of the house; or, at the psychic level: the residue, the debris of her trauma: she thoroughly cleans the house (Galloway, 1991:233), but not like before, by sweeping things under the carpet; she finds her dustbin and puts out the washing line (Galloway, 1991:232); she also throws out those clothes of hers (Galloway, 1991:233) that symbolise her non-existence in the sense of her extreme dependence on her ex-lover. With all this, she removes her “stain”-existence, but not by utter elimination or erasure - that is impossible, and can only lead to psychotic states - but by creating a balance between the simultaneous exclusion and containment of what is rejected by the symbolic order: what she rejects is excluded from the house, yet contained within the grounds - it is there, and is not there at the same time.

Parallel with this, at the interpersonal level, as opposed to the psychic and physical self-enclosure, she can write the word “love” at the bottom of the letter to her own double, Marianne (Galloway, 1991:180); she can go out for walks, and can even wave back at the newsagent (Galloway, 1991:218); and as a penultimate gesture of getting rid of the symptoms of her trauma, she can say “I forgive you” (Galloway, 1991:238). All these imply a necessary opening up, a replacement of the fixed identity by a multiple subjectivity which replaces the self-erasure and self-obliteration that is the “self-creating” gesture of

Joy at the beginning of the text. She does remove herself as “stain”, this removal, however, is not simply exclusion but also containment, an acceptance of the “uncertainty of [her] borders” (Kristeva, 1982:59), or an acceptance of herself as “adulterous nun”.

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AMBIGUOUS SEXUAL IDENTITY AND NARRATOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON’S *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*

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Despite the equivocal reception accorded to her work, Jeanette Winterson has gradually risen to prominence as a writer who interrogates the dominant contemporary models of history, re-assesses power relations between the sexes and actively seeks to represent and inscribe new female experience, explores the relations between language, truth and representation and asserts the power relationship between the reader and text. Her fiction frequently calls into question assumptions about fictional artifice, objective reality and narratorial identity. This latter aspect is fully outlined in her novel *Written on the Body*.

The narrator in Jeanette Winterson's book is in love with a married woman. Hardly a new topic. But what makes this novel a truly compelling story is the fact that the unnamed narrator is never identified as male or female. That silence and the extent to which it destabilizes both textuality and sexuality drive this novel at least as much as its surface plot.

Starting from the field of feminist narratology, which has emerged in recent decades, one may wonder in what ways this text's silence might be a matter of narratology. In 1986 Susan Lanser described the relation between feminism and narratology, which she named "feminist narratology": "My task is to ask whether feminist criticism, and particularly the study of narratives by women, might benefit from the methods...of narratology and whether narratology, in turn, might be altered by the understandings of feminist criticism and the experience of women's texts" (Lanser, 1986:342). Taking up this "task" a frequent question in feminist narratology is: how might sex, gender and sexuality function as elements of a narrative poetics and why have these categories remained on the margins of narratological inquiry?

Jeanette Winterson's novel points to aspects of the narrative that are "proper" to narratology in its classical sense, that is "the theory of narrative texts" (Bal, 1985:3) which studies, as Gerald Prince (1987:65) states, "the nature, form, and functioning of narrative" and examines "what all and only narratives have in common [...] as well as what enables them to be different from one another, and attempts to account for the ability to produce and understand them". Despite the fact that narratology has become more flexible about what constitutes its field, the sex and gender of textual personae have not been graciously welcomed as elements of narratology. In her essay *Queering Narratology*, Susan Lanser (1996:45) argues that "the categories sex/ gender/ sexuality interact with other

narratological elements from narrative person to paralipsis to reliability [...] At the same time, the ‘application’ of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality to actual texts calls profoundly into question the separation of text from context and grammar from culture and threatens the viability of binary systems on which narratology ‘proper’ tends to insist”.

Sexual categories pose certain complexities which begin to emerge in the very attempt to define them for narratological purposes. Feminist theorists of the 1970s and 1980s usually designate “sex” as a biological category and “gender” as a social one. More recent theorists such as Judith Butler have successfully deconstructed this opposition by arguing that “sex” is itself a culturally constructed category as much constituted by “gender” as “gender” is constituted by sex. Language further complicates this dynamic. The personal pronoun ‘she’ in English, usually refers to animate creatures or to objects that have grammatically acquired a gender through cultural practice: a car, a ship, the moon, autumn, etc. In contrast ‘elle’ in French or ‘ea’ in Romanian may refer to any number of objects, animate or inanimate, even to objects that might be biologically sexed as male - for example, ‘personne’ (‘person’) in French is feminine just like ‘persoană’ in Romanian. These linguistic phenomena are already slightly queer as they are sexually transgressive, undercutting their own apparent binaries.

In its turn, “sexuality” itself is perceived as a socially and historically constructed imaginary rather than as a natural energy or a set of drives which have been repressed. Foucault (1984:105-6) states in *The History of Sexuality*: “Sexuality must not be thought as a kind of natural given which power holds in check [...] it is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power”.

In what follows “sex” will be used to designate the formal identification of a human being as male or female; “gender” to refer to characteristics constructed in and by texts that implicate a male or female identity by drawing on cultural codes that conventionally signify masculinity or femininity, such as proper names and references to image, clothing or activities. “Sexuality” will be used to designate erotic orientation or identity particularly with respect to object choice.

Readers routinely seek to attribute a sex to narrators and characters through explicit linguistic markers such as “he” and “she”, through gendered codes that vary historically and culturally, and sometimes also through presumptions of heterosexuality. Although the narrator’s sex is never identified in *Written on the Body*, this absence does not stop readers from looking for gender markers through which to constitute the narrator’s sex and with it his/her sexuality, and hence to stabilize the text. But Winterson has elided from the novel virtually every possible gender identification. Only the most conventional readers, unable to imagine that a woman could wield a hammer, urinate outside, deride marriage, hit a man or make love to other women would insist that this narrator is male. For other readers, the markings of gender in *Written on the Body* will be as elusive as the markings of sex. The conventional search to attribute sex to textual personae, comes not only from the readers’ need to speak about narrators and characters in a binary-inflected language, but also from a sort of anxiety. This anxiety is precisely what makes Winterson’s novel so compelling a narrative. Here is not only the question of which sex is designated, but also the prior question of whether sex is designated at all.

In order to achieve an extended narrative without marking sex or gender, a considerable amount of information has to be omitted. This general ellipsis or “paralipsis” in Genette’s term, becomes, along with narrative person, another narratological category that interacts with sex, gender and sexuality. In *Written on the Body* we get to know hardly anything in terms of facts about the narrating “I”, neither age nor gender, neither exterior image nor specific beliefs. Carefully, the narrator avoids both describing him/herself and reflecting gender in dialogues. Without giving information about the narrating “I”, the novel opens with a key-phrase: “Why is the measure of love loss?” (Winterson, 1993:9), followed by remarks on the dry summer, without mentioning where or which summer, and soon engages in the act of remembering : “I am thinking of a certain September” (9). The opening is remarkable for its absence of information: neither the specific time nor place is mentioned, and the “I” remains as indefinite as the “you” in the first page. So far, the story seems to take place inside the narrator’s mind, and all the information a narratee different from the self would need is excluded or must be excluded, so as to keep the gender unknown.

In her essay “Narration and Gender: the Role of the First-Person Narrator in Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*”, Ute Kauer shows that, generally speaking, the first-person narrator as main character is subject to certain restrictions imposed by this genre.

“The narration is limited to the narrator’s field of vision. He or she can relate his/her mind, but cannot enter into the thoughts and feelings of other characters without a sound justification for this knowledge. As omniscience is excluded from this point of view, the narrator can only relate what goes on in the present or what is past experience; definite references to the future are not possible”. (Kauer, 1998:44). Furthermore, the first person narrator cannot provide the reader with a detailed physical description of him/herself and therefore an external picture is often given by a mirror. “The mirror may be a literal mirror, but it is usually a figurative mirror throwing back the image of the narrator from the communications of other characters, whether in letters or in dialogue” (Romberg, 1962:4). The case is slightly different in *Written on the Body*. The normal restrictions of a first-person narrator are reversed and open up narrative possibilities. Here the narrator sees no need to justify the memories but plays with fiction and reality. In addition to this, the first-person narrator in this case does not want to be identified by the categories which are usually connected with identity, namely gender, age, clothing or image. The love affairs do not offer any clue either, since both girlfriends and boyfriends are mentioned, which only indicates that the narrator must be bisexual. However, there is a scene in the novel where the narrator looks in the mirror, but only to verify an inner state of mind: “Was I in sound mind and body? I took my temperature. No. I peered at my head in the mirror. No.” (Winterson, 1993:96). In the dialogues and the descriptions of sexual encounters, every reference to the gender of the narrator is carefully omitted. Even in disputes with adulterous women or quarrels with Elgin, no verbal hint at the gender is given. This must appear contrived, as it is not usual in such situations. The difficulty is obvious in a narrated dialogue with Louise, where she tells the narrator that “you were the most beautiful creature male or female I had ever seen” (84). Since much of *Written on the Body* is about the body, the elided physical descriptions of the narrator are not insignificant and he/she is fully aware of this fact: “Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story” (89).

The absence of information about a narrator’s sex also raises questions about the relationships readers construct between the narrator and the implied author of the text. In her essay, Lanser (1996:48) says that many times, “the marking of an author’s sex on the title page or book cover serves implicitly to mark the sex of a sexually unmarked narrator”.

If a novel is written by a lady, is the narrator assumed to be a female, or is even a narrator constructed by a woman writer read as male? Therefore, would *Written on the Body* be assumed to have a female narrator because it is written by Jeanette Winterson? If so, the text could be read from the start as a lesbian narrative.

To the extent that sex and gender matter for interpretation, the non-marking of these categories yields two narrative texts. In the first half of the novel, the narrator may easily be considered a man who falls in love with a married woman, but later the same narrator recalls a previous boyfriend in Paris: "I had a boyfriend once called Crazy Frank" (Winterson, 1993:92), and consequently sexuality ruptures the conventional system. The insertion of this new formal element may affect the signification of the narrator's unmarked sex and gender only slightly, if the narrator had been read originally as lesbian, but definitely more, if the narrator had been considered a straight man. No doubt, *Written on the Body*, whatever the sex of the narrator, is a queer novel with a queer plot. In both parts, the beloved is married and narrative conflict centres first around whether Louise will leave her husband Elgin, a brilliant cancer researcher, and later on the effects of the narrator's decision to flee from Louise when he/she hears that Louise has leukaemia so that Louise will return to Elgin, who claims that his wife will certainly die without his professional care.

The categories of sex, gender and sexuality also interact with narrative reliability. If a heterosexual reader were to construct the narrator of *Written on the Body* as queer, that reader might also decide that the point of view of the narrator was suspiciously subjective about everything to do with love and desire, which are the major themes of the book. That reader may consider unreliable the narrator's claim to have left Louise hoping that she would benefit in this way from her husband's medical care and connections. If a reliable narrator is one "whose values (tastes, judgments, moral sense) diverge from those of the implied author" as Prince (1987:101) explained in his *Dictionary of Narratology*, then, the reader will construct the implied author's norms from the values one thinks the author ought to hold. A sexually conservative reader of *Written on the Body*, influenced maybe by Winterson's previous novels - *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, might well decide that the norms of the implied author are decadent. "In this case a narrator who would technically be considered reliable by standard definitions - because the narrator's norms are consistent with those of the implied author - might well be judged unreliable by readers whose values diverge from those of Winterson" (Lanser, 1996:51).

On the other hand, the author herself constructs a postmodern play on fiction and reality which hints at the unreliability of the narrator. According to Bertil Romberg's definition the "distinguishing characteristic of the first-person novel is that the author makes the novel narrate itself through the mouth of one of the figures taking part in it" (Romberg, 1962:4). In this case, the narrator not only takes part in the story, he/she is the main character, undertaking a minute self-analysis. The act of communication is characterized by a kind of partnership between reader and narrator in which the latter relates his/her experience to an audience. This audience consists of a fictitious "you" who is sometimes the self, as in a diary, sometimes Louise and other times the implied reader, who is addressed by rhetorical questions "See?" and directly as "you". The narrator reacts as if he/she could actually hear the reader's doubts or questions: "You think I'm trying to wriggle out of my responsibilities?" (Winterson, 1993:16); "Did I say this has happened to me again and again? You will think I have been constantly in and out of married women's lumber-rooms" (17). So we have a situation of communication where the narrator changes the addressee, establishes a quasi-oral relationship to the reader to whom he/she attaches the roles of confidant(e) and moral authority. But instead of the traditional device of reinforcing the reliability of the narrator, this one ironically undermines his/her credibility by asking "Can I be trusted?" (24). The same effect is given by statements which are corrected in the same paragraph: immediately after describing a scene where the narrator fed ripe plums to Louise, he/she says: "There are no ripe plums in August" (17), but: "Nevertheless I will push on" (18). The narrator displays an uneasiness about his/her trustworthiness which is on the one hand ironical, but on the other hand a strategy which underlines the fact that the fictive biography of the self is much more important than what actually took place. "One cannot describe reality; only give metaphors that indicate it" as John Fowles (1977:13) put it. The revealed unreliability of the narrator suggests the metaphorical character of the reality described. After he/she has once explicitly questioned his/her own credibility, the reader is liable to doubt what is told, and to attach more importance to the meaning than to the verbal facts. On this basis, a scene from the past is presented when the narrator actually made things up. In a fragment about his girlfriend Inge, the narrator tells how he/she made up an ironic explanation for Renoir's statement that he painted with his penis: "Don't worry. He did. When he died they found nothing between his balls but an old brush. 'You're making it up'. Am I?" (22). The scene is repeated in the Henry Miller version later in the novel, where the brush is replaced by a

ball-point pen and the anarchist girlfriend by a would-be writer. The dialogue from the past is rhetorically questioned from the narrator's present, "Am I?" although a past tense "Did I?" would be more logical. This subtle change of tense may suggest that the narrator made up not only the jokes about Renoir and Henry Miller but also the whole story.

The narrative complexities that result from sex, gender and sexuality also raise the question of tellability that some narratologists have addressed. *Written on the Body* entails three plot possibilities: "The man loves a married woman", "The woman loves a married woman" and one variable: "A person of indeterminate sex loves a married woman". Of the three, the first seems the least conflicting, the second more intense in terms of conflict, and the third different in kind because it inserts a metaplot in which additional narrative tension is generated precisely by the excitement of trying to discover whether the narrator in love with a married woman is male or female.

All these possibilities clearly suggest that sex, gender and sexuality constitute narratologically significant elements that intersect with other textual aspects to illuminate "the nature, form and functioning of narrative", to describe common points and differences among narratives, and to account for readers' "ability to produce and understand them". But narratological attention to sex, gender and sexuality also implies "contextual poetics, for the impossibility of reading any narrative without considering the context", as Susan Lanser (1996:51) points out.

As a final point it would be interesting to identify some of Winterson's intentions in constructing a gender-free persona. Elaine Showalter once correlated the development of women's writing to the changes in ethnic sub-culture groups. Analogous to the stages of imitation of tradition, protest against the given social roles and self-discovery, she identified three well-known phases in women's literature: the feminine phase (1840-1880); the feminist phase (1880-1920) and the female phase (1920 to the present). With *Written on the Body*, Winterson has transcended the stage of self-discovery. Ute Kauer (1998:41) says that: "The main object is no longer to discover a specific female identity, and the emphasis is not on a predominantly female perspective in the relationships which are described. Neither is it an attempt at self-discovery by reviving the androgynous myth of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, sexual ambiguity is not the same as androgyny". Winterson goes a step further. This is no longer self-discovery but rather a process of self-construction. The narrator does not want to merge male and female views on the subject of

the narration – love - but tries to erase all gender specifics in a manner that, at times, may seem a little too pointed not to appear artificial.

Nevertheless this artificiality may be an intended one. One of the aims of the book is to deconstruct clichés about love, gender and specific male or female codes of behaviour. “It’s the clichés that cause the trouble” (10) is a statement frequently repeated in the novel. Winterson sets out to destroy those clichés by pretending not to recognize the importance of gender-markers. Clichés such as “You’ll get over it” or “I love you more than life itself” (105) are not precise, they do not describe the feelings of the narrator adequately, and therefore he/she uses word-plays to deconstruct these clichés, like for example the opposition between “engage” and “distract” in the following paragraph: “It is so terrifying, love, that all I can do is shove it under a dump bin of pink cuddly toys and send myself a greeting card saying ‘Congratulations on your engagement’. But I am not engaged I am deeply distracted” (10). The word-play underlines that language itself is inflected with clichés and categorizations and thus no longer appropriate for a changed mode of behaviour or for the phenomenon of love. Winterson sets out then on a journey to reconstruct the language of passion, in a way reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence and his attempt to invent a new language for love. In *Written on the Body*, the section about “Cells, tissues, systems and cavities of the body” (115-139) clearly illustrates the author’s attempt. The lack of irony separates this part neatly from the rest of the book; here the impulse to create a new language “written on the body” outweighs the impulse to destroy the old clichés.

However deconstruction is not enough - the tired patterns have to be replaced by new concepts, words and modes of narrating. In this situation, would a gender-free narrator imply a narration freed from gender-specific clichés? One can argue that in fact, the narrator uses precisely this type of cliché to keep the reader in uncertainty about his/her gender. The refusal to admit the gender of the “I” is based on a play with stereotypes which the reader is supposed to have and which will be deconstructed just as the language of love is to be deconstructed in the text. The reader is caught in a net of hints and false assumptions concerning the gender of the narrator, counteracting the whole set of assumptions about the terms “male” and “female”. In the text, there are some gender hints, carefully constructed but deliberately puzzling. For example, readers would generally assume that a male first-person narrator tends to compare himself to a male figure, whereas a female first-person narrator would probably choose a female figure for comparison.

There are allusions to Alice in Wonderland (10), to Lauren Bacall (41) or “a convent virgin” (94) which lend support to the assumption that the narrator might be female. But those identifications with female figures are juxtaposed with identifications with male figures. The narrator chooses an epitaph as “unhappy Socrates” (13) and repeatedly calls him/herself “Lothario”. Again the reader is puzzled by this play with male and female identifications.

One might easily fall prey to Winterson’s design in trying to trace the gender of the narrator. Maybe it is just a clever narrative game the critic is apt to play. Every reader creates his or her own text, led by the strategies of the narrator. The “I” in the novel plays on the sexual stereotypes that constitute our view on love. They are constantly contradicted, satirized and questioned, thus suggesting that love is a more universal phenomenon than we are inclined to believe, neither restricted by gender nor exclusively reserved for heterosexual relationships. The narrator does not propagate a romantic notion of love but stresses the bodily side of the phenomenon, trying to deconstruct some of the lies about emotions. The book is “written on the body”, carefully keeping the balance between a very personal confession in a highly poetic language and a satirical deconstruction of old clichés. The blurb of the novel announces that Winterson “has made language new” in her book, which is a very high claim. What she offers is a new narrative strategy, opening up new questions about sex, gender and sexuality as narratological elements. What we get is not a totally gender-free chaos but a new way of female writing which lets us “loose in open fields” as the narrator, whose sex is forever a mystery, states (190).

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**“SEMBLANCES” – TEXTUALITY AND THE BODY
IN PAUL VERHOEVEN'S *BASIC INSTINCT***

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The heroine of *The Maltese Falcon*, Miss O'Shaughnessy, when Sam Spade tries to persuade her to tell him 'the whole truth', complains that "I'm tired of lying. Making up lies. Not knowing what is a lie and what is the truth." Her words suggest that the potentially endless process of lies building upon lies leads to the blurring of borderlines between what is true and what is false, between what is real and what is not. But this is only a temporary situation in the movie: in spite of this insight into the nature of narrative and lying, the truth surfaces in the end from beneath so many layers of lies, even if it means the fall of Miss O'Shaughnessy.

In many ways Dutch director Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct* revolves around the same problem. But by contrast, in *Basic Instinct*, the truth is left in obscurity throughout the whole movie. I think that the significance of this aspect of the film goes beyond techniques of suspense (which is, of course, a prime requisite of thrillers): it lies at the very core of what the film is all about.

Basic Instinct opens with a sequence in which Johnny Boz (a retired rock star, the first victim in the movie) and the mysterious killer are making love. This is a crucial scene, both in the sense that it presents us with the first scene of murder, and because it sets up a relation of mirroring that is paradigmatic in the movie, as *Basic Instinct* quite explicitly thematizes and interrogates the relationship between reality and representation (cf. Halberstam, 1993:196). In this first shot, the camera presents us the *reflection* in the ceiling mirror first, setting up such an opposition between reflection and reality that implicitly gives primacy to the mirror image. In this specular model, we are still able to tell the difference between reflection and what is being reflected. In my paper I would like to show how this "clear cut" model comes gradually to be replaced by another one, a textual model, in which we no longer know what is real and what is only a mirror image, which is the original and which is only a copy, what is the truth and what is only a lie.

Narrative and Lying

Shortly after this murder, the police have a prime suspect, the novelist Catherine Tramell, Johnny Boz's girlfriend (played by Sharon Stone). When the two detectives (Gus Moran and Nick Curran, the latter played by Michael Douglas) and Catherine are heading

for the police department for her to be interrogated as a suspect, Gus asks her whether she is currently “workin’ on another book?” Catherine’s answers him by saying, “It teaches you to lie. [...] You make it up, but it has to be believable. They call it *suspension of disbelief*.” (22, my emphasis) This passage quite explicitly connects narration with lying: a narrative is a lie, though it has to efface its status as a lie, it has to be believable; hence the allusion to the Coleridgean ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. (This reference to Coleridge means that we are not surprised later to learn that Catherine has a degree in literature and psychology, which are, in Nick’s view, precisely two ways of “screwing with people’s heads” (12).)

