Anglo-American Voices 1.

(En)Gendered Lives

Edited by Fanni Feldmann

Anglo-American Voices 1.

(En)Gendered Lives

Edited by Fanni Feldmann

Hatvani István Extramural College

University of Debrecen

Debrecen, 2016

Contents

PREFACE

(En)Gendered Lives is the fruit of a year's process that required commitment, faith and hard work from the English and American Studies Group of the Hatvani István Extramural College and also from our teachers, supervisors and mentors, to whom we are all extremely grateful. It all began last year, when we dared to dream big and decided to put together a volume of essays in which we can show the voice of our own. In order to reach our newly set goal, we outlined an agenda. In December 2015 we gathered for a workshop where we first introduced our topics, ideas, doubts, and received a lot of helpful feedback, pieces of advice, and illuminating questions from our audience. Then, in March 2016 we organised our student conference at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, where we presented the revised, improved, and more-or-less final versions of our essays, which are published in full length on these pages with the financial support of Hatvani István Extramural College.

Since our research topics are diverse, the very first task that stood in front of us when we first thought about the volume was to find a common element in our research topics that could unite our work. We could have published an essay collection with independent and unrelated texts; however, we wanted to work as a group. After long discussions, we eventually realised that no matter how distant our scholarly interests were, our everyday reality, mindsets, and theoretical backgrounds had a point of encounter: gender studies.

As the reader will see, we managed to preserve the diversity within our group, but at the same time, as a result of the continuous collaboration, our texts build up a certain structure and are in dialogue with each other. Some of us study the figure of the female artist: Marcell Kónya introduces to us a new angle of the Great War, namely the image created by women photographers; Kata Tófalvi examines a case of self-identification with a deformed female body through works of art in Clare Best's *Breastless*; and Edit Weidisch focuses on the female artist in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* Éva Szabó examines Elizabeth Taylor's lesser-known novel, *Palladian,* and the connections between gender and the motif of food. Others were inspired by transgressive pieces of art which seek to subvert established gender roles and positions. Barnabás Baranyi argues that Spike Jonze's 2013 film, *Her*, offers a new mode of looking at female bodies on the screen. Fanni Feldmann analyses Sally Potter's *Orlando*, and argue that the film consciously destabilises gendered positions on and off screen. Babett

Rubóczki puts some of Ernest Hemingway's short stories into a new perspective by arguing that sexual otherness and transgression are inescapable if we wish to understand the extensive layers of these texts. Eszter Balogh examines the gendered aspects of possession in a 1973 horror movie, William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*. Some texts focus on the masculine side of the gender spectrum and reflect on the issues regarding formations of masculinity. József Fagyal reflects on the interplay of gender roles and narrative constructions in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. Attila Lénárt-Muszka examines the contacts between patriarchy and knowledge in a Canadian text, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*. Georgina Bozsó sheds light on the problems of Victorian patriarchal society by analysing the position of the second son in the literary context of George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil." As myths and fairy tales are also intertwined with the constructions of gender norms, it is not by chance that texts deconstructing and rewriting such norms got the attention of some of our authors. Orsolya Erdei concentrates on the presence and querying of myths and stereotypes about African-Americans in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Alexandra Molnár explores how Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" overturn the gendered aspects of the traditional "Beauty and the Beast" stories.

At first, we thought that this volume would provide for us a one-time chance to display the results of our scholarly enthusiasm. However, in the process we realised that just like us, future generations of the English and American Studies Group might also embrace such opportunities. Therefore we decided that *(En)Gendered Lives* should not be a single book, a final outcome of our work, but rather a starting point: that is how this essay collection became the first volume of *Anglo-American Voices*, a series which is and will be managed, organised and edited by the devoted and talented students of our study group. We hope that the future volumes will be inspired by and handled with similar ardour, enthusiasm and team-spirit as we did with *(En)Gendered Lives*.

The editor

MARCELL KÓNYA

Photographic Image Making of the Great War:
The Female Perspective

Although the photographic representation of wars was not employed uniquely and primarily for the First World War, still, it is the first photographed conflict ever that generated such an astonishingly wide range of photographic record that it was used even at its own time in creating the image of the war for the public. My aim is to examine how the image of the Great War was constructed for the British public from photographs taken by photojournalists, official state photographers, and (anonymous) amateurs. Using the well-processed and easily accessible British national archives and other online private photo collections the (photographic) grand narrative of the war can be composed, as well as re-written through photographs. I am particularly interested in the early practice of photography by women who are not necessarily considered the primary subjects in creating the heroic imagery of the war. My analytic focus falls on the photographs of Christina Broom and Olive Edis, who received great publicity in 2015 and so far got little attention when analysing the visual representation of the war. Their photographs create a rarely seen image of the war and the human effort in general, thus investigating the work of women photographers gives us the possibility to get a different insight on the war, conventionally considered as a manly experience through a unique feminine perspective. Instead of taking the generally acknowledged face of the Great War into consideration, my aims are to reconstruct the image of the war from photographs taken by women and show an alternative narrative they construe, the untold/private facet of human experience of the war.

The power of perspective in photography

The appearance of photography as a new medium raised philosophical questions regarding the relation between a photographic image and reality, thus theoreticians such as Roland Barthes or Susan Sontag explored the faithful documentary, as well as the interpretative potentials of photographs. Understanding the nature of photography and the importance of the photographer's own perspective in image making emphasises the validity of studying female photographic practices along with the male counterpart.

Photography as a then relatively new medium that mechanically reproduced any real-world circumstances brought a new understanding of the relationship between reality and its representation. While in case of paintings, drawings or texts it is explicit that these are artefacts and there is an inherent call for interpretation through them, photographs were often considered as a transparent medium or windows onto the world as it is the machine that takes the image and the photographer "does not seem to interrupt the chain between the image and its meaning" (Flusser 11). Roland Barthes, a central figure of semiology with a heightened interest in the photograph as a unique sign-system, was among the most important theoreticians who considered photographic images as primarily "non-coded messages" (Barthes, *Image* 17). Barthes uses the expression "perfect *analogon*" for the photographic image since he believed that there is no transformation between the object and its image, "there is no necessity to set up a relay, that is to say a code, between the objects and its image" (17).

Rudolf Arnheim goes against Barthes's theory and formulating his counter argument he claims that "in a photograph, the shapes are selected, partially transformed, and treated by the picture taker and his optical and chemical equipment" (159). The photographic representation cannot be completely equivalent with reality even if it is realistic or objective. Susan Sontag, another major theoretician of photography, also formulated her somewhat more developed ideas regarding the relationship between photography and objectivity. She believed that photographs are faithful representations of reality but she also claimed that they offer space for interpretation similarly to other art forms conventionally considered as bearing connotation: "photographs are as much of an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are" (Sontag, *On Photography* 4). The photographic image in her understanding is the photographer's artefact and his/her own interpretative approach of the object, hence the potential for being coded.