Coleridge coined the term ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ in the chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria* and described it as a “state of receptivity and credulity desirable in a reader” (Cuddon, 1991:1044) of poetry which was created through “the modifying colours of imagination”: “it was agreed that my endeavours [as opposed to Wordsworth’s method] should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least, romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a *semblance of truth* sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” (Coleridge, 1956:168-169) However, we should note that Catherine misuses Coleridge’s phrase somewhat, as she realigns the term in at least two ways: instead of a process carried out by the reader, it is performed by the author; and the term becomes intimately related to the opposition of truth and lie. It asks us to see as truth that which is – to quote Coleridge again – only a “semblance of truth” created by the text.

If we examine the various meanings of the word ‘semblance’, in *Webster’s Dictionary* we find the following: it is either ‘outward aspect or appearance’; or an ‘assumed or unreal appearance, a show’; or ‘the slightest appearance or trace’; or a ‘likeness, image, or copy; or a spectral appearance, apparition’. The semblance thus signifies the radical disjunction between appearance and essence, subverting the order of representation built on the correspondence of these two. These observations suggest that the semantic field of the word ‘semblance’ is not very far from Jean Baudrillard’s notion of the ‘simulacrum’, a copy without an original, the term, which Baudrillard used in his critique of representation (Baudrillard, 2000).

Though it imitates something, the semblance is obviously not identical with it: the difference between the original and what is imitated is maintained. But once *Basic Instinct*

sets this logic of the semblance in motion, the specular model of truth becomes tainted by a textual one, which can no longer sustain the one-to-one correspondence between, on the one hand, original and truth and on the other, semblance and lie. To define it at last, by this “textual model” or “textuality” in general, I allude here to the various ambivalences and undecidabilities uncovered in literary texts by deconstructive readings. These ambivalences lead to a point where we are no longer able to decide what is the original and what is “only” a semblance, what is the truth and what is “only” a lie. These “textual” ambiguities become immediately palpable if we examine the referential status of Catherine’s novels.

Uncanny Referentiality

The novels Catherine writes under the pen-name ‘Catherine Woolf’ are far from being clearly separated from reality as lies, or as “an autonomous poetical universe”. These texts have, to say the least, an ambivalent relation with reality. For example, she gives one of her novels –*The First Time* – which is about a boy who kills his parents, in Catherine’s words, “To see if he can get away with it” (63) to Nick as a present. The referential status of this text is somewhat ambiguous as the police know that Catherine’s parents were killed in an accident at sea years earlier, leaving her as their sole inheritor. More importantly though, another of her books – *Love Hurts* – is about a woman who murders a retired rock star. Even the police cannot miss the striking resemblance between the narrative and what “actually” happened. When Nick perceives that nearly all Catherine’s books “got a funny way of becoming true”, Lieutenant Walker only remarks: “What are you — a book critic?” (34) To solve the case, Nick in fact has to turn into a book critic: by reading Catherine’s novels, he has to face the problems posed by textuality.

Catherine’s concept of narrative and reading method, and that of the police show considerable differences. While Catherine’s novels ask the readers to suspend their judgement (to ‘suspend their disbelief’), the law’s primary aim is not to suspend but, rather, to reach judgement as soon as possible. While the law demands reference (that is, a relation in which fiction mirrors reality), Catherine’s novels deny direct reference: she knows that the relationship between reality and fiction is, to quote Judith Halberstam, “ambiguous, undecidable, negotiable” (Halberstam, 1993:198), but at the same time she tells the police that “I’m a writer, I use people for what I write.” (29) She has written a book about many of the characters, for example Roxy (who killed her brothers), Hazel

Dobkins (who wiped out her whole family) or Johnny Boz. Nick happens to belong to this group as well: he is the protagonist of Catherine's latest novel, *Shooter*, which is being written throughout the movie. (This novel is perhaps the film itself, but we obviously cannot be sure of this.)

However, knowing the subject matter of Catherine's novels does greatly help the police to solve the case. It is still dubious whether *Love Hurts* is *evidence* for her guiltiness, or something that provides a perfect *alibi* for Catherine. The so-called "super-readers" of these books are psychologists, experts in criminal behaviour, Beth Garner, Nick's former lover, happens to be one of them. (Perhaps the police would have been better off asking deconstructors to help them, they might have solved the case earlier, or, quite the opposite, they would not have solved it at all.) These psychologists are supposed to have total authority over the texts they read - in this case Catherine's novels. However, the problems inherent in textuality invade the territory of law and jurisprudence, which thinks only in terms of clear-cut oppositions, and thus cannot tolerate ambiguity. But, like Derrida's woman in *Éperons*, Catherine deals in undecidability (Derrida, 1979).

As opposed to the indeterminacy of Catherine's novels, the texts of law (for example police files) are supposed to have a direct referential status, but unfortunately they have a tendency to disappear throughout the movie. For instance, Nick's files that belonged to the Internal Affairs of the police department, and Beth's police record from the University of Berkeley are both missing (having found their way into Catherine's hands), thus we never learn what these texts might have really contained. It is only in Catherine's rewritten version that we encounter them, which radically questions their truth-value and meta-narrative status.

The disappearance of Beth's file from Berkeley is perhaps the most important missing text in the film. Beth tells Nick that she knew Catherine from the University and that she "gave her the creeps", but she is quite reticent about their previous relationship. Later, after the night Roxy tries to kill Nick, Catherine tells him about one of her lesbian relationships at the university (84): it turns out that this girl, named Lisa Hoberman is identical with the psychologist Beth Garner. At the university, she and Beth were supposed to have made love once. However, the outcome of this romance was much more ambivalent: both Catherine and Beth tell Nick that after their liaison the other woman started following them around and begun to imitate their appearance. As there is no extra-textual evidence for either woman's claim (Beth's file could have granted a clue), it is not clear whether Beth

was “the original” and Catherine “the copy” or the other way round: like the opposition of truth and lie, the binary of the original and the copy remains undecidable as well. (Cf. Roberts, 2000:238)

Truth and the Body

In such a case where the dividing line between truth and lie, original and copy is so uncannily blurred, is there any possibility of reaching final truth, reaching that final judgement demanded by the law? Without any extra-textual clues of telling them apart, the movie tries to reduce the problems inherent in textuality by referring truth to the body. But with this “desperate” move, it only displaces and perpetrates textual ambivalence.

Of course, the body, mostly Catherine’s body is of primary importance in the movie. We only need to think of the infamous interrogation scene in the film where she makes a performance of her “femininity”, a show intended for the eyes of the entirely masculine “audience”. Because of her overwhelming erotic impulses, the whole interrogation misses its aim as Catherine is “poised, cool, in complete command of herself [...] She has control of the room” (23-24). The power relations on which the acts of interrogation rest are thus subverted, and Catherine soon becomes the one to ask the questions. Because of the failure of the interrogation Catherine has to submit to a more objective polygraph test – but ironically, it is she who offers to have the lie detector test carried out.

The polygraph test is based on the assumption that truth and lying are intimately and ultimately tied up with the body: according to official statistics, in 90% of the cases the lie detector can pinpoint the bodily symptoms of lying. Thus, the body in the movie is not only a site of erotic enjoyment, but something that can be used for solving important epistemological dilemmas as well. The result of the test is considered objective and authoritative, Catherine is immediately set free after taking (or “beating”?) the polygraph. Yet Nick has his own, personal doubts about the reliability of the polygraph test: there are hints in the movie that he himself has beaten the machine before (previously he had “accidentally” shot some tourists, but been cleared of the charge of murder). In the script version of the film, Nick asks the Examiner, “How does somebody beat this machine? (The Examiner) Ninety-nine point nine percent of the cases, they don’t. You’d have to be able to mask the truth from your own central nervous system, your circulatory system, your adrenal glands.” (30)

After the test, Catherine explains to Nick that “If I were guilty, and if I wanted to beat that machine, it wouldn’t be tiring [...] I’m a professional liar. I spend most of my waking hours dwelling on my lies. [...] For my writing.” (31) In Catherine’s view, it is because of her profession as a writer that her body cannot reveal that she is lying. Her body cannot be grasped in its primal relation to truth, as it is always already defined by textuality. This insight raises some doubts about whether the body can function as the final locus of truth both *in* the movie and in texts written *about* the movie. For instance, one critic tries to “solve” the film by identifying the body of the murderer (we see her body except her face in the first scene) with Catherine’s body (Sanello, 1997). But what I have just argued seems to preclude this possibility: it may be a mistake to entirely trust the female body and fetishize it as a privileged locus of truth in order to stabilize the order of representation.

It is his strong sensual attraction towards Catherine that makes Nick unable to read between Catherine’s lines: “(Nick) You mean getting inside you isn’t going to get me any deeper into your character. (Catherine) Not unless you confuse my character with my body parts.” (72-73) As a detective, Nick’s primary concern should obviously be Catherine’s character (and not her body), but the professional and the personal get really mixed and messed up here. If the body cannot function as the final locus of truth because it is always already inscribed by textuality, by confusing Catherine’s “character” with “her body parts”, Nick (and the critic mentioned above) get lost in the infinite mirror-play of the semblance in which inside and outside, original and copy, truth and lie do not correspond symmetrically. *Basic Instinct* dramatizes the body not as a “central nexus of narrative meaning”, as Peter Brooks would have it elsewhere (1995:25), but as a stumbling block to meaning: the film forecloses the option of moving freely from erotic enjoyment to the knowledge of “character.” Far from being univocally allied to truth, the body becomes an obstacle to knowing.

The Reduction of Undecidability

In my paper so far I have tried to show how the ambivalences inherent in textuality proliferate throughout the movie, eclipsing the body as well, constantly deferring and subverting stable meaning. But we might ask with Paul de Man whether “it is possible to remain [...] *within* an undecidable situation?” (1984:70). This question (as it happens a rhetorical one) already hints that it is really hard not to reach any kind of judgement. But how does the film negotiate this impasse?

Nick has to face an epistemological and an ethical predicament at the same time. He is in a situation he cannot get out of without violence, both epistemic and “real”. This is most obvious in the scene when Nick, having discovered his partner’s dead body, meets Beth and shoots her. It is only after her death that nearly all the evidence seems to highlight that Beth was responsible for all the murders. This is the version verified and authorized by the police: the impasse generated by the case is reduced to sense, but only at the price of another dead body, this time a female body. However, this kind of “violent” reduction is perhaps a structural necessity inherent in the discourse of law: in Barbara Johnson’s view, the discourse of law resists “opening up meaning as a question, as a non-given, as a bafflement” (1994:39), thus it necessarily carries out “the forcible transformation of ambiguity to decidability” (Johnson, 1988:107).

For Nick, however, the case is not that easily settled. What he had mistakenly thought of as a gun in Beth’s pockets, was only a small figurine on her keys (in the script version, there is nothing in her pockets). As the material remainder of their love, this figurine (this “nothing”) acts as the “return of the Real”, hinting at something that cannot be integrated into, and which thus resists, the police’s interpretation of the events. This incongruent element radically questions the forcible closure made necessary by the discourse of law. In a similar way, at the end of the film we are presented not with a reassuring closure, but precisely with a question: will the ever-present ice-pick strike again and disrupt, as Halberstam suggests, “the compulsory heterosexual resolution of the narrative” (1993:197)?

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Gender, Culture, Society

**THE BEFORE OF ORDER AND THE CUTTING EDGE OF LITERATURE
(FANTASY, CASTRATION AND THE GROUNDING OF PHALLOCENTRIC
METAPHYSICS IN GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S "THE KNIGHT'S TALE")**

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“The only way to break the power of our ideological dream is to confront the Real of our desire which announces itself in this dream.”

Slavoj Žižek

If one is to believe criticism, texts like Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales* possess a most peculiar space: on one hand they belong to a specific time and place and cultural context (which we all explain to our students at the beginning of classes), but on the other hand they inhabit a kind of mythical space outside the history of literature, a space similar to the heavens where Greek heroes went after death (if they were heroic enough), a space of immortality. "The Knight's Tale" seems to reach this space of the classics because of the picture of chivalry and gender-identity that it presents, represents and performs. Imagine two brother-knights who are hopelessly in love with a woman they catch sight of from their prison window, two knights, once best friends who fight all through their lives and are ready to kill each other for a woman they have never spoken a word to: what could be more idiotic, stupid and *ideal* than this? If the gallery of ideas (or ideal forms) in the Platonic sense exists, this tale – together with the patterns of gender, time, space, order and chivalry it prescribes – would definitely have to be placed there.

(When writing about cultural memory in the context of ancient Greece and Egypt, Jan Assmann differentiates between the ontologically different *mythic past* of a certain culture and the *historical past of the classics* which is ontologically homogenous with the present (see: Assmann, 93). As will become clear later in this paper, in my opinion, that difference cannot be maintained in the case of post-enlightenment Western cultures, in which the

mythical past has been lost (or it has been constructed as lost) and to a certain extent replaced by the classics of literature (that rely on them as being lost)).

Needless to say, when I place these patterns within that Platonic gallery, I do not mean to argue that they represent eternal truth, but I would rather like to distance them from us, defining my own position at the margins of patriarchy. It is only from the critical distance of this marginal position that we may consider the beauty of these patterns, where Platonic ideas, patterns that contemporary criticism would call fundamental fantasies may be far enough from us to become objects of aesthetic pleasure.

When I locate “The Knight`s Tale” in this mythical past that has been shaping our understanding of certain issues for centuries (in a past that never actually existed and never actually seems to stop existing), I perform an allegorisation of Chaucer`s text. His tale also starts with a reference to a mythical past: in his case it is the time of the Greeks and Theseus. For some reason, Chaucer`s Knight cannot start his tale without telling a *tale-before-the-tale*, without creating a story *before* the story, without creating a time of *before*, without situating and grounding what he has to say in this *before*.

Stories of old have made it known to us
That there was once a Duke called Theseus,
Ruler of Athens, Lord and Governor,
And in his time so great a conqueror
There was none mightier beneath the sun. (42)

So the Knight – who belongs for us to a mythical past – starts his tale by referring to “stories of old,” to another mythical past and a mythical hero, Theseus. What we see here is the workings of the trope of a *before*, the trope of an imaginary past that grounds the present. Apparently, within this tradition of story-telling (to which, to some degree, we all belong) narratives, structures, tales, time and history cannot simply ground themselves, they need an imaginary supplement which they can refer to, a point of imaginary origin outside themselves, in the outside that constitutes the core of the inside, in a non-existent past that makes the existing present coherent. In my opinion, the tale before the tale about Theseus serves as such an imaginary supplement: when we read it, we read the mythical origin of a world in which tales like that of the two brother knights and their beloved Emily can be located.

What one encounters here is the phantasmic support of a narrative in the Lacanian sense, some kind of basic manual that teaches the reader what man, woman, power or sexuality are. What is crucial to see here is that a fantasy is never simply the imaginary satisfaction of a desire, but rather a map that the symbolic follows. As Žižek argues,

...fantasy does not simply realize a desire in a hallucinatory way: rather, its function is similar to that of Kantian 'transcendental schematism': a fantasy constitutes our desire, provides its coordinates; that is, it literary 'teaches us how to desire.' ... [fantasy] provides a `schema` according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire, filling in the empty spaces opened up by the formal symbolic structure. (1997:7)

What I find interesting in this tale-before-the-tale is the workings of this trope of the *before* (which creates the mythical time of fantasy) and the way it makes the patriarchal narrative possible, the way it creates the fundamental premises, goals, figures and blindnesses that such a narrative takes for granted. On the other hand, what I find special in "The Knight's Tale" as a whole is that it dramatises this reliance on the past: it relies on the tale-before-the-tale just as we (our time, our understanding of gender, and our structures of identification) rely on the tale. In other words, it repeats the structure of the imaginary supplement of the past that is needed for the interpretation of something coming later. In this way it represents interpretation and the creation of meaning (and identity) as constituted by a never-ending chain of supplementarity, in which the present is never complete, sufficient or enough for itself, but always has to rely on its supplement, the imaginary time of the *before*, which – as long as it really was a symbolic network of meaning once – also relies on its own phantasmic *before*.

At the beginning of "The Knight's Tale" we find a war that the "great conqueror" Theseus fought against the Amazons. Obviously, this war that stands at the beginning of stories is not simply a war between two nations or armies, but also one between different ideological constructs. In this war men fight against women, women are constructed as other, alien, enemy. When the text says that Theseus "had subdued the Amazons by force" (42), we may notice that the Greek army is represented by the figure of Theseus, in other words the army has a centre, a leader with a name who may stand for it and represent it within a symbolic order of a narrative. The Greek army therefore is symbolically marked by the name of the father of order, making the army itself unified, named, structured and belonging to a phallogocentric symbolic order kept together by the name of the father. In

sharp contrast to this, the other army is referred to as “the Amazon,” a mass, a faceless crowd without such a structuring principle. In this sense, this war (like any war at the beginning of stories is supposed to be) is not just one between the Greek and the Amazons, or one between the sexes, but also a war between order and chaos.

Within this imagery, woman is marked as other, outside or before order, dangerous and to be subdued, whereas the Greeks are marked by the name of the father, order and patriarchy. In other words, the art of war and love are connected in an allegorical structure. Within this tale warring and whoring become analogous with each other, the enemy is a woman to be raped, and Theseus` s being the greatest “conqueror” under the sun becomes a most ambiguous expression, making him a “hero” of both war and sex, a master of both the sword and the penis. A kind of *double entendre* is created thus, in which power; order and gender are closely connected in a radically one-dimensional phallogentric perspective.

When I attended secondary school we used an ironic classification of movies that distinguished between two kinds of films: *kardozós*, movies in which people fight with swords, and *baszós*, movies in which they shag. (Actually, there was a third category as well, the so called *kardozós-baszós*, in which both the sword and the penis played central roles. Obviously, this was the best genre.)

In my opinion, “The Knight` s Tale” performs an ideal *kardozós-baszós* story, in which the two phallic activities do not merely occur side by side, but become each other` s allies and allegories. When the *battle* is mentioned “Between those women and the Athenian men” (43), or Hyppolita, the queen is “besieged and taken” (43), the text figures woman as a danger to phallic order, man and woman as confronting others, sexuality as a matter of phallic violence, and the female body as a battlefield, a land to be conquered. In this imagery Hyppolita appears as a castle, closed, static and cold, that masculine force has to break into. (In this sense the *ram*, the key vehicle of breaking through castle gates becomes another phallic tool, an imaginary substitute-penis.)

One may see how the basic ideological patterns of patriarchal narratives are established in these few pages. Nevertheless, there is a lot *more* to come in this tale before the tale, things that reveal the shape of these ideological patterns and their paradoxes even more clearly. This so far analysed, more or less classic and commonplace imagery takes a most interesting turn, when the story gets as far as Theseus` s getting back to Athens. Here he becomes aware:

That kneeling on the highway, two by two,
A company of ladies were in view
All clothed in black, each pair in proper station
Behind the other. And such lamentation
And cries they uttered, it was past conceiving
The world had ever heard such noise of grieving... (43)

As it turns out, the ladies are in grief because of the cruelty of another king, Creon, the lord of Thebes, who will not allow their husbands to be buried. On hearing the cries of the ladies and seeing their tears, Theseus instantly turns back and makes for Thebes.

What I consider worth noting in this situation is the different treatment of the two kinds of women: the Amazons and the ladies in grief. One may consider it somewhat ironic that right after (practically) beating and raping the Amazon women Theseus behaves like an idealist knight, who has to avenge any kind of misdeed that may happen on the surface of the Earth. What I find particularly interesting is that we (for example, most of my students) usually do *not* find this detail interesting, strange or ironic at all: somehow for the average reader it is quite natural that the Amazons are beaten and raped, while the ladies in grief are helped by a hero like Theseus. It seems that the two different images, views and approaches to women form ideological patterns that still work in us, still serve as grounding fantasies of our reality, and therefore make these events seem natural.

But let us see the differences between these two images of woman. The way they are referred to, being *Amazons* and *ladies*, is already significant: *Amazon* clearly connects to the barbaric, outside culture and the law of the father, while *lady* refers to a status within patriarchal society. *Amazon* signifies independent woman, even a fearsome enemy, while the *ladies* are kneeling and weeping: they are weak, in need of the help and protection of a strong, masculine figure. Within the (undeniably phallogentric) vocabulary of psychoanalysis, the first would be called the image of *phallic woman*, while the other would be *castrated*. The first image belongs to a pre-Oedipal perspective (when the child has not been torn apart from the mother, so she may maintain her strength), while the second belongs to the Oedipal phase, when the power of the mother over the child has already been crushed by the symbolic father.

Once we realise that these two images of woman are such central images of the child's inner changes (*development* would not be a politically correct word here), the whole story gains a different significance. In the battle between the founding father and the phallic

women one may see an allegory of the inner battle of the child's Oedipalization, which also reveals the aggression behind the symbolic order. In this sense the expression "stories of old" does not simply refer to a historical past, but also to a psychic past, to a past *before* order, history, time and castration, to the past of an ontologically different *before*. This *before* serves as the imaginary supplement of order, a fantasy written retrospectively from the point of view of the *after*, a narrative that (1) explains what there is, (2) legitimizes order, (3) recreates and reinforces order in a performative way, and (4) creates a fantasy-space which – serving as the basic conditioner of the symbolic – keeps order together. In this sense the beaten and raped Amazon and the ladies in grief may be seen as two images of the same woman, one may even claim that the ladies cry precisely because of what Theseus has done to them. (The fact that they kneel in front of Theseus clearly indicates that they are already "subdued".) The two figures can even be read as temporally subsequent images within the mythical grand narrative of Oedipalization that grounds all phallogocentric narratives.