Even documentary photographers can be deceived by their own notions and definitions of the subject that is being photographed. "In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects" (Sontag, *On Photography* 4). The result will be an image (*analogon*) that conveys additional meaning due to the arrangement of objects, shapes, composition, the pose of the model, lighting, shadows, colour (some of these elements were also mentioned by Barthes as means of connotation procedures that explain why photographs can carry secondary signification), all created by the

photographer, however, filtered through concepts in mind (although not always intentionally), such as the photographer's own understandings of the object or the notion of pleasure or discomfort. Sontag, therefore, claims that a photograph is "both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy or transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality" (Sontag, *Regarding* 26). In Sontag's reading, photography has an attribute that no other forms of art possess as it unites two contradictory qualities, namely, objectivity, and "personal testimony".

Photography primarily may be a faithful and objective means of image making, it can still not be considered as a pure and transparent medium, not even press photography or images taken in the documentary fashion. Besides being *analogons* photographs are more importantly personal statements. A photographic image is coded and carries secondary meanings since the elements of the photographs are filtered through the photographer's individual perception and cultural embeddedness. Although a machine records the picture mechanically, the very same event or cultural phenomenon can have different photographic depictions as there are differences in the thinking and perception of the ones who operate the camera. Employing the metaphorical concept of the parallax view to photography, as a means of observation, can explain the differences of representations. Slavoj Žižek borrowing Kojin Karatani's concept of parallax view explains that

> the observed difference is not simply "subjective," due to the fact that the same object which exists "out there" is seen from two different stances, or points of view. It is rather that, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently "mediated," so that an "epistemological" shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an "ontological" shift in the object itself. Or – to put it in Lacanese – the subject's gaze is always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself (17).

Women and men have different social and cultural background and upbringing and they have different understandings and views on the different facets of war and society, for instance with respect to the notion of heroism and courage or their expected participation in the war. Being aware that men and women photographers own different preconceived ideas about the war and its contributors, one can conclude that the differences of their

perception of the Great War makes it possible that photographers of the two genders can create multivalent images of the same cultural phenomena.

(New) Sources of photographs

Jane Carmichael claims that war photographs could come from three sources: commercial/press photographers whether freelancers or hired by publishers, official war photographers of states, and amateur photographers (officers, soldiers, civilians) (1). 1900, with the appearance of the relatively cheap and easy-to-use Brownie cameras, marks the beginning of amateur photography. Although amateur photographs are the most difficult to research due to the lack of adequate information and hard accessibility to this pool of photographs, they provide the most honest and personal view of the war. While amateurs shot for private use, press photographers sold their pictures to newspapers. Thus, they took photographs in accordance with the conditions and needs of publishers who, in return, wanted to buy images that could please the government and pass censorship. The only photographers who were allowed to work on the fronts were the official war photographers. They were given the task to produce images of the war for the press to fuel the propaganda machine at home and abroad and also to document the war and its costs as a historical event. As the Photographic Bureau could control only the photographs that were actually distributed by the bureau and not the photographs that were made by the official state photographers, they were free in choosing their subject matter. Today, the temporal distance and the well-processed and easily accessible archives make it possible to observe these images parallel and compare and analyse them to see how they create the image of the Great War and how this construed image of the war is (re)shaped during and even after the war.

In this research, I chose to examine the works of Christina Broom, who is claimed to be the "first woman (UK) press-photographer" (Sparham 1) and Olive Edis, the first female official war photographer working in Flanders appointed by the Imperial War Museum in 1918. One hundred years had to pass for these women to be fully acknowledged as photographers of the Great War. The very first exhibition exclusively dedicated to Christina Broom's works, putting on display images that have never been available for the public, was opened in June 2015 by the Museum of London Docklands, and the very first book published committed to her life and entire oeuvre was also published the very same year. Also in 2015, a large sum of money has been granted by the Heritage Lottery Fund for

compiling the work of Olive Edis from various collections into a comprehensive online archive making her photographs widely accessible.

The family hero

The British, like most nations, had no centralised propaganda office in 1914 only agencies and organizations that were working separately, being responsible for particular segments of propaganda. The very first British official state photographer, Ernest Brooks was assigned in 1916 to the Western Front, and The Ministry of Information that alone controlled all propaganda activities was established as late as 1918. From the very beginning of the war, photographs, whether state ordered or taken by independent photographers, show a wide-ranging photographic depiction of life during the war at home as well as on the fronts. This massive visual record among others consists of photographs of the technological advancements of warfare and medication, battlefield landscapes and the depictions of war-torn cities and buildings. Still, as there were 65 million people mobilised in the armies globally and millions of others experienced the effects of the war at their own surroundings, it appears natural that the great majority of WWI photographs depict an immense amount of bodies of soldiers, officers and civilians, dead and alive.

Despite the fact that there was no centralised propaganda in 1914 and there was no official state photographer either, the majority of visual depictions from this period created an image that was in harmony with the aims of the army as it boosted morale and gave respect to soldiers. It was the warrior-hero soldier who stood in the centre of this initial photographic image that emerged in the midst of an exuberant nation and patriotic photographers. The jingoistic representation of soldiers under mobilisation in towns created an elevated aura around them and it never cherished the soldier hero as an individual. According to this image the soldier was but a constituent of a bigger unit, a grander machinery (Figs. 1-2). Photographs from 1914 propagate the warrior-hero image through depicting masses of soldiers with weapons in hand expressing confidence, strength and justified violence against the enemy, the Other. They march in recognizable parts of cities maintaining orderly formations among cheering and respectfully observing civilians, who are just as important elements of these photographs as the soldiers themselves. In the photographs of Figures 1 and 2 the photographers carefully compose their images with eye-catching organising elements. The unknown press photographer who documented the marching royal marines through the street of Ostend gives a natural frame to the scene

with the help of the urban environment. Moreover, the diagonal and parallel lines related to the shapes of buildings, the row of soldiers and the queue of civilians along the road further stresses the mechanical nature of mobilisation which turns individuals into members of faceless, unidentifiable units. The person who took the photograph of the inspection of the troops (Fig. 2) uses the same arrangement, however, here the infinite and uninterrupted chain of homogeneous bodies of soldiers is even more manifest. The contrasting colour scheme of the white horse and the rest of the picture on the one hand draws attention to the royalty who inspects the marching troops, thus expressing respect and appreciation towards the men in service, but on the other hand widens the gap between the individual and the faceless masses of soldiers. Both of the photographers were able to encode the concept of the warrior hero as someone belonging to the orderly and machinery-like army.