In this sense this story perfectly fulfils the function of "the narrative occlusion of antagonism" (Žižek, 1997:10) that Lacanian psychoanalysis defines as a major role of fantasy-based narratives:

... the answer to the question 'Why do we tell stories?' is that *narrative as such* emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by rearranging its terms into a temporal succession. It is thus the very form of narrative which bears witness to some repressed antagonism. (Žižek, 1997:10-11)

It is in this fantasy-space that the 'horror of the real' (which is the horror of symbolic castration) is covered by a set of images that guide, motivate and ground the symbolic. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see the Amazon woman as a fantasy standing in place of the repressed real. The horror of the real cannot be seen in or behind this or that image, but rather in the *form* that fantasy takes: what refers to the cut of castration is not so much the image of the Amazon, but rather the split or *cut* between the two images of woman, the fact that woman is *cut* into two, that woman is always already many.

Reading "The Knight's Tale" as a narrative inspired (and moved) by fantasy (and a narrative that enacts the fantasy of a mythic past grounding the symbolic) may help one

understand many of the characteristics of Chaucer's text. One of the tale's recent critics writes:

Chaucer ... quite deliberately eliminates or flattens out the parts of Boccaccio's text that provide such emotional dimension, motivation, and differentiation. We do not even know what Palamon and Arcite look like. Their reactions are simultaneous and parallel. Palamon sees Emelye and falls in love; Arcite sees Emelye and falls in love. Whatever is different in them is reduced to mere affect...

In addition to flattening out Boccaccio's characters and their emotional workings, Chaucer has neutralised time in his version of the story. In fact, time passes with such an exaggerated epic stateliness that it does not seem to pass at all. (Bergan, 54-55)

In my opinion, it is most telling to see that the clearly flat characters of Chaucer do not come from a mythical-mythological tradition that he may have relied on. Boccaccio's *The Book of Theseus* employs much rounder characters. It is only Chaucer's narrative that is not interested in character: the tale is not about flesh and blood human beings, but about types, ideal types to be precise, and not about a "real" story, but a story that serves to shape reality, serves as its phantasmic matrix, a story – to quote Žižek again – "that teaches us how to desire" (7). The absence of time is another symptom of this phantasmic overload of the tale: while time (according to Freudian psychoanalysis) exists only within the conscious system driven by the 'reality principle', the two knights' story is outside history and 'normal' time, caught up in a constant reference to an ontologically different previous, somewhere in an eternal *before*.

These are the textual mechanisms that define the imaginary constructs that create the basic directions the subject and the narrative may take; it is in this fantasy-space that the main figures, goals, motivations and structural patterns of phallic order are located. It is this tale-before-the-tale that makes the story of the two knights possible. When woman becomes polarised and the other women are defeated and made into ladies in grief, a repression takes place that is the basic condition of order, a symbolic castration that divides the subject from the pre-Oedipal, the primordial and the untamed. It is this symbolic castration (which is castration by the symbolic) that creates the lack and blindness needed for "The Knight's Tale". The narrative of Palamon and Arcite is located within this space of blindness and lack, in this space of the *after*. Whatever they do, why they fall in love at first sight, why they seek what they do not know, why they are

searching for the impossible, why they are so unrealistically and so naturally blind can only be understood if we keep in sight what cannot be seen, if we keep in mind what is repressed, if we never lose sight of the invisible structuring element that shapes them without their knowing. The role of the tale before the tale is precisely to locate ('once upon a time') in the past the explanation of what seems to be the timeless condition of the subject, to place within a narrative what makes narratives possible, to explain how this world of blindness and desire (in which the tale is set) was born.

It is not love that makes Palamon and Arcite blind, love is just a symptom of a blindness that comes with being a subject, or being caught up by narratives, that is, living in a time of the *after*. Courtly love and desire are only possible in this space of blindness, which is the space that the subject inhabits from the very beginning, and also the space of literature (in the Blanchotian sense). It is only the castration covered, told and reinforced by the tale-before-the-tale that may make a quest for an ideal woman possible. Woman can become a figure of the metaphysical *beyond* only as long as we are in the historical time and symbolic space of the *after*, as long as the fantasy of the *before* exists to keep our time, the *after* together.

The key issue to bear in mind in this case is not simply that the mythical before of the grounding phantasmic narrative and the equally mythical future (or beyond) that comes after the *after* of the fall belong together just like the Amazon and the ladies. What is crucial to see is that castration did not happen when the *before* was taken away from us by the *after*, but when a tale about the *before* is told, when the myth of the before and the after and the beyond is at work. The two can happen only at one and the same moment: these fantasies belong to an order that defines itself by their lack; only the fantasy of the completeness of the before may sustain the lack of the present, lack *in* the present, or the present *as* lack.

Castration did not happen in 'times of old': rather, it is the trope of the "times of old" that creates castration. Though "The Knight's Tale" creates its phantasmic supports in the tale-before-the-tale of Theseus, and critics claim that "The Knight's Tale" creates the phantasmic supports of chivalry and patriarchy, these *before*s are always created in and by the present. The time of castration is always the present moment, which is the time of the *after*, but only as long as this time is also that of literature that creates the fantasy of the *before*. In other words, literature is not only a symptom of a castrated culture, it is not only the (neurotic, nostalgic, traumatised, utopian, melancholic etc.) material that we fill the

void of castration with. It is also the ‘dangerous supplement’ of life, what makes life seem incomplete, the thing that places us within the space of castration, in the time of the after (of the Fall). It is literature that keeps up the myth of castration and the myth of literature, that makes us good readers, that reminds us again and again who (and where and how) we are: literature is an active agent of castration. It did not come *after* castration: they were born at one and the same moment, and obviously could not do without each other.

At some points this paper, like all symbolic structures, must have created and reinforced symbolic castration as long as it supported the fantasy that castration took place once upon a time in the past, in “The Knight’s Tale” for example, that the present situation *originates* in the past, that phallogentric metaphysics is not something recreated by my words here and now. As we can see, the past is only a trope to sustain the present, just like literature (among many other things) is a trope to sustain criticism, and through it sustain the lineage of authors and works that guarantee the continuity of our culture. In this sense, phallogentric and patriarchy appear as effects of a certain kind of tropological reliance on a phantasmic *arche*. So what should one do when writing about texts of the past, if that past is always already also a construct that serves to maintain a particular form of order in the present? This paper certainly will not give an answer to that. It seems that the most this piece can do when writing about the past of Theseus, the Amazons, and the desire of the knights that the encounter of the first two gives birth to, is to confront the fantasy of the past of the *before*, and map the way castration, desire, and the possibility of phallic order are recreated by the very figures, fantasies and words that we read and write.

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ON CHRISTINE DE PIZAN'S FEMINISM

REGHINA DASCĂL

Feminist academics generally distinguish three different perspectives in the development of feminist theory: theories of equality, of difference and of deconstruction. These perspectives refer to different strategies and theoretical positions in the debate about the significance of sexual difference. The theories of difference centre mostly on mainstreaming women's history, on resisting readings of the male canon. Rewriting the female tradition, establishing the authority of the female writer as author, rediscovering women writers and women's traditions and restoring them to visibility form the abiding concerns of those pursuing the theories of difference. An archetypal example for this important direction in women's studies, an illustrious example of what it means to assume simultaneously the identity of a woman and that of an author and to strike the stance of the resisting reader, is Christine de Pizan. With her best-known work the *Book of the City of Ladies* of 1405, she proposes, as Judith Fetterley remarks in her inspirational *The Resisting Reader* of 1973, a medieval self-defence manual for the female readers (quoted in Meijer, 1995:27). In Fetterley's view Pizan goes through the main stages that the resisting reader undertakes. Intimidated at first by the authority of the male canon, by the misogynistic tradition of western culture, Christine decries the misfortune of her having been born a woman; she next internalises this contempt for women and then the assenting, meek reader gradually rejects the self-hatred that such a culture instils in women so that, finally, the resisting reader is born. De Pizan's resistance takes the form of looking for alternative texts, for different representations of women, of searching for female subjectivity and of establishing the authority of women writers.

A major problem awaits us nevertheless when talking about Christine's early feminism, protofeminism etc. This prolific late mediaeval French author who lived between 1364 and 1431 and did most of her work in Paris could hardly be called a feminist before the word existed. Actually, she was virtually unknown before the French revolution and she was discovered by a kindred soul - another learned and prolific writer and translator - Louise de Keralio who between 1786 and 1789 had already issued a 14-volume edition of works by women (Gottlieb, 1997:274-297). As interest in medieval and renaissance literature intensified, she became better known. In 1838, her contributions to the polemical literature on women were recognized although she was most often regarded as one of those *monuments historiques* of which the French are so proud. It is not known who first called

her a feminist but in 1886, a politically liberal critic in Britain - William Minto - called her 'a woman's rights person' in an article entitled *A Champion of her Sex*. A few years later, he would have definitely called her a feminist. The OED reports that the word first appeared in print in 1895, the OED edition of 1933 gives only an early and rare use of feminism as 'the quality of females'. Its *Supplement* however catches up with the late 19th century stating that the word is no longer rare and stands for "the opinions and principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women; advocacy of women's rights". The word first appeared in a book review in the *Athenaeum* of April, 27, 1895, describing a woman who has in her the capacity of fighting her way back to independence. It is the basic proposition that, as Nora put it in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* "Before everything else I'm a human being" (Faludi, 1993:18). A scholarly edition of Christine's poetry meanwhile began to appear and is still the most authoritative available presentation of her work. Her reputation as a feminist had primarily been based on her prose works, which remained for the most part in manuscript. As scholars, especially women read them they kept being struck by her feminism and the label stuck so that today her feminism is a commonplace. This paper is aiming at considering some arguments that we may put forward in order to support such a theory. Enid McLeod recommends caution: that kind of feminism, which claims that women are the equal of men in every way, was far from her. Her ideas on the subject were much more reasonable (1976:73). Joan Kelly names her "the first of the early feminist theorists who resisted the cultural and social colonization of women by men" (1982:28).

It is difficult for us today to come up with an all-inclusive definition of feminism spanning all the differences and diversities that characterize the plethora of extant feminisms. We sometimes use it to refer to a general sensitivity about women and a concern with their plight, to the need for women's emancipation, to an overarching concern for a whole range of resources, talents, abilities, social capital that are still far from sufficiently tapped; outrage at the continued existence of gender prejudices and inequalities in most fields. True, many who share such sensitivity and awareness, or even anger shy away from the label for reasons which are beautifully accounted for by Natasha Walter in her *New Feminism* of 1998. This has held true from the word's first appearance. French dictionaries say it was first used by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier and it has never completely lost this radical association. It is a complicated history because notions about what is radical changed over the years. Broadly speaking radical proponents of

women's rights in the 19th century - those most likely to call themselves 'feminist' - believed in the complete equality of men and women and wanted to end what they regarded as the demeaning restriction of women to the domestic sphere. Less radical activist women spoke not of equality but of women's special qualities they believed should be recognized and used to benefit all society. It is interesting to note that a defining feature of the movement was the demand for suffrage that started as a very radical issue and became gradually absorbed into the programme of the non-radicals. One thing that can be said about feminism in those days: it was a movement and had a programme.

I have already referred to the wide range of feminisms of our day that makes it so difficult to come up with clear-cut definitions; there are self-styled feminists who still hold ideas and attitudes very similar to the radical 19th century women's rights position, and they are concerned about equal pay for equal work, affirmative action, the legal availability of abortions and many other political matters. There has been a revival of radicalism in the last years so that it is very difficult to decide whether the soft, good, feminists or the "bad grrrls" as they are called in Germaine Greer's *Whole Woman* (1999) have taken the lead. It has too many interests and factions to be summarily defined, except if we are ready to run the risk of over generalization and reductionism. Feminism can be defined as the recognition of the philosophical, cultural, social, metaphysical meaning assigned to women's experiences, it is itself meant to win women a wider range of experience. Rebecca West wrote sardonically in 1913: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat" (quoted in Faludi, 1993:18). I think that feminism asks much more than at any other time today that women should not be forced to choose between public justice and private happiness. It asks that women be free to define themselves instead of having their identity defined for them by their culture and their men. Yet, it is probably still true that to regard oneself as a feminist of whatever stripe it is not enough to think certain thoughts, one needs a sense of sharing those thoughts with others, of being part, even if not a particularly active part, of a movement. But it isn't a movement that seeks to mould people's desires, but a movement that wants everyone to have the freedom to follow their ambitions and dreams without being stifled by the dead weight of inequality that has moulded our society for so long (Walter, 1998:257). Therefore, if, on the one hand, we have these great difficulties what with this complex and elusive concept,

on the other hand, we have this early 15th century woman. What justification could we have in bringing them together?

When the famous historian of the equally famous historiography school of the *Annales* - Lucien Febvre - wrote his *Problem of Unbelief in the 16th Century, the Religion of Rabelais* (1942) he encountered a problem similar to ours: is it appropriate to call Rabelais an atheist; did the concept even exist in Rabelais' time? Febvre defines at this point the cardinal sin of historians, which is *anachronism*. Could it be that we are committing the same sin in our enterprise?

Certainly, to render to Febvre the things that are his, among others an immense erudition and a peculiar sensitivity to the mental life of the past, changes over the past centuries have been considerable and it is therefore dangerous to assume that words carried the same load of meaning in the 16th century as in ours. Utterances of the past, Febvre warns us, should not be taken at face value, because 'face value' means more often than not 'current values'. Putting on a pair of 15th century glasses is certainly no easy task - thinking in hierarchical terms, thinking allegorically, using symbols not as arbitrary literary devices but as expressions of a real correspondence between different levels of being; experiencing the freshness of what we deem today dead literary conventions, switching from the reading mode to that of listening, since even after the Gutenberg revolution most information still came through the ears not the eyes. Therefore, there was no term for anything even remotely resembling feminism. But the real problem lies elsewhere and it is linked to women's history.

Our history, the history recorded in history books, has until quite recently been one from which women were absent. Now that our eyes have been opened to the fact that women were not absent, we see that all history has to be rewritten. As Beatrice Gottlieb says, the problem of feminism in the 15th century is not the simple-minded one of whether Christine de Pizan has the same ideas as Gloria Steinem (1997:278); that would be what Febvre called a *question mal posée*. Let us couch it in terms that are more appropriate: how was it possible to think about women and how, in fact, did women think about themselves in the 15th century? For a woman to write for a wide audience and deal specifically with the subject of women was extremely rare in that century. Christine de Pizan dealt with the subject many times. Her *Book of the City of Ladies* was entirely devoted to demonstrating the worth and talents of women and its sequel the *Book of the Three Virtues*, also known as the *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, was a sort of instruction manual for women. Most of her

explicit utterances about the plight of women in her own day and in history were defences against attacks and abuse. She saw these as deriving from a well-established misogynistic literary tradition and men's behaviour. In her comments on her own life and in some passages in the *City of Ladies* she made the particular point that women had at least as much capacity for learning as men did.

The strain of misogyny is very strong in western literature and although it is often glibly referred to as Christian, Christine refuted this argument and saw it much older and not distinctively Christian. She particularly took Ovid to task, especially as Ovid through the French Christianised *Ovide moralisé* was one of the favourite reads of Christine's contemporaries. She referred generically to a multitude of nameless misogynistic clerks but singled out for special mention two works: *The Romance of the Rose* and the *Lamentations* of Matheolus. Both Matheolus and Jean de Meun were proverbial denigrators of women in Christine's time.

What did misogyny mean to Christine? What exactly was she defending women against? In *God of Love's Letter* and from the letters she contributed to the war of words - the first literary *querelle* - over the *Roman de la Rose* and from the introduction to the *City of Ladies* we can get some answers: misogynists called women lascivious, fickle and incompetent, they were not trustworthy, they could not keep faith, they were portrayed as evil seductresses or passive quarry for sexual predators - an inconsistency of outlook that Christine seems to have enjoyed pointing out. Women were seen as utterly vicious and worthless (inferior is too weak a predication), they were an afterthought in cosmogony and a mistake in biology: "A great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart for I detested myself and the entire feminine sex as though we were monstrosities in nature" (De Pizan, 1998:5).

The *Lamentations* were written in Latin in 1300 and translated 70 years later into French, and they constitute the impassioned outpourings of an unhappy husband. Although the message of the poem seems at first sight to be that marriage is a trial and women should be avoided and it is based on the husband's experience, he thereafter reaches out in all directions for stories and sayings about the failings of women in general. The impulse toward misogyny, as Lady Reason was to make it soon clear for her, lies in men's inability to come to terms with their own sexuality.

Jean de Meun is better known but at the same time more difficult to understand. Today most scholars treat him with great respect as the master of subtle irony and the harbinger of

modern times and mentalities. Among the passages that excoriate women, there is a speech within a speech, the words of a jealous husband to his wife quoted by the character Friend to the Dreamer who narrates the poem. The tone is reminiscent of Matheolus: “Ha! would I’d Theophrastus read/Ere, like a Fool, I thrust my head/In wedlock’s noose” (vol.II, ch.XLIX:46); “A virtuous woman! Nay, I swear/By good St. Denis, that’s more rare/Than is a phoenix.”(vol.II,ch.L:51) There is also the speech of the Old Woman who says that since all men are sensualists who betray and deceive, women should be deceivers in return. There is a further passage in which Genius starting with references to Virgil, Solomon, and Livy shows how women cannot be trusted, especially with secrets. One side of the early 15th century debate on the poem seems to have agreed with the contemporary assessment of the poem that it is about how to win over a woman, but its literary merit lies in complex levels of meaning and a panoramic view of contemporary life and learning. On the other hand, however, the cumulative effect of many passages, some of which we briefly mentioned, was to convince 15th century readers that Jean de Meun had a low opinion of both women and their sexual morality.

Christine seems to have played the role of woman of letters to the hilt, initiating a controversy that has become famous as probably the first literary *querelle*. Christine sparked off the famous debate on the Romance by a letter to a distinguished scholar who had written the praise of the *Romance* after reading it for the first time. A number of people entered the fray later most notably Jean Gerson - chancellor of the University of Paris and who shared Christine’s dislike of the work. It was Christine who was most responsible for pursuing and preserving the debate since she collected the letters that were exchanged and had them published in a single manuscript. It is another long story but the main interest that it might have for a contemporary reader is that the fight was really about the different ways in which educated readers of the time responded to immorality and sexual explicitness in literature, traits that for many contemporary critics make the strength and the novelty of the great work. Christine and Gerson both found the book disgustingly lubricious and inducing to adultery and fornication. We also know that Christine found the book particularly offensive and vilifying to women, but that was not the focus of the debate. It is also true that Christine was not treated with much respect by the brothers Col Gontier and Pierre - the chief defenders of de Meun. However, the fact that she vigorously defended the right of a woman to participate in such a discussion was an extraordinary thing in itself, that a woman’s voice was so strongly heard in a debate of a male opus.

Christine was perhaps the closest thing to a career woman. She had shown through her own example how much a woman could achieve even in the teeth of Fortune's great adversities; a woman married at 15 who had had three children by the age of 25 when her husband died, galvanized her energies and resources to support herself and her family without any loss of dignity or respect. Very intelligent, strong and enterprising, she achieved what even for men was not a customary thing: she made a living entirely by her pen (cf. V. Woolf who saluted the emergence of the first professional woman writer in England - Aphra Behn - in ecstatic terms: it seemed to her more revolutionary than the crusades and the Wars of the Roses). De Pizan was business-oriented in her profession, she cultivated her acquaintance among the rich and highly placed, some of whom were women. She was both personally ingratiating with her patrons, and she took many commissions often against her own interests. Her reputation as a writer was excellent and she was much admired for her personal qualities. A 15th century manuscript on one of her poems refers to her as *domina preclara natu et moribus* "distinguished for her birth and character" (Gottlieb, 1997:283). Her output was tremendous and astonishingly varied, she was a true *polyscribator*: more than a hundred poems on many subjects, she was the official biographer of Charles V and wrote a long poem on warfare *The Book of Feats of Arms* that later so impressed Henry VII that he asked William Caxton to translate and publish it. She wrote books of moral counsel, political theory, patriotic exhortation, and philosophical reflection. All in all, it was a prodigious display of literary energy and versatility that would have been equally impressive in a man.

On the subject of education, Christine also took the stance of the defender. Based on her own experience, her plea is impressive. She looked around and saw women who seemed to possess all the mental ability that was needed. Her most moving passages are those in which she pleads for a fair chance, as in her dialogue with Lady Reason who assures her that "if it were customary to send daughters to school like sons and if they were then taught the subtleties of all the arts and sciences as well as sons... women have minds that are freer and sharper whenever they apply themselves". A dramatic exchange follows: "My lady what are you saying? She cries. Certainly men would never admit this answer is true unless it is explained more plainly for they believe that one normally sees that men know more than women do". Reason does explain: "without the slightest doubt it is because they are not involved in many different things but stay at home where it is enough for them to run the household and there is nothing which so instructs a reasonable creature

as the exercise and experience of many different things” (De Pizan, 1998:63). Natalie Zemon Davies in her *Foreword to the Book of the City of Ladies* considers Christine’s position on the education of women as the most consistent demand of proto-feminist and feminist writings in all subsequent centuries. Even the evidence produced on women’s political capabilities was made forcefully and in clear opposition to the currently touted Salic Law, a recent invention in her time (1328) – hence the prominence of past French queens in her major work - masquerading as an ancient law excluding women from the succession to the French throne as inevitably incompetent and prohibiting the crown from even passing by the female line (1998:XX-XXI). One should not be however over-enthusiastic because Christine’s conservatism does not let her take this plea for education to heights comparable to Mary Wollstonecraft. She keeps it within certain bounds because she believes in the God-ordained roles strictly laid out for the two genders: “In the exercise of ordinary housewifely duties, an educated mind - she suggests in the *Book of the Three Virtues* - is no hindrance and knowledge of literary graces and practical skills is a great help in running a noble household. There is even more urgency for widows to have the great treasure of education not only for the solace it could bring but also for its practical value in protecting themselves from being defrauded and mistreated” (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997a:172). This book can today serve as the best example of Christine’s constant subversion of the gender order of her day. Her message to the women of her day – women of all classes and estates –is that they should be obedient to their husbands, accept the latter’s control, their discourse and overall authority. Yet, at the same time women should take advantage of this façade attitude to fashion in silence and tranquillity a subjecthood of their own, to take over man’s language and discourse to fashion a language, an identity, a discourse of their own: “thus this wise lady will use discreet dissimulation and prudent caution and no one will consider this a vice but rather virtue when it is done for a good cause and for the Sake of peace” (*The Book of the Three Virtues*).

We can clearly detect in Christine what we would call today a feminist consciousness. Here was a woman who pained and outraged by reading and hearing that women were inferior and evil refused to suffer in silence. She did not defend herself as an individual but made common cause with women. She thought about women's lives and how they might be improved. Alas, there is no mention in her writings of Christine having ever discussed such matters with other women, there are almost no hints there of what women might have said to one another, it is tempting to think that she did, even that women had been saying

such things to one another for a long time. There are certainly no explicit demands for equal rights or political power, no hint of women's solidarity not even a modest proposal for some organized, regular schooling for women, but this refusal to accept insults and contempt in silence, this staunch belief in women's capacity for learning, this impulse towards creating an alternative canon, a feminine tradition in writing make up a plausible kind of feminism.

A lot of feminist ink has been spilt on the 'gender change' that Christine records in the *Book of Fortune's Transformation*: "I found my heart strong and bold which surprised me but I felt that I had become a true man" (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997a:106). So learning to fend for herself upon the tragic loss of her husband, she suggests that widowhood may reveal the resourcefulness in women that was ordinarily hidden and, more subversively, that outside their tightly confined normal roles women could find opportunities to develop their skills. Yet, Christine's tone is ambiguous if not downright sorrowful: "As you have heard I am still a man and I have been for a total of more than 13 years but it would please me much more to be a woman" (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997a:107). Her 'heart of a man' means also inventing an interior other place from which her voice can come forth with a new legitimacy. It is often asserted that Christine constantly played with transgression. However, not in moral terms, rather in ontological terms (cf. Cerquiglini, 1997:265-274). But further on, Christine is subversive of her own definition of 'natural women' as she later on in her major works often expands the concept as for example in the depiction of Fredegund, the queen of the Franks who may at first sight appear unnatural, cruel, although she will rule with great skill her subjects after king Chilperic's death. It is a re-enactment of Christine's own experience of overcoming female nature. Therefore, the series of simple, coy, honest, prudent ladies, upright simple and tranquil, Griselda-clones give place to active learning, prowess and even active martyrdom as hallmarks of womanhood (see Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997b:297-311). When Reason begins to instil pride in Christine, pride for her female body and her female intellect, whereas before she had been an 'unnatural' albeit effective woman, she now no longer needs her male disguise since she will be in the company of the most excellent and successful women of her own creation.

Christine was the first French literary figure explicitly to incorporate her identity as a woman into her identity as an author (Brownlee, 1997:372). With the *Book of the City of Ladies* the project of feminist self-authorization was most explicitly and most elaborately undertaken. There is a continuous play between margin and centre in her establishing her

authority as a writer, as a full subject - "I, Christine". While men have erred in their mistreatment of women Christine as peripheral to this tradition, set apart by her gender, yet privileged to this discourse by virtue of her education is best qualified to re-establish the reputation of women, who are themselves marginal in a man's world. The subversion of this position of marginality is an underlying concept and strategy of her work.

Her attitude towards the *auctores* reveals itself as she is trying to build her subjecthood, to fashion her own identity as a writer expressed in that dramatical "I, Christine". *The Path of the Long Study* dramatizes her entry into the world of learning, it contains echoes of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Commedia*; she is being guided however by her Sibyl, thus positing herself as another Aeneas and, by writing about it, as another Virgil. Her journey to the celestial spheres likens her to Dante who was guided there not by Virgil but by St. Bernard and Beatrice. The Sybil is thus contaminated by these two saintly figures while Christine herself follows in Dante's footsteps.

The subversiveness of Christine can also be demonstrated through her choice of language: not the mother tongue in a time when its generational, natural qualities are exalted by a genius like Dante, who repeatedly asserts the superiority of the vernacular to Latin in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and in his *Inferno*, canto XV, in the circles of sodomites places Brunetto Latini who turned away from his mother tongue and wrote in French, which he parallels to the unnatural desire of sodomy. Christine's decision to write in her adopted tongue is no less of a rebellious and guilty gesture emphasising the unnaturalness of male language towards and for women. If Dante inveighs against the blasphemy of using a foreign tongue, Christine in a foreign tongue, inveighs against blasphemy against women (Philippy, 1997:337).

Christine writes in the French vernacular also because she wants to distinguish her book from Boccaccio's mostly inaccessible address to women because of his having written it in Latin - an audience which she automatically assures, but also as a part of her self-conceived mission of continuing the Virgilian and Dantesque poetic in the vernacular. As she says in the *Path of Long Study*, she draws upon the examples of her male fellow citizens to justify her position as an Italian woman writing in the French vernacular simultaneously rejecting the tradition and language these writers provide and drawing upon it as a basis of her own authority. Her position as a foreigner - an Italian in France or a woman in scholarship is for her a double-edged sword which she can use in excuse or

defence of the novelty of her opinions, and at the same time to invoke the objective view, from the outside looking in, from which she derives her authority (Philippy, 1997:339).

Christine's radical break with all previous historiography can be illustrated by her revisionary treatment of Boccaccio's *De Claris mulieribus* and *Decameron*. Three quarters of her *exempla* come from Boccaccio, but not all are included, whilst she included - a notable addition - examples of virtuous women drawn from her own era and experience, thus positing a historical continuity between the examples of pagan virtues and her contemporaries. The inclusion of the Third Book drawn from Vincent de Beauvais, in which the city is populated by the Virgin and thirty saints, affirms the connection between pagan and Christian virtues which her feminine city founded by the secular virtues of Reason, Droiture and Justice seeks to establish (Philippy, 1997:329-361).

In her rewriting of Boccaccio, rather than translation of him, she often completely inverts the message of the *exempla* as in the case of Medea - admonition against succumbing to the temptation of the eyes in Boccaccio, to the dangers of visual seduction - whereas in Christine's rendering of Medea her only sin is that she loved too well and the accent falls on her learning in which she surpassed and exceeded all women (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997a:69); "she loved Jason with a too great and constant love" (189). Probably even more appealing to a contemporary reader, amongst others because of her tremendous appeal to modern playwrights and novelists, such as Giraudoux and Christa Wolf - Medea appears without too much reference to her tragic love, but rather as an example of the capability of women to master and discover knowledge and arts. Thus severed from the taint of excessive love and deceit of Jason, Medea is revised into an example worthy of emulation - very much along the lines of Christa Wolf's vindication of the ancient queen. Far from being an element of discord in the body politic, Medea is liberated from her role in the liaison with Jason and is presented by Christine as one of the women who constitute and maintain the fabric of society through their courage to utter the truth, to denounce the murders buttressing authority and power and through her pacifism. Medea and Dido are joined and they reflect Christine's own transformation from wife to widow, from submissive wife to independent writer with 'a man's heart'.

Women in Christine's estimation are not inferior to men by nature but by custom: "if justice reigned the female would lose nothing in this regard, but I am entirely certain that custom is stronger than justice in many places" (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 1997a:94-95), and despite the fact that Reason explains that the occupations of men and women are ordained

by God it is the overall purpose of the *City* to show that women are capable of conquering the male arts and science. Also with a view to valorising the position of women and establishing their status as inheritors of this wonderful and unknown tradition of studious women, she reorganizes Boccaccio's stories of Cornificia, Proba and Sappho. While Cornificia in Boccaccio's account is the equal of her brother, in the *City* "She wanted to hear and know about every branch of learning, which then she mastered so thoroughly that she surpassed her brother, who was also a very good poet and excelled in every field of learning" (De Pizan, 1998:64).

Another excellent example of Christine's subversion of Boccaccio's texts is her treatment of Carmentis, famous poet, scholar, founder of the Latin language and culture, inventor of grammar and lawgiver. Henceforth, whilst her mention occasions Boccaccio's entry into a panegyric on Latin (Italian) language and culture, Christine turns Boccaccio's words round to support the founding role of women as founders of men's culture and ironically of the language they use to disparage women: "let all writers be silent those who have attacked women and who still attack them in their books and poems; let them lower their eyes, ashamed for having dared to speak so badly, in view of the truth which runs counter to their poems; this noble lady, Carmentis, through the profundity of her understanding taught them like a school mistress the lesson thanks to which they consider themselves so lofty and honoured, that is, she taught them the Latin alphabet" (De Pizan, 1998:80).

If feminism means thinking about women and feeling that they deserve better in the world, then Christine was a feminist, like Margaret of Navarre, the queen and famous author of the *Heptameron* of a century later. In addition, so was Castiglione or Agrippa of Nettesheim who joined the *querelle des femmes* and sang the praises of women. However, if feminism means a belief in the equal capacities of men and women, if it means sweeping changes, demanding equal opportunities for women to be educated and trained for careers, if it means women's solidarity and having any kind of programme or even drawing the sex line before the class or race line, then feminism obviously came into existence only in the 19th century.

However, if we are interested in recording glimmerings of feminist consciousness, embryonic feminist gestures, attitudes, and mental frameworks then we are right in calling Christine a precursor of feminists. What most contemporary critics agree on today following a painstaking foray into mediaeval manuscripts is that Christine's work is not

only questioning but also subverting everything associated with the courtly ideology cultivated by a parasitical class of misogynist clerics for the benefit of an equally parasitical social elite in France blissfully content to ignore the most basic tenets of Christianity. Although some critics saw her as an ultraconservative author searching for ancient examples to add a veneer of legitimacy to her own elitist ideas, the work of Christine stands proof to her extreme sensitivity to all social and political aspects of her age. She pointedly called her 'New Kingdom of Femininity' (De Pizan, 1998:117) a *city* rather than a *convent* in a deliberate allusion to the rise of free cities in all mediaeval Europe especially in view of the city-states in her native Italy compared with the civil unrest in her adopted homeland.

In considering questions of power and authority in Christine's work one should bear in mind that her preferred iconographic self-portrayal was a visual citation of illuminations of the Annunciation of the Virgin: Christine at the opening scene of the *Book of the City of Ladies* shown in a cell reading a book when the archangel Gabriel appears. In her French Christine used interchangeably the word 'cele' in its original monastic sense and 'study' *estude* which could lead us directly to her dramatizing women's search half a millennium before Virginia Woolf for a room of one's own rather than a cloister shutting her off from the world.

For Christine her authority stemmed from God and therefore she did not shy away from reminding the readers in her *Mutations of Fortune* that her name included the name of the perfect man (Richards, 1998:Lxi). As a political thinker her books show her appealing to all the important people of her day to make peace among the various estates of society and to return French chivalry to its former glory not as an expression of her nostalgia for the good old days or an attempt by Christine to ape the political rhetoric of her male predecessors whose authority as far as Christine was concerned existed at best in name only. There is now almost a consensus that Christine transformed received political concepts for highly specific purposes: Christine replaces the traditional authority of the ruler with the authority of the learned writer. Erudition entailed moral and political obligations, especially responsibilities to serve the truth and to maintain justice.

The concept of social justice so prominent in the legal writings of legal scholars in Bologna during the time Christine's father had studied there came to assume an ever-increasing role in Christine's thought. Her 'declaration of the rights of women' in the *City of Ladies* borrows heavily from late mediaeval political speculation on the nature of justice

and significantly, it is the allegorical figure of Justice herself who invites the Virgin to be crowned queen of the City.

Christine's work has lost none of its provocative challenge to readers since its first appearance five centuries ago. As Susan Groag Bell aptly noted in the *Preface* to the French anthology of critical articles, Christine de Pizan 'gets under your skin'. Once she has been discovered there is no forgetting, it is not possible to be free of her. Christine specialists have emerged in great numbers all over the world. The modern English translation beautifully done by Earl Jeffrey Richards in 1982 was soon followed by versions in Dutch, modern French, German, Catalan, Spanish and Italian. Many international congresses and conferences have been dedicated to Christine, the *Christine de Pizan Society* was set up in 1988, the Christine de Pizan Society Newsletter was first issued in 1992, and we have witnessed over recent years the growing internationalisation of Christine Studies. As scholars look to the future of Christine studies it seems that we will come to appreciate even more the depth of her political thought, of her integral part in late mediaeval culture, of her humanity and of her feminism. It is high time that Romanian scholarship joined this new city of scholars.

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BIBLE WAS USED AS A POLITICAL WEAPON BY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN FEMINISTS

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Introduction

Seeing the words “Bible” and “feminist” in the same title may surprise some readers. Yet, for America’s first feminists of the nineteenth century, the Bible was the basis for their beliefs in the equality of the races and the sexes. The women now known as the first American-born feminists, according to women’s historian Gerda Lerner (1998), were Sarah and Angelina Grimké. Lerner wrote one of the biographies of these sisters who were some of the first women to speak in public to mixed (both women and men) audiences about the abolition of slavery and Angelina was the first woman ever to address a legislative body in the US. In addition to their short-lived public speaking career and the scripts of their speeches, they have also left a legacy of writings. Angelina wrote a unique anti-slavery appeal to the Christian women of the South in 1836 begging them to examine the issue of slavery from a biblical perspective and to understand, on the basis of the teachings of Jesus Christ, that it is a sin (A. Grimké, 1968 [1836]). This was the first such writing published by a white Southern woman from a slaveholding family. Her elder sister Sarah was to publish the first-ever, full-length biblical exposition on the equality of the sexes in 1837 (Bartlett, 1988). While these writings are now considered some of the earliest American feminist writings, they can only be called feminist in retrospect since the word “feminism” did not come into use until the late nineteenth century (Lerner, 1993:17).

Another early American feminist, Quaker preacher and friend of the Grimkés was Lucretia Mott. She often quoted - and based her life on - the biblical phrase from the Old Testament prophet Micah: “love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God” (Savage, 2003:5). The present researcher’s previous study of all of Mott’s transcribed sermons and speeches, has found that she consistently referred her hearers to the life of Jesus Christ as the moral standard and she encouraged her female listeners to read the Bible for themselves and not to depend solely on the interpretations they heard from male preachers.

These three women have been the subjects of other papers by the present writer, so this paper will focus on two other of their contemporaries: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and

Sojourner Truth. Elizabeth, as the young bride of abolitionist Henry Stanton and as the daughter from the wealthy and prominent Cady family, was inspired by Mott whom she met at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 and with whom she would plan the world's first women's rights convention in 1848 (Ward, 1999). (Note: since Elizabeth Cady Stanton made a conscious decision to retain her maiden name with her married name, I will respect that choice and use both names.) Cady Stanton was also a friend of the Grimké sisters and had visited them on her way to the London convention (DuBois, 1981). Sojourner Truth was known to all of these women, had shared the platform with several of them, and had been a guest in some of their homes on different occasions (Painter, 1996). According to her biographers Truth was an ex-slave who had escaped that life and had become an itinerant preacher who changed her name from her slave name Isabella as a result of a spiritual encounter with God (Gilbert, 1991[1850]; Painter, 1996). According to some she was the "best-known black woman preacher" of the mid nineteenth century (Ward, 1999:57). She travelled and spoke in more than twenty states promoting abolition and women's rights on the basis of her religious beliefs.

While Cady Stanton and Truth represent two different standpoints in the early American feminist movement they had a common theme in their philosophies: biblical concepts that formed the basis of their feminist ideals. The following pages will give specific examples of the biblical rhetoric that shaped their political arguments.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the biblical basis of emerging feminist thought in nineteenth-century America. The significance of this study lies in its analysis of the actual words written or spoken by these women or the transcriptions of their speeches instead of relying on secondary research about them. Another such collective case study (Creswell, 1998) of the biblical rhetoric of these two particular women has not been available to me. Also, according to historian Kathi Kern (2001:13), there is still a need for researchers to be "hard at work determining the relationship of feminism to Christianity." Hopefully, this study will be a contribution to the body of literature about early American feminism and the religious motivations behind their rhetoric.

Research Questions

The research questions this study sought to answer were:

1. For which feminist ideals did these women refer to a biblical basis as their source in their major writings, speeches and sermons?
2. How did they use this biblical source as a moral justification or foundation for their feminist ideals?

Methodology

This research was conducted using a qualitative research paradigm based on Creswell's (1998) definition:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (15)

The main approach to this research was a basic qualitative case study approach (Creswell). Also applied to the analysis of the women's texts were aspects of critical theory, cross-case analysis, and within-case analysis (Creswell). Based on Merriam and Simpson's (1984) definitions of analytic induction, emerging themes and categories of these women's feminist ideals were identified.

Data collection was limited to the print, electronic, and microfilm resources available. Only their major writings, speeches, and sermons were analyzed and not all of their personal correspondences and minor writings. While Cady Stanton was a prolific writer and speaker and many transcripts are readily available, Truth, on the other hand, is believed by many historians to have been illiterate in English (Painter, 1996), so an analysis of her rhetoric has had to be based on transcriptions.

Findings and Analysis

Reading the rhetoric of these two women and their frequent use of biblical texts, stories, and concepts, it is obvious that their audiences were able to understand the source of their philosophies since the women seldom provided a particular biblical citation within their statements. One has to wonder, what were the characteristics of the culture that allowed this particular approach? According to Humphreys (1983:11), the nineteenth century in the US has been labelled by some as the "success story of Protestant Christianity." During the activism and lives of Cady Stanton and Truth in the mid nineteenth century, church

membership was on the rise in the US growing from only 10 percent in 1800 to 40 percent by 1910 (11). Also during this time, “Sunday Schools . . . grew and became the major medium for Christian education” (11). Therefore, the culture was imbued with biblical literacy and could accept and understand a biblically based argument.

Since this was the case in the mid 1800s, Cady Stanton and Truth were able to put forth their beliefs in equality within a spiritual context. However, neither of these women approached their biblically based arguments from a mainstream Protestant viewpoint. Cady Stanton had been influenced greatly by Freethinkers and liberal Quakers and had come to the conclusion that Jesus was not divine (Stanton, 1993[1895-1898]). Truth told of her own dramatic, experiences and conversations with God and her visions of Jesus, so her spiritual perspective was from a deep, personal understanding (Gilbert, 1991[1850]). She had also been involved in a couple of different religious communes led by rather colourful characters (Painter, 1996; Stetson & David, 1994). Yet, while both of these women’s views of scripture were not the norm of their day, they each had a way of pointing their listeners and readers to a spiritual reason for their actions and beliefs. The following excerpts will illustrate this.

Cady Stanton’s Use of Biblical Rhetoric as a Political Weapon

As will be shown later, Cady Stanton launched a vehement attack on the hierarchical religious orthodoxy of her day and even on the Bible itself. However, she did not completely dismiss the Bible or religion. As a matter of fact, according to Fitzgerald’s (1993) foreword to a reprint of Cady Stanton’s *Woman’s Bible*, she explained the importance of the religious aspect of this early American feminist movement, especially in regard to Cady Stanton:

Identifying the roots of Stanton’s thought as religious is not merely an attempt to correct the dominant interpretation of the nineteenth-century woman’s movement - that Stanton and her radical cohorts were primarily from an Enlightenment, or secular, political tradition. The reason it is important to acknowledge religious as well as Enlightenment or republican natural rights influence is that the “self” or “soul” employed by Stanton and other radicals is far more encompassing than the concept of political citizenry, and is derived largely from their religious thought. (ix)

Even in her first major speech at the world's first-ever woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, she used the language of the Declaration of Independence and its religious statements in the document she helped to write, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . .

Let facts be submitted to a candid world. . . .

[Man] has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for [woman] a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God. . . .

Resolved, That woman is man's equal - was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such. (as cited in Ruth, 1995:486-488)

These statements were shocking to the first audiences who heard them, but they sparked a flame that would be fanned again and again for the next 72 years until the woman's suffrage amendment to the US Constitution became law in 1920.

Between 1840 and the 1880s, Cady Stanton would become intimately acquainted with many radical reformers who were Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, and Spiritualists (Fitzgerald, 1993). She began to present a "systematic critique of Christianity" (DuBois, 1981:183) and became especially vocal about it by the late 1880s. By 1886, she had begun plans to work with a committee to compile a commentary on all the biblical passages that dealt with women. Because her anticlerical and anti-church writings were consuming her time, she resigned her long-time post as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1892 when she was 76 years old. Her swan song speech was entitled "The Solitude of Self" and emphasized the fact that woman is an independent soul and must face the end alone (Ward, 1999).