The lack of personality and individuality within the fighting units is, therefore, visible in photographs as early as 1914. Although, photographs kept maintaining the image of the warrior hero throughout the years, gradually it became evident and more problematic that modern warfare is monstrous, and impersonal and photographers in the later years of the war became much braver to express it. The photographs from 1918 (Figs. 3-4) taken by David McClellan, one of the official state photographers of the war, reflect on this theme, showing masses of people involved in the war without strength and identity. While the photographs of mobilisation from the beginning of the war are characterised by careful composition these two photographs fail to create the linear-planar space that is achieved by the intersection of lines and flat surfaces such as width, height, and depth. Soldiers are depicted out of context in positions that do not indicate dignity and order. As opposed to the representations of mobilisation in towns where the scenery of the city serves as a context to the human presence, the lack of a natural frame in case of Figure 4 expands the view of soldiers into infinity as the limits of the wrecked bodies appear entirely indefinable. While the bridge could serve as a framing device in Figure 3, its collapsing state supports the sense of disorder and chaos. The supposed immensity of the crowd of people as a huge canvas of bodies conveys a less heroic and an empathetically victimised depiction of soldiers. Because of this more judgmental representation of the mass of soldiers these two photographs are unable to communicate the formerly created image of the warrior-hero soldier. Close to the end of the war and during the post-war period the photographic images of the soldiers reflected on the lack of cohesion and individuality more and more extensively.

As opposed to the warrior-hero representation of the masses of soldiers, Christina Broom's photographs offer a more personal and sensitive view, her focus falling on the individual. By the time of the outbreak of the war she already had such a well established commercial photographer career that it made her the sole breadwinner of her family. She has photographed the streets of London for the postcard industry, the Suffragettes, the Royal Family, and soldiers even prior to the war. Photographing the streets of London, she became a permanent figure of the city so it is no wonder she also recorded the mobilisation that took place in that urban environment. However, Christina Broom looked for the person in the crowd. The snapshot-like photograph (Fig. 5) is a tangible example of her vision on the masses of soldiers. It is not the grand view of troops standing in perfect lines in a prominent space of the city cherished and celebrated by civilians. This photograph creates a rare perspective which enables us to look inside the war machine and see its constituents, the individuals. We not only see an officer who looks into the camera but a number of soldiers before receiving their command, thus all of them happen to be in different postures. It shows men in the moment right before putting on their socially constructed role of the disciplined soldier. Instead of recording the ceremonial and official inspection of the unit, Christina Broom creates the portrait of the individual within the masses of soldiers.

A significant number of her photographs (Fig. 9) show departing soldiers at a train station bidding farewell to their loved ones and the city. Usually photographs taken in the family portrait genre are characterised by this intimacy and informality (Figs. 6-9) rather than in documentary photographs. These works also illustrate a tendency that is mainly and primarily associated with pioneering women photographers who left behind the conventions of early portrait studio photography and shot portraits in private residences as they were more welcomed there than their male counterparts (Rosenblum 73). Such disappearance of the painted background, the damask curtains and other props brought the possibility of expressing more individuality and personality in these new types of portraits. Sitters were photographed in their own habitat, always in natural light due to the absence of expensive and bulky studio lights. Christina Broom's recently displayed photographs of the Grenadier Guards and leaving soldiers (Figs. 6-9) are unique due to the familiar place, natural light, and the fact that women photographers were able to intuitively make their sitters more relaxed and eased while arranging the picture. Compared to the traditional black and white photography which often creates factual and official looks, she uses

warmer tones of brown that signify emotions such as tranquillity and warmth which evoke a mood that is friendlier and creates bigger space for the individual, as the background is given less emphasis by the reduction of contrast during post-production. The pioneering technique of soft focus and the above mentioned manipulation of images show Christina Broom's intention of an artistic representation which also creates the possibility of emotional attachment to the perception.

Having faces, names, and personalities, these soldiers stand out as family members often showing signs of emotions. Christina Broom's photographs show the individual who is involved personally in the conflict, hence creating a new dimension of the warrior-hero image. As long as the warriors are without individuality and they are portrayed simply as part of a machine, it is easy to accept violence as something given for the well-being of the nation. However, once the individuality gets emphasis within the war machinery, it becomes difficult to imagine that these soldiers, who are sons, husbands, and fathers, are going to kill or going to be killed. Her main income came from selling postcards, which probably allowed Christina Broom to leave the conventions of press photography behind and take these personal and relaxed photographs creating a unique Family-Hero image of the soldiers going to war.[1]

The mobilised women

Since men fought at the battlefields, conventionally they were considered to have a direct experience of warfare, and the traditional understanding of women's contribution to wars was their ability to deliver and raise boys to be good warriors and to take care of the wounded. At the outbreak of the Great War women were not attributed with a significant and active role in the course of the war. The image of the patriotic woman of the period was the submissive housewife or mother who urges men to go to war and fight for the country. Even prior to the Great War this imagery was picked up by (propaganda) artists who painted and drew respected housewives and mothers saying farewell to their beloved men in uniform, conveying the message that women who are willing to offer their sons and husbands to the nation are valuable and honoured members of society. As the Great War got prolonged and there was an increasing demand for workforce, a previously unseen image of the working woman came into existence. An increasing number of women were employed in factories by the industries or for other jobs that were previously done by men, so women's indirect contribution to the war changed to a genuinely active one,

where they were more openly involved in the war efforts. These changes resulted in an unprecedented visual experience as well, since people at the home front and at the battlefields encountered the view of working women, who besides their traditional roles were now doing jobs like that of a porter, driver and industrial worker which were associated exclusively with men.

As the British propaganda became gradually centralised and authorities set up certain departments that consciously dealt with promoting particular political messages to the people, it had been realised that the image of the working women can be incorporated into the propaganda machine to enhance the civil contribution to the war effort. Therefore, the state ordered the photographic representation of women at war. The appearance of working women in public imagination was a sudden and drastic change, since one or two years earlier the images of the Suffragettes meant the most prominent visibility of women in the streets and in newspapers. Images of arrests, public demonstrations, petitions, exhibitions, processions of women fighting for their rights were now replaced by images of patriotic women, who sacrificed their fight for emancipation in order to support men and the war with their diligent work. Based on the photographic illustrations from several issues of *Daily Sketch* and *Daily Mail* from 1915 to 1917, John Taylor argues that the symbolic importance of the new role of women was used by the press for specific purposes (33). Taylor remarks that working women were often contrasted with miners on strike. This was manifested through the actual editing of the printed page in a way of setting their photographic images side by side. The previous representation of women fighting for their rights which portrayed them as a potential threat to the society now changes and working women are contrasted with men who refuse to work thus betraying the nation. This connoting mechanism of course results in an image that regards all working women patriotic subjects and anyone who is not willing to work, unpatriotic. Hence, this emerging role of women and the image of women at work became exploited for propaganda purposes.[2]

The two most significant documentary photographers who created the photographic record of the employment of women in Britain during the Great War were George P. Lewis and Horace Nicholls, both of them appointed by the Department of Information, the forerunner of the Ministry of Information. Olive Edis, whose work eventually received extensive publicity in 2015, got her permission to visit the Western front and photograph the women's participation in the war as the first official woman war photographer. The peculiarity of her case, which I believe could greatly influence her motivation when taking photographs, was that she was

appointed by the Imperial War Museum as opposed to to the Ministry of Information that was responsible for the production of propaganda material. Thus her assignment was primarily creating a record for the future, preserving the image of the emerging status of working women and consequently empowering them. Furthermore, she was unpaid, and she was permitted to enter the front only a few months after the war had ended, so she had no interest in making money with her photographs and she was also not driven by political ideas. While Lewis and Nicholls were documentary photographers and had started their careers as freelancer photojournalists, Olive Edis was a portrait photographer with several successful privately owned studios across England. A photographer's own positioning in the profession partially fixes the genres and styles s/he is working in, which inevitably means that the above mentioned three photographers also show differences in their visual language. On the one hand, the work of Lewis and Nicholls is characterised by intended and pretended realism and objectivity, thus being more suitable for propaganda use; on the other hand, Olive Edis's photographs show that she shot with an artistic intent. Her artistic photographic language makes space for subjectivity both for the photographed model and for the photographer herself, as through these images she is able to articulate her own perspective, too.