In 1895, Cady Stanton published the first of two parts of her commentary on the Bible which she considered her greatest achievement and called *The Woman's Bible*. With the

help of a committee, Cady Stanton compiled a collection of passages about women and provided notes about why she and others disagreed with these passages. However, while most conservative readers of *The Woman's Bible* saw it, (and many still do), as simply heretical and scandalous this researcher has found that even though she disagreed with much of the Bible, she still based her belief in equality on the first chapter of the Bible and explained to her readers that Jesus' life was indeed worth emulating. As Fitzgerald (1993:xxix) has pointed out, *The Woman's Bible* "is not a scholarly book; it is a call to action, a political treatise." Yet, the following excerpts will illustrate how Cady Stanton's political ideology was indeed based on particular biblical concepts.

Cady Stanton's belief in the equality of the sexes was based on Genesis 1, where man and woman were created at the same time, as opposed to the Genesis 2 account where man was created first, and then woman. She even found "the existence of the feminine element in the Godhead, equal in power and glory with the masculine. The Heavenly Mother and Father! 'God created man in his *own image, male and female*'" (Stanton, 1993[1895-1898]:14-15, italics in original). She also stated, "Scripture, as well as science and philosophy" all "declared the eternity and equality of sex" (15). She clarified for her readers that according to the text in Genesis 1, that "equal dominion is given to woman over every living thing, but not one word is said giving man dominion over woman" (15).

As one can imagine, *The Woman's Bible* caused quite a stir at the end of the nineteenth century. Many articles were written denouncing it in the three years between the publication of Part 1 (on most of the Old Testament) in 1895 and Part 2 (on the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament) in 1898. To answer these denunciations, she published an article in *Free Thought Magazine* and presented her staunch belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ and a plea to her readers to distinguish between his teachings and the way nineteenth-century church leaders had misinterpreted them:

The grand ideas of Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mahammed [*sic*], Jesus, have been slowly transforming the world from the reign of brute force to moral power, and science has been as slowly emancipating mankind from their fears of the unknown; but the Christian Church has steadily used its influence against progress, science, the education of the masses and freedom for women. . . .

But the life and teachings of Jesus, all pointing to the complete equality of the human family, were too far in advance of his age to mould its public opinion. We must distinguish between the teachings attributed to Jesus and those of the Christian Church. One represents the ideal the race

is destined to attain; the other, the popular sentiment of its time. (as cited in Holland & Gordon, 1991:673)

For some even today, especially among mainstream Christians, it is difficult to see how Cady Stanton could come to some of her conclusions. Her attempts at theology, however, gave women permission to question for themselves what the scriptures really meant for them.

Cady Stanton, while finding much to dislike about the Bible, also found valuable teachings in it. For example, her comment in Part 1, stated:

To criticise [*sic*] the peccadilloes of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel does not shadow the virtues of Deborah, Huldah and Vashti; to condemn the laws and customs of the Jews as recorded in the book of Genesis, does not destroy the force of the golden rule and the ten commandments. Part of the Bible are so true, so grand, so beautiful, that it is a pity it should have been bound in the same volume with sentiments and descriptions so gross and immoral. (Stanton, 1993[1895-1898]:Part1, 61)

Cady Stanton found much to disagree with in the Old Testament because of the patriarchal culture in which it was historically set, yet she still pointed to the creation account of Genesis 1 as the source of her belief in equality.

Cady Stanton's comments on the New Testament consistently pointed the reader back to the life of Christ. She concluded her commentary on the four gospels with this statement regarding the words of Jesus: "All further references should harmonize, in spirit, with his teachings, and should be interpreted, without regard to contrary assertions by learned but unwise commentators" (Part 2, 143). While her personal conclusion was that Jesus was not divine, she wrote about him with the utmost admiration. Her concept of Jesus' divinity and humanity was explained in the following way from Part 2 of *The Woman's Bible*:

If, as the Scriptures claim, he descended from heaven, begotten by the Holy Ghost, the incarnation of God himself, then there was nothing remarkable in his career, nor miraculous in the seeming wonders which he performed, being the soul and centre [*sic*] of all the forces of the universe of matter and of mind. If he was an ideal character, like the gifted hero of some novel or tragedy, his great deeds and his wise sayings the result of the imagination of some skilful [*sic*] artist, then we may admire the sketch as a beautiful picture.

But if Jesus was a man who was born, lived and died as do other men, a worthy example for imitation, he is deserving of our love and reverence, and by showing us the possibilities of human nature he is a constant inspiration, our hope and salvation; for the path, however rough, in which one man has walked, others may follow. As a God with infinite power he could have been no example to us; but with human limitations we may emulate his virtues and walk in his footsteps. (116)

The inclusion of such a statement denying the deity of Christ within a commentary on the Bible, which was compiled completely of writings by women, and its publication in Protestant America at the height of the rise of evangelicalism, makes it no wonder that the organization she helped to found, the National American Woman Suffrage Association should have voted to remove itself from any connection with *The Woman's Bible* for fear of the public's reaction toward the suffrage movement (Ward, 1999). According to Fitzgerald (1993), Cady Stanton had intentionally written such a book because of the political and religious uproar it would cause. What she probably did not realize is that in so doing she was ushering into existence a whole new field of feminist theology which is still developing today.

Truth's Use of Biblical Rhetoric as a Political Weapon

According to Painter (1996:270), "Truth's religion [has] always [been] a puzzle for biographers" and has "disappeared entirely" in the "work of secular-minded feminists resenting orthodox religion's power to oppress women." This study has sought to revisit Truth's religion and to highlight the biblical concepts upon which she based her philosophy of emancipation for both the slave and women. Stetson and David's (1994:3-4) study showed that "Truth's political primer was the Bible. . . . She could use the Bible to withering effect."

Since it is generally believed that Truth was illiterate in English, the words of hers that exist today were recorded by others, which, of course, means there is room for human error. However, there is a consistent biblical message in her speeches regardless of the transcription. She used biblical imagery to motivate an audience or to reveal their wrong thinking as illustrated in the following excerpts. Her speech to the Friends of Human Progress Association in 1856 included the following: "I believe in Jesus, and I was forty years a slave but I did not know how dear to me was my posterity. . . . Has not God given to all his creatures the same rights?" (Sojourner Truth Web site, n.d.:3).

In 1863, during the Civil War, she addressed the state Sabbath School Convention, and an unidentified newspaper reported these words of Truth's regarding the equality of the races:

She said that the spirit of the Lord had told her to avail herself of the opportunity of speaking to so many children assembled together, of the great sin of prejudice against colour. Children, who made your skin white? Was it not God? Who made mine black? Was it not the same God? Am I to blame, therefore, because my skin is black? Does it not cast a reproach on our Maker to despise a part of His children, because He had been pleased to give them a black skin? Indeed, children, it does; and your teachers ought to tell you so, and root up, if possible, the great sin of prejudice against colour from your minds. While Sabbath School Teachers know of this great sin, and not only do not teach their pupils that it is a sin, but too often indulge in it themselves, can they expect God to bless them or the children?

Does not God love coloured children as well as white children? And did not the same Saviour die to save the one as well as the other? If so, white children must know that if they go to Heaven, they must go there without their prejudice against colour, for in Heaven black and white are one in the love of Jesus. (Sojourner Truth Web site, n.d.:4)

The reporter of this speech claimed that "this short speech from Sojourner was, perhaps the most telling anti-slavery speech that was ever delivered at Battle Creek, or in Michigan. Scores of eyes were filled with tears" (Sojourner Truth Web site, n.d.:4).

Truth's most famous speech, which has come to be known as the "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, was delivered in 1851 and published first by a newspaper reporter and more than a decade later by a woman whose rendering would be immortalized as part of the Sojourner Truth image. The earlier transcription is considered more accurate by historians (Painter, 1996) and reveals Truth's biblical knowledge regarding women's rights:

The poor men seems [*sic*] to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble. I can't read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible [*sic*] and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well, if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again. [. . .] And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and the woman who bore him. Man, where was your part? (Sojourner Truth Web site, n.d.:2)

By using the same biblical text that ministers used against women, Truth turned it around and showed how God had elevated woman and had even used her to accomplish the birth of Jesus without any help from a man.

Another memorable moment in Truth's life was when she refuted Frederick Douglass with one simple question. While the exact wording of the question is debated among historians, the meaning is the same. The topic being discussed at an 1852 meeting was the need for bloodshed in order to end slavery. Truth was a pacifist and Douglass had given up his belief in pacifism and was advocating war. Truth responded to his argument with, "Is God gone?" according to one newspaper report (as cited in Stetson & David, 1994:132) and according to Douglass' memoirs, the question was, "Frederick, is God dead?" (134). This phrase became so memorable that it is engraved on Truth's gravestone and not "Ain't I a Woman?" (134). Truth's personal experience with God as an ex-slave fuelled her messages in a powerful way. No white abolitionist's efforts could compare.

Conclusion

In summary, the original research questions will be answered. The feminist ideals for which these women referred to a biblical basis as their source included abolitionism, the equality of the races and the sexes, and woman's rights. They each knew the Bible's content well enough to quote from it or to use illustrations from it to make their points in the midst of political argumentation. Because of the biblically literate culture of mid- to late-nineteenth century America, a biblical argument was their best weapon in a political context. Therefore, this study concludes that the Bible was indeed the basis of a feminist manifesto in nineteenth-century America.

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WOMEN AND INDIVIDUALISM

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Motto: “ *She is the most admirable handiwork of God, in her true place and character. Her place is at man’s side. ... All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be, false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities, void*”

of every effect, and productive of intolerable mischiefs [sic] ! The heart of true womanhood knows where its own sphere is, and never seeks to stray beyond it!"
(Hawthorne: *The Blithedale Romance*:122-123)

American female fictional characters are not people. They have no individuality, no entity that says: "I am myself, this person and no other". Like Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*, as Joyce Warren argues in *The American Narcissus*, they say instead: "There is no me anymore". Or, he goes on, like Marilyn Monroe in the film *Don't Bother to Knock*, they submit: "I'm anything you want me to be".

American culture, literature included, has reflected this role assigned to women in society. Nineteenth-century American literature lacks fully drawn women characters. Critics have often commented on the limited or stereotypical role of women in American fiction. Whether elevated to abstract symbols of idealized traits or reduced to images of sin, female characters in American novels have, for the most part, been uninteresting non-persons. Except for Hester Prynne, Hawthorne's heroine, who is usually recognized as the great exception, few female characters can compete or even share the spotlight with the male heroes of American fiction. William Wasserstrom concludes that the majority of heroines in nineteenth-century American fiction are little girls who will never grow up (1959:25-27;51;76-87;126). Wendy Martin points out that the major tradition in American literature portrays woman as a fallen creature who must be punished (1971:329-246). Ernest Earnest argues that many of the real women in nineteenth-century America were more interesting than the lifeless and sexless heroines of American fiction. Although his explanations help to account for the sexlessness of these characters, he continues, they do not explain why American heroines were so lacking in depth and personality or why European writers of the same period were able to create women of character and substance (1974: 8;265-267).

Women in all walks of life were seen not as individuals but as secondary characters in the drama of the American individualist. It was only for their usefulness to men that women were valued. America was making the transition to an industrial society. In this rapidly changing society, women and the home represented stability. The rise of industrial capitalism led to the creation of two separate 'spheres': the 'women's sphere', and the 'men's sphere'. Women constituted a distinct culture, a culture separate from the national (male) culture. William A. Alcott's *The Young Wife* (1837) insisted that woman was

created to be “man’s assistant”: “The very act of entering into the married state is, on the part of the woman, a concession ... and submission” (27-29)

The position of American women differed from that of European women. Nowhere, of course, did women have the power and autonomy of the male members of their society. But European visitors to America consistently commented on the American women as being more repressed and more submissive than their European counterparts. In 1835, de Tocqueville said that, although the young American girl is more independent, she gives up that independence totally when she marries. That was necessary, according to him, to ensure “security for the order and prosperity of the household” (1954:212-213). Another French visitor to the United States, Gustave de Beaumont, emphasized in his novel *Marie* (1835) the “early reduction to non-entity of the married woman” in America (1958:19-20). Later on, he saw no difference between the single and married woman.

While American culture emphasized individualism and competition, American women were conditioned to accept a passive and submissive role, and were taught that a contrary behaviour was to go against God and nature.

Women have been denied their individuality in America and particularly in the nineteenth-century, the heyday of American individualism. Women, blacks, Indians and other “*others*” had no place in the drama of American individualism, as critic Joyce Warren argues. And it is as such that woman is reflected in nineteenth-century American literature.

R.W. Emerson’s individualism was central to nineteenth-century American thought. It is this consequence of American individualism that helps to explain the role of women and their reflection in nineteenth-century American literature written by both men and women.

Emerson believed in the primacy of the individual. The most valuable trait for any individual was, according to him, self-reliance. “Trust thyself”, Emerson writes in his essay “Self-reliance” (1841). Emerson was very much a man of his time, and his ideas reflect the prevailing attitudes in American life. What Emerson means by his ideal man is in many ways a description of the American hero. The ideal man will be strong, forceful, with strong will and personality. A true transcendentalist, he had an inflated view of the self, and, as such, he failed to recognize the independent existence of other people. Women belonged, in his view, to this category of ‘other people’. Even in his own marriages, Warren says, Emerson tended to think of his wife more as an abstraction than as a real person. Moreover, he accepted all the contemporary stereotypes about women: innocent

fair maidens or evil dark ladies; the angel, the fallen woman, the Puritan Calvinist, the slave mother, mother and daughter, the Black woman, etc. Emerson regarded men as reasonable beings and creative while women were seen as acting by instinct and passive. Like most of his contemporaries, he viewed women only in relation to man. The two principal functions that woman might have were “the comforter in the home and softener of man” or the goddess who inspires man to honour, morals and religion (*The Journals...*, 8:300-381; *Works*,3:150). Women who did not demonstrate the characteristics Emerson admired in women were condemned as masculine: “A masculine woman is never strong, but a lady is” (*Works*,11:425). Obviously, he could not conceive of a woman as an independent being, with a self-reliant role; he could see woman only in her relation to man.

This emphasis on individualism, expressed by Emerson, with its overwhelming view of the self, of the man who could not see other people as individuals was to be represented in the nineteenth-century American literature. The effects of this philosophy on two nineteenth-century novelists (J.F. Cooper and N. Hawthorne) are explored in the following lines. The approach taken is to understand the relationship between an author’s private beliefs and attitudes and the attitudes towards the portrayal of women expressed in his public works.

J.F. Cooper has often been criticized for his conventional and lifeless heroines. Perhaps the most famous comment is James Russell Lowell’s couplet from “A Fable for Critics” (1848). The women he draws from one model don’t vary: “All sappy (sentimental and foolish) as maples and flat as the prairie” (*Poetical Works*:137)

Joyce Warren speaks about Cooper’s heroine as superfluous to the action (1989:92). He divides the young white women in Cooper’s novels into three categories: “At one end of the scale are the very weak, totally dependent child-maidens. At the other end stand a few young women who are stronger and more independent, but somehow tainted; Cooper never allows one of them to be his heroine. They are not as weak as the child-maidens, but they are always dependent, and they are wholly ‘feminine’” (93).

The category of fragile child-maidens includes, e.g. Alice Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) or Hetty Hutter in *The Deerslayer* (1841). Although they are portrayed as feeble and childish we sense, most of the times, Cooper’s preference for them to the stronger women in the novels, e.g. Cora and Judith, whose strength is somehow linked to tainted blood or tainted virtue. Major Heyward, before he even knows of Cora’s black blood, chooses Alice. Obviously, he prefers the shrinking dependency and the “sweetness,

the beauty, the witchery” (1994:188) of Alice to Cora’s strength and vitality – a choice the reader finds difficult to understand but which is in accordance to Emerson’s view of ‘masculine women’ as self-reliant and independent. When he proposes at last to marry Alice, she responds, not with the proud warmth of Cora, but trembles and almost faints as is “common to her sex” (308).

Throughout the novel, the ‘strong’ Cora is contrasted with the ‘weak’ Alice. While Cora is praised by Heyward for her “fortitude”, “undisturbed reason” (99), Alice is seen by the same Heyward as a “trembling weeper” (97) who needs her sister to dry her tears up. Hawkeye thinks so highly of her that he wishes he had “a thousand men of brawny limbs and quick eyes that feared death as little as you [Cora] do” (167). Alice is weak with no blood boiling in her veins. Cora is a passionate woman whose dark and primitive beauty can fully appeal to the primitive instincts of the Indian. But she is not allowed to be free. Cooper punishes her: she is corrupted, stained even before birth (through her black mother) with the blackness of the primitive and the passional. Moreover, she is not capable of stirring and responding to passion. She represented all that nineteenth-century men privately dreamed of, but publicly disavowed as being eligible for wives.

However, Cooper’s women totally rely on men as initiators of action (although some of them are more spirited and resourceful than others). However, if a woman acts in a limited capacity, it is only out of a concern for others, not for herself. She never wants to save her own life. Then, she is not seen as unfeminine. Such is Cora’s case who chooses to lower herself in the eyes of Tanemund to save her sister’s life out of deep love for her and their father: “For myself I ask nothing... the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child. But yonder is one who has never known the weight of Heaven’s displeasure until now. She is the daughter of an old and failing man, whose days are near their close. She has many, very many to love her and delight in her; and she is too good, much too precious, to become the victim of that villain” (1994:362)

Cooper’s image of woman as passive and placid rather than active and assertive is reflected in her faith in God. Cooper regards religion as a peculiarly feminine province. In *The Pathfinder*, Mabel Dunham’s principal accomplishment is to pray with her dying father (*Works*, 3:471). And, in an emergency, the only activity that Cooper’s heroines can be counted upon to undertake is prayer. They bear the “spirit of Christianity” (92) and, whenever they are saved, they raise thanks to “the heavenly father”.

These are the majority of Cooper's heroines – spirited perhaps, but always limited, modest, dependent and selfless. The third category of young women, the stronger, more independent characters, contains a few examples. Moreover, these women are criticized, even punished for 'daring' to assume 'masculine' qualities. Cooper kills off Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cora is strong and brave. Her black blood allows her to be more independent than Cooper's usual white heroine, and, when her superior vitality attracts the love of two competing Indians, she and they must die.

Judith in *The Deerslayer* possesses strength and intelligence and the ability to act (She even pushes an invading Indian into the water (*Works*, 1:68-69)). But, although Deerslayer can almost forgive her for being too confident and not showing enough respect for other people (which, according to Cooper, is unbecoming to the sex she represents (*Works*, 1:434)), he cannot forgive her indiscretions with the officers of the garrison. Both he and Cooper turn their backs on Judith; Deerslayer accepts the "pure" rifle, Killdeer, instead of the "tainted" woman. Deerslayer, acting out the role of the self-reliant American individualist, cannot be emotionally involved with anyone, particularly with such an independent woman as Judith.

When we come to speak about Cooper's personal life, critics say that, on the one hand, his wife was a high-spirited woman, who supported and encouraged Cooper in his work, but, on the other hand, she was totally dependent on him.

In *The American Democrat* (1969:174), Cooper expressed his belief in the necessity of individuality for all greatness of character and for the pursuit of happiness, yet, he considered it unimportant in women, which clearly shows Cooper's opinion about women as having an existence only in relation to men. Like most of his contemporaries, he accepted American individualism, which finds clear expression in his fiction. The American individualist was, of course, a man, Natty Bumppo, Cooper's only real character, as most critics concede.

Another author who, most of the time, believed in a conventional image of feminine behaviour was N. Hawthorne. However, he managed, unlike Cooper, to go beyond this stereotyped image of American femininity. Hester Prynne, Zenobia, and Miriam are real flesh-and-blood women, independent, although, to some extent, they also reflect the nineteenth-century opinion of women.

In many respects, Hawthorne's view of women differed little from that of his contemporaries. He was mostly troubled by the fear that an independent woman would lose

her femininity. Yet, his fiction is filled with references that reveal a sympathetic understanding of the problems that women faced. Hawthorne agrees with Hester on the need to treat women more equitably. Hester's portrayal is illustrative in this sense. However, Hawthorne's men clearly express the general attitude toward women. Chillingworth uses the youthful Hester for his own comfort (*Works*,1:176-177). Judge Pyncheon is said to have killed his wife early in their marriage by requiring her to serve him "in token of fealty to her liege – lord and master" (*Works*,2:123). And Colonel Pyncheon wore out three wives by the "remorseless weight and hardness of his character in the conjugal relation" (*Works*,2:123). In *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), after Hollingsworth characterizes woman as nothing but a reflection of man, Coverdale comments that Hollingsworth has only expressed what "millions of despots like him" really feel. This kind of thinking, says Coverdale, deprives woman of her "very soul" to make her "a mere incident in the great sum of man" (*Works*,3:123). The cause of so many of the wrongs of women, Coverdale asserts, is the egotism of men. When Zenobia drowns herself, he reflects:

It was a woeful thought, that a woman of Zenobia's diversified capacity should have fancied herself irretrievably defeated on the broad battle-field of life ... merely because Love had gone against her. It is nonsense, and a miserable wrong, - the result, like so many others, of masculine egotism. (*Works*,3:241)

One of the problems Hawthorne notes is the lack of opportunities for women. Hester must turn to needlework because, "then as now", it is almost the only work available to women (*Works*,1:81). Hepzibah must become a petty shopkeeper for the same reason (*Works*,2:38). And in the preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne characterizes Zenobia as a type of "high-spirited woman, bruising herself against the narrow limitations of her sex" (*Works*,3:2).

Hawthorne's attitude toward women cannot be understood without looking at his relationship with the important women in his life: his mother, his sisters, and his wife. Despite being a private person, it is clear that his feelings were deep and that for him each woman was significant in her own right. Sophia Peabody, his wife, apparently shared Hawthorne's traditional view of women. She was shocked at the idea of women speaking in public, and she agreed with her contemporaries that a woman's place was in the home. However, as the critic Joyce Warren opines in *The American Narcissus* (1989:204), if

Sophia had been the conventional heroine embodied by Priscilla or Hilda, she would never have attracted and sustained Hawthorne's interest. In his "inmost heart", Hawthorne knew that this was not a true picture of womanhood. Aware of women's changing roles, Hawthorne was ambivalent in his attitude toward women. He tried to rely on the polarities of fair maid and dark lady, the sexless and saved versus the sensual and damned. And so the independent, rebellious, strong-willed Hester, Zenobia or Miriam also appear. Hence, for Hawthorne, Sophia was both the spiritual and the physical woman. Hawthorne's recognition and respect for Sophia as an independent and individual person, Joyce Warren continues, and his simultaneous preference for gentle femininity in a wife, "help to explain why in his fiction he balanced his independent women characters with gentle dove-maidens" (208).

Nevertheless, times had not come yet for men to see in woman a true partner in life, self-reliable and independent, and not a constant source of fear. Insubstantial as Priscilla is, Hollingsworth marries her. Hawthorne makes her a survivor while having the strong Zenobia drown herself. As Baym states in "*The Blithedale Romance: A Radical Reading*" (1968:142) Zenobia can never sustain a relationship with either male character because she represents the ideals they disdain. Zenobia's and Cora's cases resemble each other in this sense. At the other pole is Priscilla, a slave to men's ideals, as is the case with most women of the nineteenth century. As Baym states, "She is considered an inferior being, subjected, exploited, and yet idealized". (140)

The conclusion we can draw is that Hawthorne was different from his contemporaries in his attitude toward the dominant American culture. He did not share his countrymen's (Emerson and Cooper included) enthusiastic belief in American individualism. He was interested in people in general, did not regard them simply as material, but as real human beings with strengths and weaknesses. However, his opinion about women is very much in consonance with his contemporaries. It is clearly expressed in the last lines of *The Blithedale Romance*, when Coverdale states: "I – myself – was in love with – Priscilla" (247). Coverdale is a male representative of his age, a spokesperson for men's conceptions in the nineteenth-century American society. Although he appreciates Zenobia's beauty, intelligence, active role, he cannot approve of her radical beliefs and occasional exhibition of traditionally masculine tendencies. He prefers Priscilla, who is fragile, delicate and physically frail, passive, indomitable, innocent, invisible ("seen but not heard"), relying totally on men's decisions. Whereas Priscilla is ever-submissive to Hollingsworth's

desires, Zenobia begins as an independent character, who later surrenders to his control. This determines how the male characters, Coverdale and Hollingsworth, view both women. Coverdale and Hollingsworth are first entrapped by Zenobia's charm, but both fall for Priscilla's docility. Zenobia represents female independence, and Priscilla embodies feminine subservience; the triumph of Priscilla casts the male vote in this novel unanimously for obedient women.

In 1844, Margaret Fuller wrote that there was "no need to clip the wings of any bird that wants to soar and sing" (1855:175). But in the nineteenth century, few American writers could perceive women with the unclipped wings of a free American eagle. In nineteenth-century American literature, as in nineteenth-century American life, the male individualist came to the fore, while women were in the background, with few roles, if they had any role at all.

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**OLIVIA MANNING: A FEMALE VOICE AS CRITIQUE OF UTOPIAN
SOCIALISM**

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Both the admirers and detractors of Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* and *Levant Trilogy* tend to see these works having two distinct aspects: on the one hand they give us the local colour and political history of the Balkans and the Levant during the Second World War;

on the other they tell the story of a marriage and its problems. There is in fact an absence of serious critical work on Manning, but this is certainly how the books are marketed: the blurb on the back of my edition of the *Balkan Trilogy* (Manning, 1997) speaks of ‘the remarkable portrait of a marriage’ and ‘a delightfully ironic comedy of manners in a breaking world’, while that on the back of *The Levant Trilogy* (Manning, 2003) remarks that Guy and Harriet Pringle find the war in Egypt ‘a volatile backdrop to their own troubles’. Even the authors of *The Rough Guide to Romania* make the same distinction when they grudgingly praise the evocation of wartime Bucharest in *The Balkan Trilogy* but add that ‘as an extensive study of human relationships it is weakly constructed and eventually wearisome.’ (Burford, Richardson, 2001:396)

I should like to go beyond this opposition and to make connections between Manning’s portrait of a marriage and the politics of a breaking world, by discussing the way in which a female voice in the novel, the voice of Harriet Pringle (a voice which is sometimes, though not always, difficult to distinguish from the author’s voice) functions as a *political critique* as it operates within, and makes criticisms of, personal relationships. This critique is not simply political in the feminist sense of the personal being political, but also constitutes a critique of a certain type of leftist-Romantic attitude which can be called *Utopian socialism*. This is the attitude of Guy Pringle, representative of a whole generation of 1930s-educated British intellectuals who, in the most well-meaning way, supported Stalin. He is an admirer of the Soviet Union, whose political beliefs, despite (or indeed because of) his convinced atheism have more than a touch of the religious and Messianic: Harriet comments that he “read *Das Kapital* as the padre might read his Bible” (Manning, 1991:787), and she interprets his political enthusiasm in the following way:

I think it is the need to put his faith into something. His father was an old-fashioned radical. Guy was brought up as a free thinker, but he has a religious temperament. So he believes in Russia. That’s another home for little children above the bright blue sky. (Manning, 199:316)

In this paper I shall draw on Ernst Bloch’s work *The Spirit of Utopia* to help thematise the characteristics of the Utopian as exemplified in Guy Pringle, and to show how Manning lets us see these Utopian characteristics operating in both the public and the private realm.

What then is Utopian socialism? For a partial answer to this question, I would like to turn to the opening words of *The Spirit of Utopia*, which Bloch placed under the heading ‘Objective’:

I am. We are. That is enough. Now we have to begin. Life has been put in our hands. (Bloch, 2000:1)

Manning’s characters also meditate on the theme of life as a ‘great fortune’ (Manning, 1997:287) which is placed in our hands and which we often choose to squander, but it is on the initial “I am. We are” which I would like to focus. What exactly happens between these two sentences? In the context of what follows in *The Spirit of Utopia*, I think that we can say that we have a gathering of momentum as an invisible ‘you’ or ‘they’ is added to and subsumed under the ‘I’. It is significant that Bloch’s text takes ‘the inconstruable We-question’ (Bloch, 2000:165) as its central problematic, yet nevertheless makes constant use of the first person plural in sentences where the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ are strictly speaking more appropriate.

In Manning’s novels, Guy is presented as jumping just as quickly and heedlessly from the ‘I’ to the ‘We,’ whilst Harriet’s female voice functions as a cutting edge driven through that seamless transition between the ‘I am’ and the ‘We are’, rupturing the sense of agreement taken for granted. It is a voice which relishes saying ‘I disagree’, a voice of suspicion, a voice which delights in making precise delineations of character and motive, and in being frequently, in no uncertain terms, the voice of a bitch. For all these reasons, it is also a voice which frequently causes shocked reaction, and which has to resist various male attempts to stifle it.

Guy’s slipping from the ‘I am’ to the ‘We are’ takes two complementary forms, both of which cause Harriet to feel dissatisfied with her marriage. The first is his attitude to the outside world, the second his tendency to see her as a part of himself. With regard to the outside world, Guy gives us an example of what Bloch called “the Ways in This World by Which the Inward can become Outward, and the Outward Inward”. (Bloch, 2000:231) (This is incidentally an alternative title for the last chapter of *The Spirit of Utopia* – otherwise called ‘Karl Marx, Death and the Apocalypse’!) Guy seems to Harriet to be

like radium throwing off his vitality to the outside world – not that he thought of it as an outside world. So spontaneous was his approach to it, he seemed unaware of any sort of frontier between himself and the rest of humanity. (Manning, 1997:148)

This makes her marriage seem incomplete, since their relationship lacks the necessary element of exclusivity, and makes her feel compensation in the affection of a cat which bites *other* people, but not her. (Manning, 1997:207) When her friend Clarence remarks “you’ll always have Guy”, she retorts: “And he’ll always have the rest of the world”. (Manning, 1997:270) After Guy’s arrival in Greece after a brief but anxious separation, she realises that she had felt closest to him as she imagined him in a plane flying towards her, and that

He had only to arrive to take a step away from her. He was not to be shut up in intimacy. The world was his chief relationship and she wondered whether he really understood any other. (Manning, 1997:654)

Yet at the same time the outside world does not exist for Guy in many senses in which it can be said to exist for Harriet. As Harriet finally realises at the end of *The Levant Trilogy*, in a scene in which she tries to point out a camel from a moving train, Guy’s myopia is so severe that the world beyond the window of a train does not exist for him:

Beneath his confident belief in himself, beneath his certainty that he was loved and wanted wherever he went, he was deprived. She saw the world as a reality and he did not. (Manning, 2003:566)

This goes some way towards explaining why the world Guy inhabits is a purely human world of work and socialising, books and conversations, theatre and politics. He has no interest in seeing the sights, even the pyramids and the Parthenon, and something approaching a horror of animals and wild places. There is something of the spirit of Utopia in this aversion. For Bloch, ‘The Lower Life’ of plants and animals is only significant in so far as there is a ‘human-seeking quality’ in evolution - as for any intrinsic value - well, “A history of hedgehogs, even of cows in fifteen volumes, would not really be very interesting.” (Bloch, 2000:233-234) In the same way, Guy is perplexed by Harriet’s affection for cows, and when she answers him by asserting that she loves all animals he

asks “How could you love something so totally different from yourself?” To this she replies: “Why not? I don’t simply love myself. I think I love them because they are different.” (Manning, 1997:514)

Another thing about the outside world that Guy misses is many of the qualities which make people distinctive, different from one another. Because of his short sight, other people’s faces appear to him as undifferentiated, like so many friendly buns. Harriet on the other hand (and here her perception often blends with the authorial voice) sees people with a malicious clear-sightedness. For example, she perceives Guy’s friend Dubedat as having scurf, dirty finger nails and a smile lingering round his lips “like the grime left by bathwater”. (Manning, 1997:367)

Guy’s short-sightedness goes beyond the visual. Despite his gregariousness, there are some ways in which he is not really interested in other people. When Harriet asks him rather suspiciously what his boss Inchcape does with himself in his spare time he responds:

Why be interested in people’s private lives? What they are pleased to let us know should be enough for us.

Harriet retorts:

Well I just am. You’re interested in ideas; I in people. If you were more interested in people you might not like them so much. (Manning, 1997:63)

The plot tends to bear out Harriet’s judgement of people: Dubedat, whom she disliked on sight, turns out to betray Guy professionally, and Inchcape’s private life erupts in a disturbing way when the offices of the Organisation is trashed by a group of young Iron Guardists whom it is hinted, he dare not identify to the police because “they knew him too well”. (Manning, 1997:539) having been (insufficiently) paid as male prostitutes. More seriously, Harriet warns Guy not to allow the Jewish refugee Sasha and the impoverished Prince Yakimov to stay in their house at the same time because Yakimov is not to be trusted. Guy, in his eagerness to be all things to all men, over-rides her, with the result that Yakimov betrays Sasha’s presence to a German and Sasha is taken by the Iron Guard. The same mistake is often writ large in his judgement of international politics – we see his myopia functioning as a political metaphor, not only in his faith in Stalin and Russia, but also, for example, in his belief that the establishment of an Israeli state will be a good thing

for Jews and Arabs alike, brushing aside the diplomat Dobbie Dobson's conviction that trouble is inevitable.

However, more damaging to the marriage than Guy's devotion to or blindness with regard to the outside world is the way in which he makes the transition from the 'I am' to the 'We are' with regard to Harriet herself. In *The Levant Trilogy*, discussing Guy with one of his many admirers, Harriet says:

[...] I'll tell you something that happened in Bucharest just after we got married. I was about to step on a bus when Guy pulled me aside so that another woman – a woman of my own age – could step on in front of me. I was thunderstruck. And what annoyed me most was the simpering amusement of the woman when she saw Guy holding me back. I was furious and he was bewildered by me. He explained as though to a child, that one should be courteous to other people. I said, "What you did was damned discourteous to me," and he said "But you're part of me – I don't have to be courteous to you. (Manning, 2003:165)

On another occasion, Guy is surprised by Harriet's attitude when Sophie, a woman who had wanted to marry Guy and is still running after him, threatens to commit suicide if he does not go round to her house late on Christmas night. He cannot understand why she threatens to leave him if he does so:

Because I married you. You are part of myself. I expect from you what I expect from myself. (Manning, 1997:161)

Harriet repeats this phrase bitterly on a number of occasions, complaining that Guy is "Too wonderful, perhaps. He imagines he can do everything for everyone." And to the question "But not for you?" she replies "He sees me as a part of himself. He does not think that he needs to do things for me." (Manning, 1997:748) It also means that he does not need to see her as a whole individual in her own right; even his favourite endearment for her, 'little monkey's paws', reduces her by synecdoche to a part of herself.

Guy's 'part of me' phrase seems to be a relic of classic patriarchy, bringing us back to the female as spare rib, to Milton's Adam addressing his Eve as "Sole partner and sole *part* of all these joys". (Milton, 1998:245;my italics) For Marxist feminists, the critique of patriarchy, of woman as chattel, is often inextricably linked to the critique of private property, but Manning shows how Guy's disregard for private property combines with his

feeling that Harriet is a part of himself to create unthinkingly callous behaviour, leading us to the possibility of making analogies between his behaviour and that of a totalitarian Marxist state towards its citizens. The last straw in the marriage for Harriet, and the cause of her decision to leave Guy, is when Guy comes to visit her as she lies ill in hospital and takes away a rose-diamond brooch given to her by her friend Angela so that he can give it to another woman friend, Edwina Little, to console her after a failed relationship. He is delighted to have something to give away, but Harriet bitterly remarks “But what he gives he takes from me!” (Manning, 2003:345)

Indeed, Guy’s lack of respect for private property puts him in company which he would have been eager to disown. His grotesque behaviour is not so far from Nikko’s anecdote of the German officer billeted upon the family during the First World War, who showed his appreciation by giving Nikko’s mother a special present of her *own* bed-quilt. (Manning 1997:577) This comparison can be read as a metaphor for the way in which the behaviour of a right-wing militaristic state differs little from that of Communist totalitarianism.

It is also interesting that Bloch in *The Spirit of Utopia* resembles Guy in seeing the ideal love between man and woman in terms of two parts of a whole, speaking of “love’s path towards androgyne unity” (Bloch, 2000:210) This raises the question of the political link between the dissolution of the individual in marriage and in the socialist Utopia. Is such a Utopia a kind of marriage in which everyone is a part of a greater whole, and as such do not have to be courteous to each other, or rather perhaps in which leaders or party members will say to the ordinary citizen: *You are part of me – I don’t have to be courteous towards you?* There are, of course, conceivable Utopias in which the relationship between man and woman is differently construed: the most obvious being Plato’s *Republic*, where the women of the Guardian class bear children for the State – yet these two extreme positions – like the extremes of right and left in politics – have something in common: in both there is the risk of the female identity becoming submerged. If one asks why it is the female, rather than the male, who should be submerged in ‘androgyne unity’, the only answer is perhaps that, empirically, it too often works out like that. Manning’s novels give us an incisive illustration of the way in which relationships which seem to be based on give and take, often turn out to be asymmetrical in practice. Guy’s conception of the part-whole relationship in marriage never causes *him* to be pushed around like a limb of Harriet’s body. He never describes himself as a part of Harriet. It is tempting to see an additional

comment on the part-whole relationship in marriage in one of Dobbie Dobson's political anecdotes:

King Farouk said to me: Egypt, you know, is part of Europe.

Indeed, I replied. Which part? (Manning, 2003:513)

In the same way, Harriet might well have replied to Guy's assertion that she was a part of himself: "Indeed. Which part?"

Another aspect of the hidden asymmetry in the relationship is that Guy is constantly excusing the absence and inattention caused by his devotion to the outside world by reminding Harriet that *he* does not mind *her* doing things by herself, or having other friends, just as he does. However, as Harriet remarks, there is no particular merit in this since he knows that there is no risk involved because he is 'too good to lose' and the novels repeatedly show how she does not, given her temperament and prevailing social realities, have the same opportunities for social interaction that he does. The attitudes of the time make it uncomfortable for her to do things alone, male friends, such as Clarence, Charles, Halal and Lister, usually end up creating problems by being sexually attracted to her. As for female friends, they generally leave her in the lurch as soon as they have the opportunity of romance or flirtation, as is the case with Edwina Little and Angela Hooper in the *Levant Trilogy*, or when it becomes politically dangerous to associate with the English, as is the case with Bella in *The Balkan Trilogy*.

Harriet's main way of defending herself against all this is through her voice – although, as she recognises, she is not especially good at acting independently, she is at least not afraid of speaking out. This is made clear at the very beginning of *The Balkan Trilogy*, when the Pringles are confronted shortly after their arrival in Bucharest with a pompous Englishman who believes it the duty of all the Englishwomen in Romania to follow the example of his 'lady-wife' and go home so as not to be 'a drag on the gents'. Harriet retorts that she never follows examples, and we are told that

Woolley started, surprised, it seemed, not only by the edge on her voice, but by the fact that she had a voice at all. (Manning, 1997:28)

However, it is not only politically conservative characters who behave in this way. When Harriet makes comments during Guy's rehearsals of a play he tells her "Just try and

keep quiet.” (Manning, 1997:231) Likewise, when Harriet tries to join in political discussion, arguing with Guy’s Marxist friend Ben Phipps, and rejecting his conspiracy theories about the Vatican and Western capitalism being behind the rise of Hitler, Phipps tries to put her in her place simply by saying: “You know fuck all”. When she replies in the same register, by saying “You *ugly* little man” and walking out, her husband forces her to return and apologise. (Manning, 1997:791)

Though Guy is a critic of what he calls women’s *zenana complex*, his attitude to women’s speech is not really so different from that which Harriet encounters when invited to the Damascus house of a would-be progressive, but actually quite traditional Muslim. There, having rashly made a polite enquiry about the host’s wife, she finds herself taken away from the party where she was enjoying herself as the centre of male attention, to spend ‘an hour, or what seemed like an hour’ with a lady who cannot speak much English or understand her Egyptian Arabic. When she later remarks that “I’m afraid we couldn’t talk much. We have no common language”, her host well-meaningly replies “What does that matter? Ladies do not need language. They look at each other and they understand.” (Manning, 2003:438) In other words, it is assumed that the female will prefer a quasi-mystical and fleshly sympathy with someone to whom she cannot talk, to the opportunity of engaging in rational conversation with its possibilities of differentiation and dissension.

The Damascus episode could also be taken as an ironic comment on the type of Utopian ‘sisterhood’ feminism which assumes that women’s interests are better served by spending less time with their men folk and more with other women. In what might seem a paradox to such a feminist, Harriet frequently uses her voice to resist separation from her husband: to reject the idea of his packing her off to England with the other women and children for her own safety, and to show her resentment at the amount of time he spends away from her. It is symbolically appropriate that when Harriet, playing Xanthippe to the Utopian Guy’s Socrates, empties a pot, a teapot in this case, over his head, she is actually doing this to baptise him for fear that they should be in different places when they die. (Manning, 1997:386)

The one thing that Harriet’s voice does not do, however, is give us an alternative ideology to Guy’s. It is certainly not a defender of the capitalist *status quo*, nor even of the sanctity of marriage. And despite the unrelenting critique of Guy, *The Levant Trilogy* closes with her decision to stay with him, making the best of incompatibilities and imperfections. If the voice has any phrase that can summarise its position, it is perhaps its

answer to Guy's question: "Why aren't you a Progressive? You recognise the truth but don't subscribe to it":

I disagree. Truth is more complex than politics. (Manning, 1991:718)

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PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS IN BRITISH CONTROVERSIAL – IN-YER-FACE - DRAMA OF THE 1990s

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I write about human beings ... I don't think of the world as being divided up into men and women, victims and perpetrators. I don't think those are

constructive divisions to make... (Sarah Kane in Stephenson and Langridge, 1997:133)

On Christmas Eve 1994 John Osborne died. His death invited the critics to reassess his contribution to post-war British drama. His play *Look Back in Anger*, first staged at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 8 May 1956, saved British theatre from its steady decline. Drama of this period was not alive, it was backward-looking in its theatrical forms, ignoring the post-war social and cultural revolution. Post-war expectations for a Poetic Drama revival launched by the success of Christopher Fry and T.S. Eliot had evaporated. The theatre existed by means of revivals of plays by George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and John Galsworthy. 1956, however, saw the necessary breakthrough in British drama with Osborne's play and his hero, Jimmy Porter, one of the "angry young men" of the period, who directed his fiery attacks against the Establishment. Osborne's success encouraged a *first* and *second wave* of playwrights in the 1950s and 1960s (notably Simpson, Jillicoe, Delaney, Arden, Wesker, Bond, Pinter, Brenton, Hare, Griffiths, Barnes, Edgar, *inter alia*) who wrote political and experimental theatre and invigorated the English stage.