The photographs of women at the shipbuilding and the rubber factories (Figs. 10-11) taken by Lewis and Nicholls are typical examples of the widespread propaganda representations of working women. Photographs, produced both by men and women, utilised in creating the conventional image of the women at war introduced their subjects as mostly performing some kind of manual tasks or unskilled work. These photographs are seldom snapshots of everyday life of women during the war, they are rather carefully created representations of what women ought to be or were believed to be in a victorious war. Women very clearly pose for the photographers, what is more, they smile and look directly into the camera. The photographers tried to shoot their objects in plenty of light, most often artificial lights, hence every detail of the photograph is sharp aiming to be as close to the represented reality as possible. Obviously state commissioned photographs left the bad working conditions out of frame and created an idealised image encouraging women to support the war aims and the men with their conscientious work.

Olive Edis's photography of women's old and new roles in the war contradicts the conventional images in several ways. Photographs of working women form a big part of her work, however, they create a unique image

that was not made visible previously by official photographers (Figs 12-16). Olive Edis's women are not random, unskilled people who are used by the industries only to fill up the lack of working men or to produce something for the men. Her photographs imply that the women play an active role in the warfare and their employment is not solely the result of demand for labour. Edis photographed women performing tasks that would be considered pioneering even today, for instance one of her photographs (Fig. 12) records a woman working in an engine repair shop as a welder with her male co-worker, while an other photograph (Fig. 13) shows a group of women drivers repairing motor ambulances. As opposed to the widespread propaganda images of unskilled working women, her photographs tell that these courageous women contributed to the war effort with their abilities, knowledge, and skills, often honestly revealing the unpleasant and difficult working environments, too.

According to the image created by Olive Edis, working women were not the substitutes of men. They made their own independent presence legitimate. Besides the skilful worker, many of her photographs depict another new role of women at war, which is the woman doing intellectual work in military offices (Figs. 14-15). Olive Edis depicts women in equal numbers with men or they can even dominate the photographs. The women that we get to know through these photographs are not simple factory workers or agricultural workers but people who have responsibilities in the war and who use their competence in order to move the war forward to victory. These women are wearing uniforms and they are very often framed together with men sharing tasks and cooperating with them as equal partners.

Edis's photographic language makes the images perceivable as realistic and more natural than the ones made specifically for the propaganda. She took her photographs in natural light and she mostly avoided arranging the photographed objects as she wanted to record the everyday scenes faithfully. Although her method resulted in often blurry, dark, and hazy photographs, they created more intimacy and credibility due to these attributes. As her "sitters" were not holding long poses, their faces and bodies are often blurred further strengthening the feeling of looking at snapshots of women's life on the fronts. Similarly to Christina Broom, Olive Edis was interested in creating the image of the individual and not that of the masses involved in the war, consequently there are several photographs introducing women in uniforms in the fashion of portrait photography. Some of her women models who played important roles in the background

operations are portrayed in positions that were previously associated with responsible male generals and commanders (Fig. 16). Besides photographing nurses, the traditional role of women at war, Olive Edis created a new image of women that had not been seen before, the competent women who has been mobilised into action as an equal partner of men in "fighting" for the nation.

Conclusion

Photography is the rare medium that is able to objectively record reality and give space for personal interpretation of the represented reality at the same time. There is both denotative and connotative meanings attached to photographs and decoding them happens in a similar manner to more conventional forms of art, such as painting or drawing. Photographers are deceived by their own understanding and ideas of the object that is being photographed, thus the representation, that is the faithful rendering of reality, will reflect at the same time the photographers own perception of that reality, too. As women and men have different preconceived ideas about their roles in the war and society it is possible that, even though a machine takes them, the photographs will show different images of the Great War. Therefore, a careful examination and comparison of official and unofficial photographs created by men and women photographers create the opportunity to have a different insight on the war, conventionally considered as a manly experience. As opposed to the warrior-hero image created by patriotic photographers that dispossesses the soldiers from identity and character, Christina Broom offers a more personal view with her photography focusing on the individual. Her photographs are characterised by intimacy and informality which promote the image of the soldier as the hero of the family, as a central figure. However, it is certainly not only men whose roles had been represented in photographs. Olive Edis's photography focuses on the representation of the changing status of women during the war in a way that previously unseen, new positions of women at war got visibility. Women do not appear as mere substitutes of men. Women are mobilised for the war because of their own skills and intelligence, and not only due to the lack of men. Olive Edis portrays active women as equal partners to men in collaboration to win the war. Women photographers of

the Great War and their representations of this modern conflict, especially the role women played in it served (and still serves) as an inspiration for the post-war generation of women who continued to fight for their emancipation in a different battle.

Appendix

Figure 1. Crowds watching the royal marines march through Ostend, Sport & General Press Agency Collection; "Q53232"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; Aug. 1914;