The theatre at the beginning of the 1990s, however, was generally considered to be again in a state of decline. Eighty-seven prominent British playwrights complained to the *Guardian* in a joint letter about the lack of new drama on the English stage. The theatre critic Michael Billington blamed the worrying cultural trend and restrictive governmental policy for this situation, which was turning the British theatre into a "dusty museum rather than a turbulent forum where society carries on a continuous debate with itself" (in Saunders, 2002:2). David Hare, a playwright of the *second wave*, considered that the 1990s "marked a breach in the continuity of a process that had evolved since *Look Back in Anger*" (in Saunders, 2002:2). He observed that his generation saw no young writers to challenge what they had fought for.

It was in this nostalgic atmosphere after Osborne's death and the longing for another revolutionary production that, on 12 January 1995, a new play called *Blasted* was premiered at the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs. Written by an unknown 23-year-old woman, Sarah Kane, the play was received with angry outrage both by the serious and the tabloid press on account of its scenes of violence, such as rape (male and female),

masturbation, defecation, cannibalism and torture. The critics' hostile reception can be compared with the controversy caused, thirty years earlier, by Edward Bond's play *Saved*, or in the 1980s by Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain*. Bond's play has been reviled and was censored by the Lord Chamberlain's office for the scene in which a baby is stoned to death by a group of youngsters in a London park, the child's father among them. The scenes of violence, however, were not gratuitous, but aimed at drawing attention to the aggressiveness of our world.

It is generally maintained that the controversy around Sarah Kane's *Blasted* on 18 January 1995 marked an important cultural moment and unleashed a new generation of confrontational young writers fomented by the Royal Court and the Bush Theatre, and supported by its artistic directors Stephen Daldry and Dominic Dromgoole. They allowed the playwrights to follow their imaginative trends to criticize the world, which they did by using shocking images and often foul language. Aleks Sierz (2001:36), however, points out that it would be a mistake to date the start of the new wave of nineties drama from the opening of Kane's play, because it was not the first provocative play produced during the 1990s. There was a new wave of young novel dramatists who had written rude, sexually explicit and generally violent plays. Sierz (1998:324) explains that the sudden appearance of so-called "in-yer-face" plays was not an isolated phenomenon, "but an aspect of the putative cultural renaissance much hyped as 'Cool Britannia'", that included Brit pop and Brit film. He claims that among the precursors of "in-yer-face theatre" one should mention Antony Neilson's *Penetrator* (1993) and Philip Ridley's *Ghost from a Perfect Place* (1992). These authors use shock tactics similar to Sarah Kane's (Sierz, 1998:325).

In fact, a disaffected group of playwrights had started to write plays with common themes and styles, "that put critics on their toes about a new strain of writing and a new kind of audience" (Saunders, 2002:4). Their work was referred to as "smack and sodomy plays" (Clapp, 1998:5) or defined as "The Theatre of Urban Ennui", because of its abrasive portrayals of city life (Nightingale, 1998:20 in Saunders, 2002:5-6). Plays of this category include Nick Grosso's *Peaches*, Joe Penhall's *Some Voices*, Rebecca Prichard's *Essex Girls*, Judy Upton's *Bruises* and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*, among others. Ravenhill's play, as its title might well suggest, provoked considerable controversy with its connection between "commerce and pleasure", as if "co-authored by Karl Marx and the Marquis de Sade" (according to a *Financial Times* review cited on the title page, 1997 Methuen Edition).

In the 1950s, a belligerent Jimmy Porter had acted as a spokesman for a disillusioned generation of post-war Britain to express “an angry national psyche of class resentment” (Sellar, 1997:29). The apathy of the period is expressed in Jimmy’s often quoted speech that “there aren’t any good, brave causes left” (Osborne, 1957:84) for young people to fight for. In the 1990s, the emerging group of young writers expressed a similar disappointment with the social and moral situation in Britain. Michael Billington and Lyn Gardner have tried to explain what has spawned this new drama by affirming that “it is partly a reaction against the drab uniformity of television”, and “a total disillusion ... with social decay: specifically with the breakdown of any binding moral code or common sense of decency” (1996:10).

The end of the ‘80s and start of the 1990’s were marked by a series of historical events – the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Communist regimes, the exit of Margaret Thatcher – which showed that despite a seeming ossification of politics, change was possible. This new-found freedom was translated into unprecedented theatrical freedom, encouraged by a post-modernist view that anything is acceptable. As Sierz (2001:36) explains: “Youth could be critical of capitalism without writing state-of-the nation plays; it could be sceptical of male power without being dogmatically feminist; it could express outrage without being politically correct”. Dromgoole, artistic director of the Bush theatre from 1990 to 1996, states that the production of Jonathan Harvey’s *Beautiful Thing* in July 1993 was “one of the most significant nights in post-war theatre” and that it was “the tip of the battering ram which knocked down the wall of dogma and defeatism” in British theatre (Droomgoole in Bradwell;Sierz, 1998:325). Harvey’s theme in the play is the crisis of masculinity, which is an important issue in the new confrontational aestheticism of the nineties. This male confusion and discomfort seems to be a response to thirty years of feminism and is articulated by New Men or a new kind of Laddism. If the eighties were dominated by women’s plays, “now it was the turn of “the *Boys’ Own play*” as David Edgar (in Sierz, 1998:326) has argued. Edgar was one of the prime advocates of the *new wave* writers he sponsored in his postgraduate courses at Birmingham University, who included Sarah Kane.

We are shown a dysfunctional society of problematic blokedom, missing fathers, difficult father-son relationships, male bonding, homosexuality, etc. This is exemplified by plays about war games, sports, male competition, such as Naomi Wallace’s *The War Boys* (1993), Jez Butterworth’s *Mojo* (1995) and Simon Block’s *Not a Game for Boys* (1995).

Most of the plays are haunted by images of violence, where we witness torture, murder (homicide and even matricide), child abuse, incest, rape (of women *and* men), gender confusion and sexual ambiguity, sex acts onstage, sex wars and sexual politics. The plays show people under pressure, disaffected and disorientated. The spectators, like the people on stage, are battered and bruised by the extreme cruelty that is mixed with desperation, by physical and also linguistic brutality, where words are used as knives. Most of the characters are lonely, demoralized working-class girls, who end up in teenage girl gangs, such as in Judy Upton's *Ashes and Sand* or Rebecca Prichard's *Essex Girls* and *Yard Gal*. The violent images are used to make a moral point, to show the victims of a violent, alienated British consumer society.

However, the drama of the 1990s does not show a "victim drama", where perpetrators are bad and victims good, but it also shows the complicity of victims in their victimization. Thus, this kind of provocative drama becomes more complex, with grey areas and ambiguous situations, instead of presenting a morally black and white world (Sierz, 2001: 231). It is the kind of theatre that triggers off a response in the spectators to form their own judgement, as Brecht advocated in his epic drama, and as Edward Bond does in his didactic epic theatre.

I have chosen to talk about two plays of the 1990s, where perpetrators turn into victims, and victims into perpetrators, as they do in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Judy Upton's *Bruises*. Both plays show important issues about the *Zeitgeist* of the decade, yet they are very different in form. Most of the new plays were admired for their good craftsmanship and their critical content, though most of them present a naturalistic dramatic form. This is the case of Judy Upton, whose dramatic strategy complies with the conservative context of British television drama within the constraints of real space and real time. Sarah Kane, on the other hand, is a notable exception to the rule. Edward Bond, much admired by Kane and one of her most important supporters, stressed the genuinely innovative quality about the form of *Blasted* (in Saunders, 2002:40). Kane's agent Mel Kenyon observed how Kane blew apart the three-act structure of the play. After the blast of a bomb – thus the title of the play – "we move from socio-realism to surrealism, to expressionism" (in Saunders, 2002:40). She employs postmodernist dramatic strategies – there are frequent references to classical and modern European theatre - that signify a clear rejection of the conventions of realism, eluding psychological verisimilitudes (see Saunders, 2002:8-12). Kane herself has

affirmed that the structure of the play was an attempt to express the chaotic structure of war, “where people’s lives are completely ripped to pieces” (in Saunders, 2002:41).

The opening scene of *Blasted* seems to be modelled on Ibsen and Chekhov in the theatrical tradition of naturalism and psychological realism. It is a domestic scene, set in an expensive hotel room in Leeds, while the second part is public, and the action continues in an unnamed war zone. This fact is symbolized by the blasting of the room by a bomb and the entrance of a soldier. Most critics failed to understand the relation between the two parts leading to their dismissive and hostile reviews, quite apart from their rejection of the violent scenes.

Blasted centres on the relationship between a middle-aged tabloid journalist who is dying from cirrhosis and lung cancer, and a psychically retarded girl, who sucks her thumb, stutters, and has cataleptic fits when she is frightened or emotionally perturbed. In the opening stage directions we are given precise indications about the characters’ age, class, birthplace, accent and speech. “IAN is 45, Welsh-born but lived in Leeds much of his life and picked up the accent. CATE is 21, a lower-middle-class Southerner with a south London accent and a stutter when under pressure” (Kane, 2001,1:3). We also learn that Ian leads a second life away from journalism. He is an undercover operator for a secret right-wing organisation, which is suggested in the opening scenes by his producing a revolver: “... He checks it is loaded and puts it under his pillow” (1:3). Ian is obsessed with order and cleanliness. He always feels dirty and keeps on having showers. Ian is a racist; his hate is directed against Wogs and Pakis who are “taking over” (1:4) the city. Furthermore, he directs his fascist discrimination against homosexuals and disabled persons. His obsessive frame of mind instils in him constant fear and aggressive behaviour.

Kane uses carefully chosen objects and symbols both to reveal Ian’s character and actions, and to indicate the connection between the scenes – a pile of newspapers, a revolver, a bunch of roses. There is insistent emphasis on the outward corruption of Ian’s body through the use of disease imagery with reiterated references to stink and sweat. After a lung operation, Ian explains that the surgeon “brought in this lump of rotting pork” (1:11), which stank. The author has explained that the disease which eats away at Ian’s remaining lung and the physical corruption of his body function as manifestations for his moral corruption (in Saunders, 2002:43). Ian’s moral and physical corruption cause repulsive reactions in Cate and they make her feel sick. Whenever he tries to kiss her, “she pulls away and wipes her mouth” (Kane, 2001,1:12,17). At one point he ejaculates in her

mouth, which makes her “spit frantically, trying to get every trace of him out of her mouth” (2:31). She cleans her teeth, but feels that she still stinks of him (2:33). “She begins to cough and retch. She puts her fingers down her throat and produces a hair. She... looks at Ian in disgust” (2:33).

Cate rejects any sexual relationship with Ian, thus resisting the pattern of previous abuse that happened “years ago” (1:13). There is therefore the insinuation that Ian abused her when she was still a child, which is hinted at by Cate’s sucking her thumb throughout the play. There is another insinuation that she was also abused by an older man, probably her father, because her fits started “since dad came back” (1:9). Cate has come to the hotel because of her empathy for Ian’s illness. Ian, however, keeps on harassing her, eager to satisfy his sexual desire. Zimmermann (2001:176) has rightly observed that “his mechanically repeated “I love you” is merely the prelude to or excuse for sexual violence”. Interestingly, the action shows Ian’s contradictory behaviour that oscillates between tenderness and aggression. We find him hugging Cate, specially when she is having her fits, while a moment later he is menacing her with his revolver. In this battle of the sexes “the phallus and the revolver become interchangeable” (Zimmermann, 2001:176). During the night, Ian rapes Cate, thus repeating his past abuses. She is bleeding afterwards from the vagina and anus. Her initial sympathy with Ian has now turned into disgust and hate because of the pain she is suffering and his repulsive cruelty.

After the rape, Cate “stares out of the window” and observes: “Looks like there’s a war on” (2:33). The existence of the war is materialized through the blasting of the Leeds hotel room by a mortar bomb and the invasion of a mercenary. In a Pinteresque mode, Kane makes the soldier knock insistently on the door; each knock being followed by an interval of menacing silence and the awareness of danger. Before the intrusion of the soldier, Cate, utterly scared, and threatened once again with Ian’s revolver, flees into the bathroom. The scene ends with blinding light, a huge explosion, and a blackout. At the end of the first part, we watch not only the blasting of the room, but also the blowing apart, the collapse of the structure of a well-made play. Sarah Kane, however, establishes a thematic and causal connection with the second part by relating “private sexual aggression and postcolonial racism at home with the systematic violence and serial rape of war”, as Zimmermann (2001:177) has indicated. Thus, the soldier functions as a link between the physical and mental torture Ian has perpetrated on Cate by turning the tables on him and subjecting him to a similar physical and mental abuse (Saunders, 2002: 45). The soldier, physically and

sexually starved, devours the two delivered breakfasts and would have raped Cate whose sexual smell he senses, had she not mysteriously disappeared. He consoles himself with a pair of Cate's knickers which he rubs gently over his face, smelling with pleasure (Kane, 2001,2:37), while looking at Ian with hate. He then describes his acts of utmost cruelty committed supposedly in the rape camps of Bosnia, though Kane does not relate the cruelties referred to in the play to a specific war nor the soldier to a specific nation; her aim is to focus on the systematic violence of any war:

SOLDIER. Went to a house just outside town. All gone. Apart from a small boy hiding in the corner. One of the others took him outside. Lay him on the ground and shot him through the legs. Heard crying in the basement. Went down. Three men and four women. Called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there. Turned her over and – Then she cried. Made her lick me clean. ... (3:43)
... I broke a woman's neck. Stabbed up between her legs, on the fifth stab snapped her spine (3.46).

Paradoxically, while the soldier has perpetrated this terrific cruelty on women, he is outraged at the same atrocities inflicted on his girlfriend Col:

SOLDIER. ... My girl – Not going back to her. When I go back.
She's dead, see. Fucking bastard soldier, he – (3:44). ...
Col, they bugged her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door (3:47).

Kane has explained that “the soldier is a kind of personification of Ian's psyche” (in Saunders, 2002:46), that is to say, the soldier is a metaphorical creation to show the darkest side of Ian's subconscious. Thus, the whole episode between Ian and the soldier has a kind of hallucinatory quality, because Ian, who has perpetrated a series of brutal atrocities himself, “revisits his possible war crimes as phantasms, or, rather, they revisit him”, as Buse (2001:176-7) has explained. Ian's shadowy activities are never openly related by him, but are externalized in fragments while he makes Cate help him masturbate (2:28-9).

The play is built very much on parallelisms, and there are striking similarities between Ian and the soldier, specially as regards rape. The theme of rape pervades the whole play. At one moment, Cate asks Ian whether he has ever had a fuck with a man (Kane,

2001,1:19), and so does the soldier (3:47), which is foreshadowing the male anal rape Ian will be subjected to. The soldier re-enacts the rape Ian has perpetrated on Cate in the first part of the play, and again it is carried out with a gun held to the victim's head. When the soldier has finished the act, he "pushes the revolver up Ian's anus". Throughout this diabolical and dehumanising act, "the Soldier is crying his heart out" (3:49). After relating another series of atrocities, he "grips Ian's head in his hands. He puts his mouth over one of Ian's eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it (3:50). This is another form of re-enactment, of repeating the same brutalities that other soldiers have done to his girlfriend. **Soldier:** "He ate her eyes. Poor bastard. Poor love. Poor fucking bastard" (3:50). The soldier has finally realized the agonies his girlfriend went through when he is pulling the trigger to kill himself ... "the next moment is the moment of death", as Kane has explained in an interview with Nils Tabert (in Saunders 2002:47).

The removal of Ian's eyes can be interpreted as a metaphor for his blindness to the real kernel of traumatic events, that is, his actual blindness is a kind of revenge on having been a bad witness, a theme which Buse (2001:184-7) has developed in his enlightening study. I have already mentioned that the soldier may be an externalisation of Ian's memory. Ian is a journalist, and, significantly, he is "specialized" in reporting rape, being a rapist himself. It is his mission to act as a witness of horrific events and to give testimony in the press. The soldier tells Ian: "You should be telling people" (3:47), proving that the atrocities perpetrated during the war really happened. Ian refuses, because, as he says, "this isn't a story anyone wants to hear" (3:48). The "stuff" *he* does concerns "shootings and rapes and kids getting fiddled by queer priests and schoolteachers" (3:48). The story has to be personal, like the one of the soldier's girlfriend, not about soldiers "screwing each other for a patch of land" (3:48). He then produces one of the "stories" he writes for the British press:

Kinky car dealer Richard Morris drove two teenage prostitutes into the country, tied them naked to fences and whipped them with a belt before having sex. Morris [...] was jailed for three years for unlawful sexual intercourse with one of the girls, aged thirteen (3:48).

Ian is the prototype of detached journalist whose historical testimony is reduced to daily routine and delivered in hackneyed language, “the churning out of lurid clichés down a telephone” (Buse, 2001:3):

A serial killer slaughtered British tourist Sarmantha Crace, C-R-A C-E, in a sick murder ritual comma, police revealed yesterday point new par. The bubbly nineteen-year-old from Leeds was among seven victims buried in identical triangular tombs in an isolated New Zealand forest point new par. Each had been stabbed more than twenty times and placed face down, comma, hands bound behind their backs point new par. ... [etc] (1:12)

Buse (2001:3) has rightly observed that *Blasted* “implies that modern Britain is a society where potentially traumatizing events, such as rape and murder, are rendered inconsequential by the constant diet of them the press provides”. Kane, however, “makes those events strange by presenting them so graphically, and in such an intimate environment” (Buse, 2001:3) as the theatre. This caused the reviewers’ outrage at the scenes of violence on the stage, scandalized by its supposedly offensive quality. Significantly, a *real* rape and a *real* murder, familiar events from television newscasts, are perceived without outcry. However, when converted into visual art, the horror scenario acquires a different quality, “where the spectator as voyeur becomes a passive participant in the atrocities shown” (Zimmermann, 2001:177). Kane has remarked herself: “The press outcry at the images presented wasn’t outrage at the idea of such a thing actually happening, but about being asked to consider the idea when viewing that imagery. The shock wasn’t about the content, [...] but about the familiar being arranged in such a way that it could be seen afresh” (in Stephenson and Langridge, 1997:131). Kane wanted to show the shocking truth, as Edward Bond does in his Rational theatre and Howard Barker in his Theatre of Catastrophe. She deglamorizes violence to show how the world brutalizes us and how serious subjects are reduced to “stories” in newspapers. The misunderstanding of her work and the dismissive reviews - (Jack Tinker, for instance, branded *Blasted* “This Disgusting Feast of Filth” (*Daily Mail*, 27 January 1995) - entail a savage irony and prove her right in her predicament that most of the newspaper journalists write their reports in inadequate, hasty language, as Ian does in the play.

It is also savagely ironic that Ian, who writes “stories” about rape and perpetrates torture and rape on women himself, becomes a victim of rape and torture. This nightmarish experience instils in him a death wish, and he tries to strangle himself. He has to rediscover

his lost humanity before he dies, and “get as low as humanly possible”, as Kane (in Saunders, 2002:63) has explained. His mental and physical terror and frightful isolation caused partly by his blindness are shown through a succession of Brechtian-inspired scenes, when Ian falls into the deepest pit of degradation by performing wordless basic human activities, such as masturbating, defecating, laughing hysterically, crying, eating the dead baby (see Kane in Saunders, 2002:63).

Cate returns at the end of the play, carrying an injured baby from the war zone. Her return seems to indicate a kind of reconciliation with her torturer. However, she is not a passive victim, as she has shown throughout the play. She stubbornly rejects Ian’s advances and questions almost everything he says, stressing repeatedly that she is not stupid. Cate exacts revenge on Ian’s patronizing attitude and cruel abuse at several moments by ripping the arms off his jacket, attacking him physically, biting his penis when he ejaculates into her mouth, refusing to pray for him when he is dying. She also denies Ian’s insistent wish to tell his son Matthew what has happened. It is only after the removal of his eyes that Ian seems to understand the necessity of bearing true witness, but, ironically, language fails him and his attempt ends in silence (Buse, 2001:185). Nevertheless, Kate feeds the blinded Ian, yet sits apart from him afterwards, huddled in blankets, sucking her thumb, like a vulnerable child yearning for warmth. Ian is sitting in the grave Cate has prepared in the floor for the baby who died. When Ian has experienced “life after death”, he returns to life to say “Thank you” to Cate. His expressing gratitude has been interpreted as a sign of hope. Ian has learned to be human after experiencing what hell is like, in a way reminiscent of Lear’s learning process on the heath. (For further information on the theme of punishment and redemption, as well as classical influences, see Saunders, 2002:54-70).

While Kane has posited a direct link between domestic violence in Britain and civil war in the former Yugoslavia, as she has explained herself (in Stephenson and Langridge, 1997:131), Judy Upton, in *Bruises* (1996) portrays a domestic world of violence and pain in England. In her play, as the title insinuates, men beat up each other and their women, causing serious emotional and physical bruises. Upton shows a world of mental and verbal impoverishment, where people suffer from isolation and emotional deprivation, and where language is reduced to bodily violence. Set in Worthing, Sussex, the play relates the arrival of the young Kate, a student with problems, to visit her vulnerable, divorced mother, Myrtle, who has eloped to the town with a new man, Duncan. Kate books into a B&B run

by an Irish father and son, Dave and Jay. She falls under the spell of Jay, a conceited, nasty and insecure youngster. Jay has been battered by his violent, jealous and heavy-drinking father, Dave, ever since he can remember. Violence seems to be genetic, as Jay completes the cycle of violence by beating up his girlfriends, which, to his mind, is the only way to earn respect. Jay associates violence with sex, because he tells Kate, who is badly bruised and abused by him, women should be scared of men: “that’s what makes a relationship” (Upton, 1996,II,ii:42). Though he hates his father because of his violent character, he imitates him in his treatment of women. His Mum was always terrified of dad, but “that’s what made her respect and love him” (II,ii:42). Jay’s mother died of a brain haemorrhage when he was fourteen. She was found dead at the bottom of the stairs. We may rightly conclude that her death was caused by one of her husband’s violent fits, and not because of a fall. There is the implication that Kate, if she stays with Jay, may suffer the same fate.