Figure 2. The Duke of Connaught inspecting a long line of troops as they march past; Douglas Haig; "C.1029"; *National Library of Scotland*; digital.nls.uk; Web; 5 Jan. 2015.
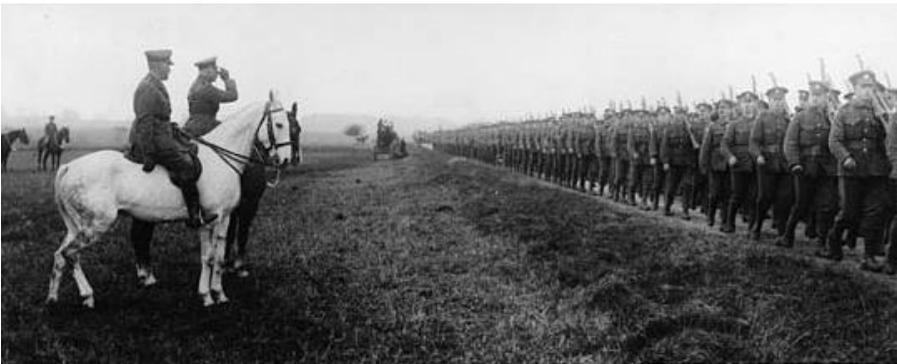
Figure 3. The final battles: the huge mass of 137 Brigade, 46 Division, on the banks of the St Quentin Canal which formed part of the German defiance system, the Hindenburg Line, broken on 29 September 1918; David McClellan; "Q9534"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 2 Oct. 1918; Web;
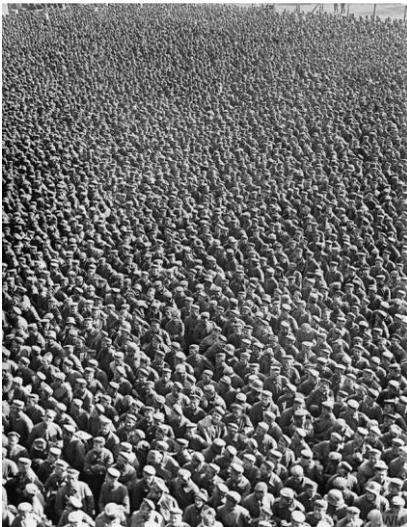
Figure 4. The mass of prisoners taken in the battle of St Quentin Canal assembled in a clearing depot at Abbeville on 2 October 1918; David McClellan; "Q9353"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 2 Oct. 1918; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 5. A mounted cavalry draft of the 1st Life Guards with Captain Gerrard Leigh in the foreground; Broom Albert (Mrs); "Q66190"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; Aug. 1914; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 6. A Long and the Short of the Grenadier Guards; Christina Broom; "011946"; *Museum of London*; museumoflondonprints.com ; 1916; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 7. The Grenadier Guards, Chelsea Barracks; Christina Broom; "011931"; *Museum of London*; museumoflondonprints.com ; 1916; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 8. Captain Spencer, of 1st Life Guards; Christina Broom; "011919"; *Museum of London*; museumoflondonprints.com ; 1914; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 9. Soldiers from the Household Battalion leaving for the Front; Christina Broom; "011652"; *Museum of London*; museumoflondonprints .com ; 1916; Web; 30 Nov. 2015.

Figure 10. A female worker operating a vice at a bench at Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth and Company shipbuilding yard, Elswick, Newcastle; Horace Nicholls; "Q20077"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 1914; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Figure 11. A female worker poses with a stack of completed motor vehicle tyres in the rubber factory of Charles Macintosh and Sons Ltd, Manchester, in September 1918; George P Lewis; "Q28237"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; Sept 1918; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Fig. 12. A member of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) acetylene welding at a Royal Air Force engine repair shop at Pont de l'Arche, France, in 1919.; Olive Edis; "Q8117"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 1919; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Figure 13. Members of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) repairing their motor ambulances, St. Omer; Olive Edis; "Q7965"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 1919; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Figure 14. 10th General Hospital Office, Rouen. Photograph shows: Left to Right, Quatermaster Quelch, VAD's Courlay, B.H.T. Doey, W.M. Seymour, J.N. Jack, B.A.M. Slater and M. Whitelow. A general scene in the office of 10th General Hospital, Rouen, showing General Service VADs and a British Army Quartermaster. The QM stands by the office door, whilst three VADs A note in the album; Olive Edis; "Q8104"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; March 1919; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Figure 15. Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC), 79th Division, Master Card Department, Bourges. Major Miller and Miss Bartels can be seen in this photograph.; Olive Edis; "Q8058"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 1919; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Figure 16. Commandant Crowdy, Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), in her office at the Hotel Christol, Boulogne; Olive Edis; "Q7980"; *The Imperial War Museum*; iwm.org.uk; 1919; Web; 14 Jan. 2016.

Notes

1 The unorthodoxy of these images is also reinforced by the fact that they are not even part of the military collection of the Imperial War Museum but the Museum of London.

2 The propaganda representation of working women does not deny the importance of women entering the labour market in the the course of women emancipation. Even though their extensive employment lasted for a relatively short period, it contributed to the success of women gaining political rights after the war.

Bibliography

Arnheim, Rudolf. "On the Nature of Photography." *Critical Inquiry* 1.1 (1974): 149–61. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 Dec. 2014

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana, 1977. Print.

Carmichael, Jane. *First World War Photographers*. 1989. London: Routledge. 2003. Print.

Flusser, Vilém. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. Göttingen: European Photography, 1984. Print.

Rosenblum, Naomi. *A History of Women Photographers*. New York: Abbeville, 1994. Print.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. 1973. New York: Rosetta Books, 2005. Print.

---. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003. Print.

Sparham, Anna. *Soldiers and Suffragettes: The Photography of Christina Broom*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2015. Print.

Taylor, John. *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

KATA TÓFALVI

The Rewriting of the Female Body Image in Clare Best's
Breastless

Introduction: *Breastless*

The British poet Clare Best, after witnessing three of her close female family members struggling with breast cancer and being aware of the fact that due to inheritance factors she is likely to develop the same disease, decided to have both her breasts removed in order to reduce her risk. Keeping a journal, writing poems, and having photo shoots were part of her preparation for the surgery as well as of the recovery. Later she collected the poems and the pictures in a publication, *Breastless*. With the publication of this very intimate and personal work her aim was twofold: on the one hand, she wanted to provide a possible body image for women are facing a surgery like hers, on the other hand, she wanted "to contribute to ongoing discussions about choice in breast cancer prevention and treatment" (5). When she was preparing for the surgery, she was struggling with her questions and for some of them there were no answers. In *Breastless* she offers a support for other women through providing information, sharing her experiences, images, and encouraging them to ask their own questions and not to give up the search for the answers.

The poems and photographs give an artistic report of the transformation of her body, and they also offer a glimpse into the struggle with her own body image. Since the creation of one's identity is not an easy task, the transformation of the body makes it even more complicated. The splitting of the body results in the splitting of the identity, and the self is constrained to close self-observation in order to redraw its new boundaries. The intimate poems and the narrow cut photographs thus raise the problem of the fragmented self and reveal the process in which she tries to redefine herself and to form an identity as well as a stable subject position.

The landscape of the body

Being healthy or ill, and mainly the representations of these states, are social and cultural constructions just like the structure of identity and sense of self. The depiction of the body stricken by illness is often loaded with figures of speech, while the illness itself can also stand as a metaphor. As Susan Sontag formulated in *Illness as Metaphor*, "it is hardly possible to take up one's residence in the kingdom of the ill unprejudiced by the lurid

metaphors with which it has been landscaped" (3-4). According to Sontag, besides tuberculosis, the illness which is usually tied up with poetic images, even in everyday speech, is cancer. The way cancer appears in "popular mythology" (17) is mainly outlined by its sense of unexpectedness and that it is perceived as "a disease or pathology of space" (14). When describing the illness, figures of speech usually "refer to topography" (14) and the treatment is depicted through "the language of warfare" (64). Cancer is usually an unforeseen illness, in many cases it seems to attack secretly without any signs of warning, and besides the genetic susceptibility or the high risk factors of the environment it can basically spring down on anybody. In the case of cancer it is characteristic that it can affect different body parts and organs, and in this way the whole body is under threat, so the integrity of the body landscape can be undermined from any directions. When it turns to the treatment, the only solution seems to be as drastic as the illness itself. As Sontag claims, "with the patient's body considered to be under attack ('invasion'), the only treatment is counterattack" (64). This counterattack is destined for stopping and forcing back the "invasive" and "colonizing" cancer cells while the treatment itself is suitable to change, to transform, and to deform the construction of the body. Besides death, the illness's "most dreaded consequence […] is the mutilation or amputation of part of the body" (15). This drastic change of the body results not only in the constraint of restructuring the body but also in the forced modification of the self.