Judy Upton explores the contradictory fusion of tenderness and abusive aggression in male behaviour in a way similar to Kane in *Blasted*. Jay repeatedly affirms his love for Kate, but his caresses turn to blows, and his love is corroded by violence. His reiterated plea “Kiss me Kate” (I,ii:21) is followed by hitting her violently across the face which is his method of venting his frustration and of showing his masculinity. Utterly startled, Kate asks Jay at one moment: “How can you say you love me and treat me like a punchbag?” (III,i:57)

The cycle of violence is perpetrated by men – men beating up their women, fathers their sons - but the female acquiescence is even more alarming. Women submit to violence thus becoming passive victims. Kate makes several attempts to escape from this violent relationship, yet, in spite of her protestations and pain, she returns whenever Jay pleads with her not to leave him. She seems unable to break free from the cycle of violence she witnesses between father and son that is passed on to her. As Sierz (2001:217) has observed: “... she is attracted to an abuser, that bruising is what she is looking for”. Kate, in fact, seems to be accepting her own victimisation, and becomes a complicit partner in Jay’s father’s cruelty towards his son (Billington, 1995:1607). Jay proclaims: “I’m not a battered baby, I’m not a victim” (II,ii:43). His macho pride hinders him from reporting his father’s continuous cruelty to him, despite the medical reports proving physical abuse.

Dave’s aggression towards his son is now partly due to his sexual jealousy and futility. After learning that Phoebe, his 40-year-old lover and lodger, has slept with his son, he shows his utmost viciousness when he threatens to kill them both unless they have sex in

front of him. Jay, full of self-pity, relates this sickening incident to Kate. He tells her that his father's cruelty causes him to suffer temporary bouts of blindness and paralysis (III,i:55-6). We can observe an interesting parallelism with Ian's blindness in Kane's play – though *his* is caused by actual removal of his eyes – where two perpetrators are turned into victims. However, whereas Ian acquires certain insight through his suffering, Jay uses his victimization only to blackmail Kate, appealing to her pity to stay with the man who loves her and needs her. In this way Upton explores “how the perpetrators, in presenting themselves, (sometimes justly) as victims, get a blackmailing hold over their partners they both oppress and use as pity-dispensers”, as Taylor (1995:1608) has pointed out. Jay's father, too, tries to oppress and blackmail his son in a similar way. He always starts by conjuring up the good old times, that is, Jay's boyhood, to kindle in him past loving affections, and promising again and again in a sobbing voice that he will give up drinking and stop being violent. Jay is very much his father's son. He uses similar words to persuade Kate to stay with him. Ironically, Jay does not pay attention any more to such melodramatic scenes. He leaves the receiver lying beside the phone while his father's incoherent, sobbing voice goes on (II,ii:45-7).

Judy Upton's play portrays impoverished human beings who are emotionally deprived and though violent, yearn to be understood and loved. She does not proselytize, but wants the spectator to understand the social causes that produce bruising and bruised human beings. It is a haunting play about our violent society that raises important questions about victims and perpetrators, about victimhood and aggression: “Why are some women attracted to violent men? Are those complicit in violence equally to blame, or is a culture of blame just a way of hiding from uncomfortable truths?” (Sierz, 2001:218). Why do men use their fists to show their masculinity? Why do they kiss their girlfriends and beat them afterwards? Is their aggression a response to feminism, fear of women taking over power? In this sense, I deem it of interest to refer again to Osborne's hero, Jimmy Porter, who, “in order to establish his manhood, [he] has to attack women” (Wandor, 2001:43), and his target is his wife Alison. Jimmy feels vulnerable in his sexual and emotional desire for her. This vulnerability can be equated to weakness. Jimmy, as a man, has to fight weakness by transforming it into aggression against his wife (Wandor, 2001:44). In *Blasted* and *Bruises* the men's behaviour is very similar to Jimmy's. In order to establish their “manhood” and to earn “respect”, they inflict violence on women.

Unlike Kane, Upton perhaps eludes straight answers and avoids showing utmost sickening scenes, like the dramatic event of implied incest between Jay and his father's lover Phoebe. Upton's style is much less provocative than Kane's (Sierz, 2001:219), but she can also be named among the "angry young women" who started to raise their voices on the stage against violence directed at women (we should also mention, among them, Sarah Daniels and Timberlake Wertenbaker). Both Kane and Upton show traumatized victims from the past who turn into perpetrators to suffocate their futility and frustration by victimizing their women. Nevertheless, Upton's play, though portraying horrific abuse, did not provoke uproar from the critics, now almost inured to these horrors through television newscasts. Furthermore, Upton presents them in the traditional mode of writing, using the linear, naturalistic, documentary style spectators are accustomed to from watching television. Kane, however, transgressed the conventions of social realism by positing a link between domestic violence in Britain and civil war in the former Yugoslavia or any war, blasting apart the structure of the play. And she shows that hatred and fear and aggression lead to serial torture and violence in wars; perpetrators becoming victims of the violence perpetrated by other victims.

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Women in a Changing World

**WOMEN IN THE POPULAR MOVEMENT *RESISTANCE* ('OTPOR') IN NOVI
SAD 2000**

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The purpose of this paper is to present the activities and the role of the autochthonous women's group *Resisting Mothers* ('Otpor Moms'), which rose within the organization *Resistance* ('OTPOR') in Novi Sad (the capital city of the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina) in the summer of 2000. This topic is interpreted in empirical discourse.

The roots of the movement can be found in student protests in Serbia (1996-1997) against Slobodan Milošević's totalitarian regime. Its original energy has been channelled into aims of political parties. The student energy erupted again at the end of 1998, but it was cut short by the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. When the bombing stopped, the student movement started acting under the name of *Resistance* and declared itself as the people's movement.

It is considered that *Resistance* developed spontaneously, and that it consequently spontaneously decided upon its objectives. The movement started with its most basic demand for the change of the regime, and then it broadened this demand to include restoration of juridical system and civil rights. These objectives had their source in the hard social and economic position of the largest part of the population, which is related to the economic and social regression.

Resistance did not have strictly delineated target groups it wanted to win over. Its main intention was to raise the consciousness of citizens so that they could, with their own engagement, unsettle and bring down the regime. In the atmosphere of widespread passivity and depression, they showed that changes were possible, that individual activism is both desirable and purposeful. All their activities were directed toward helping large number of people to cast aside their fears and engage in civic disobedience. The movement took on the job of rallying society in the struggle against the regime, leaving aside political differences, heterogeneous social structure and differences in regional

* The co-author of this paper, Professor Dr. Marija Kleut, was a member of the women's group "*Resisting Mothers*".

development. Most prominent activists pressed the opposition parties into forming a united front.

Resistance chose the strategy of non-violent struggle, without mass public gatherings. It developed very recognizable forms of symbolic communication with the citizens: street theatres (short, clear, witty and/or ironic), posters, graffiti, leaflets, pins with symbols of *Resistance* (a clenched fist), flags, T-shirts and other paraphernalia with that symbol, which was absolutely disturbing, not only for the regime but for the citizens as well.

The composition of activists was heterogeneous, as far as age, sex, profession and political stance were concerned. At the start, the largest part of membership consisted of students, however, the movement gradually started to gain intellectuals, high school pupils and workers, as well as pensioners as its members. Since there are no precise data about the structure of *Resistance* membership (and there were no lists with names because of the high possibility of break-ins and arrests), it can be said, that, apart from students, the movement mostly attracted people from the middle and lower middle class. The political orientation of the members also varied, from those who did not belong to any party, to those belonging to various oppositional parties. Vojvodina is a multi-ethnic community and *Resistance* attracted people from different ethnic minority groups.

Still, generally speaking, this movement was a predominantly youth movement. Apart from university students, there were also high school student branches, whose number significantly rose in May 2000, exactly at the time when the police repression toward the members of the movement grew stronger. It is rather indicative that more girls were in that branch (named 'Baby Resistance').

Resistance came into existence as a movement and it acted as such: without formal organization, without internal hierarchy or a leader, with action groups in city centres but also with prominent individuals. As it is the case with all movements, it was stronger in negation than in affirmation. In the extremely difficult and complex conditions in Serbia during 1990s, under the unbreakable encirclement of political powers and repression of the police forces aimed at the opponents of the regime, the negation was needed because the situation could not be improved. Considering the situation in the country and bleak future which offered no options, political activism was a matter of survival for young *Resistance* members. (Ilić, 2001)

The regime recognized the potential strength of, and how dangerous *Resistance* could become, for their own survival. For this reason, state authorities refused to register *Resistance* as an NGO. Using this refusal as a pretext, they treated *Resistance* as an illegal

organization and its members as terrorists, and the police applied repressive measures against their activists and pressed charges against them in the courts.

The object of our interest in this paper is the particular women's group within the *Resistance*, which was organized only in Novi Sad. It was founded predominantly by the mothers of university and high school students. It called itself *Resisting Mothers*, although the group also included women without children¹. It was a group of women who realized that it would be very hard to dislodge the tenaciously established authorities in all the hierarchical levels of Milošević's regime (Kleut). Therefore, they decided to go public with a particular form of open oppositional engagement. Their decision to get organized in a particular group was triggered by the arrest of a group of students, members of *Resistance* who were subjected to physical brutality. A TV scene of a fragile, boyish looking student surrounded and beaten by policemen went around the world. It was also evident that the citizens of Novi Sad, as well as citizens of other cities in Serbia, did not strongly protest against the police beatings of students. *Resisting Mothers* was one small group which could not accept repression aimed at young people and was courageous enough to oppose it in public, to get organized and begin with public political activities against the regime.

This group was organized in accordance with the main programme of the *Resistance* movement. Its members did not see themselves as feminists. Their public engagement was a spontaneous and emotional reaction against the poverty and hopelessness for their children's future and for all young people's future. It could be said that they took this situation harder than the men, so their political engagement could be understood in this context.

Why was the group *Resisting Mothers* organized, while there was no "Resisting Fathers"?

Resisting Mothers simply wanted to make sacrifices for their children, and for all the young people engaged in *Resistance*. That their behaviour took the form of engagement in public represented a form of deviation from the patriarchal pattern. It was expected that the boys would be protected by their fathers, and not mothers, by men, not women. It seems that *Resistance Mothers* not only better understood the seriousness and hopelessness of the situation if impassivity remained the predominant reaction of Serbian citizens, but they were also prepared to risk police brutality. Their involvement in protest activities

organized by *Resistance* was based on the attitude that “A blow received by us is one blow less received by our children”. They themselves stated that it would have been a stronger provocation for the regime if men had taken action, that is, the repression would have been heavier also. Men would also lose jobs, and in Serbia there are still more men than women who are employed and they still have better paid jobs. Had they lost their jobs it would have hit families harder. Motivation for women's sacrifice was therefore twofold.

How would fathers themselves interpret their insufficient presence in the over-all *Resistance* activities? There is not enough information on this aspect. However, it is important to emphasize an evident fact – there was only one, relatively old man, who was hence called Granddaddy (‘Dedica’). No other grown-up man showed readiness to take part in the actions of *Resisting Mothers* in public. One might assume that they did not conform to the predominantly symbolic manner of communication, which had elements of play, one might even say children’s play. However, this is surely not the only reason for their non-involvement in the *Resistance* movement. Perhaps one should seek for the reasons in the patriarchal character of society in which men prefer an engagement in formal political parties, since their activity is directed towards gaining political power (within the framework of the struggle for power in society in general).

For the purpose of analyzing activities and roles played by *Resisting Mothers*, data were collected by means of a questionnaire and group interview (October 2002). Since membership data were not accessible, it was not possible to create a sample, nor interview all group members. Apart from a written questionnaire, a group interview was therefore conducted with those *Resisting Mothers* who voluntarily responded to our invitation to take part in the research as respondents (20 persons).

Based on the data collected, the social and cultural profile of *Resisting Mothers* is the following:

- In accordance with the group's name, *Resisting Mothers* was made up of mothers with children (only three members did not have children). Contrary to our expectations, members of this group were not exclusively mothers whose children were in the *Resistance*; about one half of the examined mothers had their own or closely related children in *Resistance*, but the other half did not. There were also cases of mothers getting involved in the *Resistance* instead of their children.

¹ In their own words: they wanted to *create* conditions for having children.

- Regarding the age group, these were mostly middle-aged women, 45-60 years old
- *Resisting Mothers* came from the middle class: they were mostly employed in non-manual routine occupations (two thirds), whereas one third belonged to professional groups (judges, professors). The majority of them were employed in state factories and institutions, and only one fifth was employed in the private sector
- According to their own perception, *Resisting Mothers* came from families with modest incomes: half of them judged the position of their family as bad and very bad, one third as satisfactory and only one fifth as good.
- Previous data indicate that women's revolt came from the middle class who was significantly impoverished and dishonoured during Milošević's regime.

In our analysis of the reasons for joining and taking active engagement in the *Resistance*, we therefore supposed that the way the long-lasting crisis in the country was perceived played an important part. Our results indicate that this group of women accurately identified the main causes of the crisis:

- Bad implementation of state policy
- Corruption and moral degradation of people in key positions in politics and economy
- Impassivity of the majority of people
- Loss of independence of the judicial system

In 2000 there was an increased repression against opposition groups, and especially against the members of the movement *Resistance*. Basic feelings of *Resisting Mothers* during this period clearly show that the ability to withstand terror had reached its culmination point. The most common, most characteristic, feeling in this group was “new energy and readiness to take part in bringing about changes” as well as “anger and fury”. A little less common was the belief that changes were possible and that they would come soon. About one third of the examinees stated that those were the feelings of concern and fear. Research of public opinion showed that in the last two decades of the 20th century the basic emotions of Serbian citizens were fear and a feeling of insecurity (The SCAN

Agency, Novi Sad), so it can be concluded that the feelings of *Resisting Mothers* were significantly different from the feelings of the majority of the population.

Public engagement of women on the part of *Resistance* was something new for the police. For this reason, in the beginning they did not know how to react. They informed their bosses through radio transmitters that there were only women in the protest and that they did not know what to do. Later on, however, women were also beaten and arrested. Policemen read the political engagement of *Resisting Mothers* within the traditional cultural pattern, according to which that kind of engagement was not appropriate for a woman. When arrested, women from this group were usually asked, “Do you have a husband?” Men would not be asked this. It is taken for granted that they are normal if they engage in opposition activities. Questions from the press were similar: “Do your husbands agree with you?” In other words, did they allow you to do this? Obviously, for journalists, as well as for policemen, such behaviour did not conform to the traditional view of obligations and the place of women in society.

Most policemen exerted brutality toward women in *Resistance*. Their anger was especially provoked by paraphernalia with symbols of the movement. Typical questions were: “Who wanted you to be his wife in that shirt?” “If I see you in an Otpor shirt next time, you’ll eat it!”² All in all, the police, but a part of the public also, saw young people with symbols of *Resistance* as delinquents, American mercenaries. Still, it was difficult to say that women with respectable professional careers, like university professors, were delinquents. The police therefore arrested *Resisting Mothers* and tried to separate them from the *Resistance* youth and speak to them independently. They were trying to neutralize their activities, in fact.

A group of *Resisting Mothers* organized various symbolic activities in order to establish some sort of communication with the general public. Symbolism was supposed to show the absurdity of violence. One such activity was drawing a fist in the sand on the Danube beach Štrand. Instead of achieving communication with the bathers, who showed no interest in the performance, the police came, with weapons, walkie-talkies and a Black Maria, and arrested the whole group. Communication was established in the police station, where one of the *Resisting Mothers* was brought wearing only her bathing suit. This was undoubtedly an instance of degradation and humiliation. The dangerousness of this game

² To tell the truth, there were also ruder sexist remarks which are usually not mentioned in civilized public communication

in which members of *Resistance* participated became practically evident during a period of interrogation and ill treatment by the police lasting several hours.

Similar things happened during the action of collecting and public sale of toys in the town centre, with the aim to financially help the arrested members of *Resistance*. Not only the sellers, but the buyers were also mostly women and young people. A few men came, paid for a toy, but would not carry it with them, in order to avoid being seen and marked as participants in the action. It seems that men find it harder to accept actions with elements of a child game, and in this case, the game and the danger were intertwined. That made them even more unwilling to join this kind of activism.

The local community reacted to the activism of *Resisting Mothers* in different ways. At the level of the city of Novi Sad, impassivity as the basic stance of the citizens in some situations turned into resistance. This was evident during one of the protest gatherings, when citizens threw eggs and potatoes at *Resisting Mothers* until the police came and arrested them.

The social circles of *Resisting Mothers* also had different attitudes toward their political engagement. Their families mostly supported them. In just a few cases their children expressed the fear of having the police knock on the door and of possible arrests. The reactions of husbands covered the whole range going all the way from outright disagreement to support.

Generally speaking, their work communities did not support the women's activism in the movement *Resistance*. If there was any support, it came mostly privately, and mostly from younger colleagues. Some *Resisting Mothers* hid their engagement in this movement for fear of losing their jobs. One examinee was even dismissed from her job.

Friends from their social circles were mostly reserved, critical, surprised by this kind of activism (“Who needs that?”) or simply did not communicate with them at all. About one third of the examinees said that they were supported by their friends, which nonetheless is an important difference with regard to the reactions of their work communities.

Their neighbourhood, as expected, due to the heterogeneity of its grouping, often expressed criticism, suspicion and protests toward the oppositional engagement of their adult female neighbours. *Resisting Mothers* stated that, in the majority of cases, the reactions of their neighbours were closely related to their political affiliations.

Based on the analyses of the data collected in this, as well as in other research on the subject, it can be concluded that the activism of *Resisting Mothers* was met with a

predominantly negative attitude on the part of the community. Most prominent were attitudes of distancing and suspicion. A sort of a glass wall. It is fairly certain that this kind of attitude was largely influenced by fear that members of these groups might themselves be subjected to police repression or criticism of the community.

Resistance activism was especially intensified after the local and presidential elections in September 2000, when the regime did not accept the electoral results. Great tensions and the possibility of civil war were in the air. *Resistance* activists were the most agile and fearless leaders in various actions of applying civil pressure and negotiation. Protest gatherings of Serbian people on October 5, in Belgrade (about a million people), resulted in the final collapse of the totalitarian regime. Did this change on the global level bring about changes in the community reactions toward *Resisting Mothers*? They themselves have identified different reactions: from old reservations to sudden kindness and congratulations. Generally speaking, it was evident that people were no longer as afraid as before October 5, communication became easier, and there were more public statements of individuals that they had always supported *Resistance*. These late acknowledgments of a truly risky political engagement had no meaning for *Resisting Mothers*.

How did this group at the end of 2000, view its political role in the ensuing political processes? Almost all examinees expressed their intentions to remain politically active, which indicates the high level of their political awareness. More than half saw themselves taking part in *Resistance* activities, one-third in various forms of civil disobedience. Only one examinee said that she would continue her political engagement in the political party to which she belonged. The reasons for further public engagement lay in the realization that the fall of the regime did not automatically mean that changes were secure in all areas in society, and that initial changes should be brought to their logical conclusion. Some examinees stated that *Resistance* represented social consciousness and that its mission was to confront negative elements in the new authorities as well. Not unexpectedly, impressed by the achievement of the opposition, not only *Resisting Mothers*, but also other members did not realize that the mission of the people's movement *Resistance* was accomplished with the fall of the totalitarian regime. However, this does not lessen the importance of the decision of some of the women from this group to remain politically active in an attempt to make their society better.

If the objective of *Resisting Mothers*' public engagement essentially was to protect the young from repression, then it could be interpreted within the corpus of motherly duties

and obligations. But since this engagement took place under the conditions of defining and treating *Resistance* members as enemies and foreign mercenaries, any form of protection of individuals marked in this manner has then to be viewed independently of the biological characteristics of the protectors. The public engagement of *Resisting Mothers* against the regime should therefore be understood as a way to destroy stereotypes about women and mothers as weaker human beings who stay at home and wait for the outcome of events where men are the main participants. In the past, in wars and other crises, women were engaged in “background” activities of securing the essentials for the direct participants in the events. That was the only way they were “visible” in the society. But after the crisis was over, they went back, or were brought back, to their private place in the family and the household, to their “proper” duties. Unfortunately, as it turned out, the new authorities in Serbia also did not recognize the importance of the public engagement of *Resistance Moms*, nor did women from other opposition groups understand the importance of their political engagement and, consequently, did not show public support or recognition to *Resisting Mothers*.

However, regardless of the attitude of the political authorities, the appearance of *Resisting Mothers* on the public political scene, where the opponents were representatives of the totalitarian regime, that is, brute force, certainly marks an important moment for the change in the attitude toward women in Serbia and for better understanding their role in society. This paper will serve its purpose if it contributes to identifying the political engagement of the Novi Sad group of *Resisting Mothers* as one form of anti-traditional model of activism and an indication of women's political potential. But, it also salutes the political activity of this group of women against the totalitarian power, though not with the aim of obtaining a share of this power.

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