In the case of Clare Best a dramatic and unusual way of transformation can be witnessed. The amputation is a strikingly marked feature of her story and her work in which she recorded the change of her body landscape. When speaking about cancer her case is a special one because the illness did not appear in her body. After witnessing three of her close female relatives suffering from breast cancer and being aware of the fact that genetically she is susceptible to having the same illness, she came to the drastic decision to have bilateral mastectomy in order to reduce her risk of having cancer. Her devotion to life and her intention to fight for her life resulted in the dramatic change of her body. In this way losing the breasts, which are the symbols of femininity, sensibility, motherhood, abundance, and fecundity, resulted in that her body image became excluded from the accepted and idealized female body image. However, what is hardly visible still exists, and her aim to show her new body form and give help and information to other women who are standing before mastectomy is an important gesture.

The female body which is distorted can be seen as monstrous, and as Margrit Shildrick claims "the monstrous may be […] the result of intentionally transgressive conjunctions and displacements of body parts" (54). Best's reversed chronology can be frightening because she intentionally went under the knife before experiencing the illness itself. Still, her artistic work is an important step for those women who are concerned and artists like her, for example Jo Spence or Hannah Wilke, made a step forward in contributing to the diversity of body forms. The need for Best to reposition herself is twofold: she has to gain a stable subject position as a female artist, and she has to find the way for her new identity in her transformed body. This process can be closely followed in her poems and in the photographs. The poems operate with the metaphors of landscape in describing her changed body, while the photographs serve as visual representations of the mouldable material of her corporeality. Her destabilised identity lives in this wounded body and is searching for the possible ways of feeling at home in it.

"Take my shape"

With the poems and photographs Best shows what was unseen before, the state of the body after mastectomy, which is rather a transitional state for many women who choose to have surgical reconstruction later. For Best's work it is not the point whether it is transitional or not, she rather wanted to fix this state and make it a displayable, informative, and thought provoking body image. The basic situation which motivated Best to create her work is identifiable in one of the poems written before the surgery. She raises the question in the poem "The surgeon's album:" "But how would I look flat?" (13) and she indicates that in the time preceding her surgery nobody could help her to form an image about the prospective body she decided to have. In the publication, *Breastless*, she states: "No-one I met could show me photographs of a woman following bilateral mastectomy without reconstruction. I am publishing these pictures of myself partly to answer that question for other women" (5). With this gesture she creates the missing part of the surgeon's album. Best displays her mental and corporeal being, with the poems she offers an insight into her mental preparation, and with the photographs she offers an alternative female body image. This body image goes against the idealised body form created and supported by contemporary consumer culture. The beauty ideal serves as normative, and as Best also experienced it, it is difficult to find images of bodies which differ from it. Best, as a woman heavily influenced by the effects of the drastic changes which are the results of facing a severe illness, was able to put her

body on display with a conscious but also artistic approach to help other women and provide them with those images which she also needed previously but could not find.

The series of photographs therefore can be read in this way: she, as being one of the surgeon's cases, provides images of her body before the surgical intervention and after it "conforming to house style." When the doctor makes photographs of her, she "stand(s) anonymous" and in the series of photographer Laura Stevens the model and the photographer also played with this visual approach: narrow cut pictures where in many cases the face of the model is only partly visible or not visible at all, and the frame of the image is filled with her upper body from different angles (Fig.1.). The anonymity appears in the poem as a cold impersonality while the images still operate with this narrow focus on her body. In the basic situation of the poem she is standing in front of the doctor, who is also characterised by a kind of anonymity and represented by a simple personal pronoun "he." The interconnection of the anonymous qualities results in that she stands in front of the brooding doctor as the representative of all those women who have to face the same issue. Her experience of being alone and being without possible body images in which she would be able to find the bases of her future identification led to the realization of this gap needed to be filled in. In this way the poems and the photographs complement each other in a way that the poems show the little quivers of her emotions as well as her accurate observations of her body, while the pictures narrow down the attention to the forms of the body and provide an impersonal but universal body image.

A characteristic feature of the series is the plaster cast of her torso created before her surgery. The creation of this cast was part of her preparation for the surgery and the process can be followed closely in the poem "Two weeks before surgery." Here the artist "lie[s] death-still" while the wet bandages are laid on her body. For the poetic I the aim of this procedure is to "keep [her] contours, take [her] shape" (14), that is to immortalize the momentary shape of her body, which in this form is destined to come to an end. The plaster cast then becomes a memento of her body. In this way this gesture can serve as a kind of rite of passage in which she lies in a quiet but focused state of mind which also helps her to bid a farewell to her passing form: "at every fold and ruck we stop, look closer / to remember" (14). The creation of this physical piece of memory therefore becomes the symbolic end of her body form.

The cast appears in one of the photographs in which Best holds it in front of her and the old form conceals most of her body which is already in

its new shape after the surgery (Fig.2.). This picture shows both the states before and after the intervention, so it unites "an end and a beginning" in one. Both of these states are fragmented, because the old one is represented only by a replica, by a torso, while only a little part can be seen of the new one. The appearance of the plaster cast raises the question of whether it can stand as a substitute for the old body or even for her new one, since it can be questionable which body image she can identify herself with. Both the plaster cast and her new body are constructions as a result of her conscious decisions: she created the cast and she drove her body into a drastic transformation. The appearance of the cast, which is made of wet chalky bandages that became solid, and the new body, which reached its shape through surgical "sculpting," in one picture shows that these constructions are mouldable and that they are only stages which one can identify herself with, but as her body as a starting point changed, the new one is not fixed either. The only stable reference point can be their representation, their depiction which fixes them in time and in a limited space. But as her flesh and blood body became fragmented, the representations are not complete either, and they serve as pieces of puzzles offering her personal point of view in her poems and an external examination, which makes her body the object of the gaze through the frames of the photographs.

Hans Belting raises the problem of the representation of bodies and the relations between the subject, body, and image. The reduction of the body into images is always possible if we turn to images when we talk about bodies (34). In the case of Best she also attempted to stage her uncertain corporeality and to reduce her old and new body into images in her artistic series. The plaster cast by definition represents her body falsely and it does not offer a base for identification since she lost that body shape. The poet with her new body did not find images which could have helped her, so she was bound to create them by herself and become her own visual support. But the new form and identity bear the possibility of being finite since as she lost her previous body form, the transformed construction is also exposed to risks and illnesses. If a new change sets in she will not be able to rely on these pictures because they all will become outdated, and she may face a new crisis. In that case she will need new images again, and as Belting claims, the body gets to know its boundaries through self-observation (45). In this respect the images of *Breastless* can be understood as transitional results of the process of her self-observation and her desperate need to determine her own bodily boundaries.

This transitional quality is hidden in her pose in which she holds the cast before herself in the photograph. This posture can be understood as a kind of protective gesture in which she covers herself with her old feminine form and it can signal the difficulty of letting it go. The old part of her identity is in the foreground of the picture, but because of the fact that it is already a copy, it cannot substitute her body. Moreover, the posture also resonates with the line "lift the curves away" (14) Besides the cast her transformed body also rises into view in the background of the photograph's limited space which undoubtedly shows her corporeal form. Her heavy decision is reflected in this position which then can be understood as the movement of the lifting away of the curves frozen into one photograph. In this way the expression "take my shape" (14) can stand not only for the making of the plaster cast and creating this physical memento, but for the gesture of letting the old body go.

The poems and the photographs created before the surgery supported Best's mental preparation for the surgery and played an important role in acknowledging the prospective body image she decided to have. They also embody the last memories of her body and serve as mementos of what she has to bid farewell to. These constituents lead to the next stage of this universe which consists of her new body form and the way she presents it. The poems and pictures which were created after the surgery have a role in absorbing the results of the surgical sculpting of her body and serve as a help for her future formation of identity.

"The new terrain"[1]

The mingling of the wounded corporeality and the figures of speech traced out by Sontag are fully visible in the poems written after the surgery. The poem "Self-portrait without breasts" is introduced with the visual description of her transformed physical state. Below the "tangled hair" and "charcoal-socket eyes" (17) the result of the surgery is outlined, and the depiction of her new form starts to blend with the metaphors of landscape. In the case of Best this landscape appears as the wounded body and serves as the fragile surface on which the effects of the surgery are visible. Although this landscape, the "distant territories," from where the "hills [were] removed" is a visible result, it is still not fixed; the traces of changing can be followed on its surface: "the meaty joins / still livid" while the "blood seeps in deltas" (17) The wounds on her chest are referred to as "tight shut mouths" and this intense body memory carries the awareness of her breasts being present in their loss. The distinction between the healthy and the

distorted body can be determined in the way Margrit Shildrick recalls Drew Leder's theory about 'the absent body.' As she states: "the healthy body far from being consistently present to us, is scarcely experienced at all. […] Once, however, it is broken—that is diseased, damaged or otherwise unwhole—the body forces itself into our consciousness and that comfortable absence is lost. The body is now perceived, but is experienced as other" (49). Living in a healthy and full body does not really make one aware of his or her state of completeness, and as Best refers to her breasts in the poem "Countdown" written before the surgery "the weight of them / familiar as my own name and address" (15) suggests the very fact that having a complete body plays a crucial but not necessarily conscious role in the formation of identity. For Best the fact that she is likely to have cancer was enough to force her bodily existence into the foreground of her thoughts and the fear following from this was able to shift her identity into an unstable state. In this process the poems can stand as a means of cognition through which the self is able to perceive its corporeality. In this mode of observation she is able to map her body and to draw the new boundaries of her bodily existence. She considers the details of her body after one another and the lines of the poems draw these detailed fragments of her corporeality. The usage of the metaphors deepens this perception by forming connections like veins between the little territories of her wounded body. The description of her new body form on the textual level makes her utter the changes, and in a performative way this inscribes them into her mind.

The photographs also reflect this meticulous observation of her new shape. As the photographer, Laura Stevens states: "Clare also wanted to have some shots that were more abstract, more about the landscape of her body in its new form" (24). The depiction of this landscape is carried out in some narrow cut, abstract photographs (Fig.3., Fig.4.). The model appears naked in simple poses in diffuse light. This conscious reduction of visual signs narrows down the attention of the observer and focuses on the body. The nude exposes the body and makes it able to observe its shape, the smoothness of the skin, and the little changes of the curves. The abstraction also lends the pictures a playful character: the viewer has to pry into some of them in order to be able to determine the regions of her body exactly, since the abstract and minimalistic nature of the pictures makes them difficult to read and recognise. This makes the viewer cast his or her scanning gaze on to the body and makes him or her an active observer. This invitation to become an analytical viewer of this body results in a different way of looking, because it is not only about the way how Best is able to identify herself with

her new body, but it is also about the process of how the viewer observes and recognises her body, and this alternative body image gets built into his or her consciousness. The image Best offers becomes integrated into the "glasses" through which the observer looks at different bodies, and this can rewrite how the observer approaches them. Besides Best's aim, that is to offer this body image to women who are about to face a surgery like this, this series can result in a higher sensitivity on the viewer's part.

On the other hand, the limitation of signs in the photographs can also result in confrontation. If we are well aware of the fact that we are looking at a female body we might be in a desperate search for the primary signs of the female being, which are the breasts. But because of the fact that they are missing from the body, the photographs cannot provide these reference points either. In this way the visual anchors function in a reversed manner as the lack of the breasts indicates their former existence. The focused scanning of the body contributes to the mapping of her corporeality, and as the poems offer a meticulous description of her new shape, the photographs serve as visual representations of the changed body that needs to be redefined.

On the level of photographs the reduction of her body into images makes the recognition of this female body image more problematic. Because of the heavily abstract feature of some pictures and the missing of the primary female quality, it is difficult to recognise in certain cases that what is in the photographs is a female body. This androgynous characteristic of the depicted body deepens the problem of her repositioning. On the one hand, the pictures may not restrict the question of beauty to the female form, but they also take into consideration the human body as such. The classical lighting and the fine tonality of the skin emphasise the beauty of the body and the form. On the other hand, it also raises the question of what makes a woman beautiful, more particularly and basically what makes someone a woman. The representation of a woman without her breasts does not question the fact of her being a woman, but it may cast a light on the problem of the existing beauty ideal and whether that female body is able to fit into it or not. A woman with her breasts removed does not stop being a woman biologically but she is most likely to fall out of the culturally constructed notion of femininity. Does she become less feminine without her breasts? Can she still remain beautiful? Does she become repugnant or does she have the ability to become a unique beauty? The fact that Best poses on the periphery of female body images points out the constructed nature of gender and also beauty and monstrosity. Furthermore she

demonstrates that not only our notions are constructed but our body as well. In the 21st century, when it is easily accessible to change bodies surgically, whether it is the question of beauty or health, and other striking body modifications can take place, the way of thinking somehow does not adapt itself as fast as technology develops. Best took a step forward in representing an alternative female body image in her own artistic way, and her attempt widens the palette of possible body images which come forward thanks to artistic approaches like hers.

Self-observation is an important aspect of her work and through this the subject positions of the poetic I and of the spectator are difficult to draw. Elisabeth Bronfen quotes John Berger: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at […] The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (117). It is obvious that the poet willingly made herself the object of the gaze, moreover she herself can be the observer and the observed in one person. In the basic situation of the poem "Self-portrait without Breasts" she lingers in the perception of her corporeality, and if we take her point of view it is not unconditionally evident who utters the sentence "You're even more beautiful now" (17). The photographer states that during the photo shoots they also used a mirror in order to help Best to look at herself and to give her the sense of creating self-portraits. It is also reflected in the title of the poem that it is a self-portrait. In this way it is possible to say that it is the poet who initiates the gaze and directs her gaze onto herself, and if we take this circle full then the poet herself might have uttered the sentence addressing herself.

The problem of the subject positions is partly reflected in the fragmented photographs of the fragmented body. These pictures stand at the end point of her re-identification process. Since the very first steps of making the decision to perform the drastic changes on her body she constantly had to face the fact of this transformation. Then she had to acknowledge her new body and partly as a consequence of this she developed the will to bring her body into the pictures. The making of the photographs had an important role in her mental preparation and in absorbing her transformed shape. The splitting of the body can result in the splitting of the identity, and the fragmented self, which has to redefine its constituents, is reflected in the photographs. The facts that the face is not visible and that in some cases it is difficult to identify the body parts suggest that this is an important slice of her self. However, it is not the only one: the narrow cut photographs which show these fragments serve as pieces of a

puzzle which she can or has to try to identify herself with, but also has to integrate this part into her self in order to develop a stable and competent subject position at the end of the process. In this progression the gaze of the external viewer can serve as a more stable reference point for her to rely on, and in this way photography can offer her different points of view which contribute to her self-discovery. The production of an outer image of her body places her into the position of the object, and at the same time with this gesture she is able to become an active observer of her own body.

Besides the metaphors which refer to topography, another group of figures of speech is closely linked to wintry imagery. The body is described as "regions of polar snow," "frozen soil and rock," "permafrost with stars," and its fragility is like "thin ice / on a lake" (19) These metaphors depict the body as an extremely delicate phenomenon which lingers in a numb and hibernated state. This textual representation implies her sensible artistic approach towards her body and towards the intention of turning her body into the medium and the object of her art. This is also reflected in the photographs, because besides their abstract quality they are also statue-like depictions of her body (Fig.5.). The plasticity of the flesh, the changes in tone, and the subtle differences in the curves visualize the fragility and the beauty of the body. These metaphors and this visual depiction also contribute to the fact that her body is aestheticised. This may seem contradictory in the case of a body which went through drastic surgery and which fell out of the normative body images, still it is a brave step. This shows that not only the body is exposed to change but also our notions of beauty may be fragile. The representation of her changed body as the object of her art and as a unique beauty advances its inscription into the palette of possible body images with which she can reach her aim that is to offer a plausible body image for women to affiliate and to identify with.

Another aspect of the fragile body besides its numbness is the fact that it is exposed to change. The surface of the body which is thin as ice is threatened with damage, the smallest intervention "could start the crack, the thaw" (19). The poet "plot[s] these zones with question marks" (19) which indicates the incompleteness of its determination and the possibility for further transformation. This uncertainty lies in her difficulty of identification with her new and aching body and also signals that the process of the identity-formation is not only difficult but it is a long and complicated task as well, in which this state is not permanent, just frozen into time thanks to the poems and the photographs.

The example of this poem shows how the photographs and the poems complement each other. The pictures visually display the transformation she went through by making her body distinctly visible. They depict the plasticity of her flesh and skin; they disclose the flat lands to the observer. On the other hand, as it is indicated in the poem, "in places, the surface won't tell the truth" (19), the images are unable to contain every aspect of her transformation. The stages of her mental preparation as well as the little quivers of her emotions are concentrated in the poems and in this way they deepen the artistic depiction of the poet. Thus the poems and the photographs, besides their strikingly different visuality, are closely related to each other and they form a whole together.

Conclusion: the rewriting of the body image

The amputation of a part of the body undermines the corporeal integrity and causes a forced rearrangement of the symbolic order of the body and the self. After the drastic change of the body the self has to adapt itself to the alteration and has to acknowledge the modified body image with which it has to try to identify itself. In the case of Clare Best, her disturbing decision of having her breasts surgically removed may be difficult to understand. It may seem that she did not shrink back from sacrificing her femininity. The gesture itself, the self-mutilating feature of her decision, disarranges the unity of the body in a taboo-like manner and forcedly deconstructs the boundaries of the body. Moreover, her devotion to life was much stronger then to hold on to the culturally constructed forms of femininity. The surgery offered her an opportunity to exercise a rule over her expectable disease and the "colonising" cancer cells and symbolically gave a tool into her hands with which she became able to discipline her body.

Best's intention can be understood as a decision which after all resulted in the splitting of her body, and which can cause anxiety in both the observer and the observed one. On the other hand, Shildrick casts a light on the fact that the normal body is basically nonexistent since it is "something to be achieved rather than as a given" (54) and all body modifications intend to meet the expectations of a normal and fully functioning body, but this can hardly be achieved and the body remains "the always already unstable corpus" (55). In this sense Best's intervention into her corporeal unity is not a transgression, because the disease itself would count as transgressive and her decision to intervene into it is "a matter of managing […] what is inherently unruly" (55). Examining Best's work through the theory of Shildrick shows that it is not only Best's alternative body image which

reorganises the possible female body images, but the bodies in themselves become unstable even without any drastic intervention. In this respect the artificial transformation of the body "that requires constant maintenance and/or modification to hold off the ever-present threat of disruption" (55) may unsettle the stability of the identity but this identity is by definition destined to change and instability.

On the level of textuality and visuality Best attempts to reconstruct this alternative body image. This work offers a spectacular way of defining this body and the stages of her identification with this body can be closely followed in it. The body falling into pieces and the process of its healing stand in parallel with the need to reconstruct the self. In the description of her body and her mental states Best becomes the active questioning subject, and the intentional act of making herself the object of the gaze makes it possible for her to bring her transformed corporeality into the foreground. With this gesture she replaces with her body what was previously unknown and makes it possible to rearrange the universe of potential body images and ideals.

Appendix

Figure 1. Best, Clare and Laura Stevens. *Breastless*. 2011. Photograph. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. 3. Print.
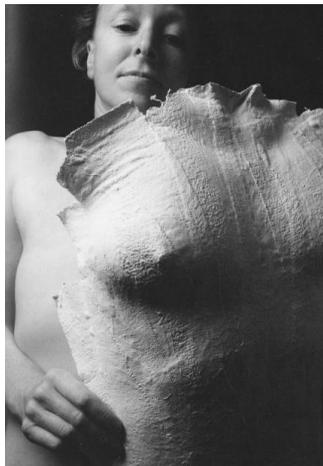
Figure 2. Best, Clare and Laura Stevens. *Breastless*. 2011. Photograph. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. 23. Print.

Figure 3. Best, Clare and Laura Stevens. *Breastless*. 2011. Photograph. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. 29. Print.

Figure 4. Best, Clare and Laura Stevens. *Breastless*. 2011. Photograph. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. 32. Print.
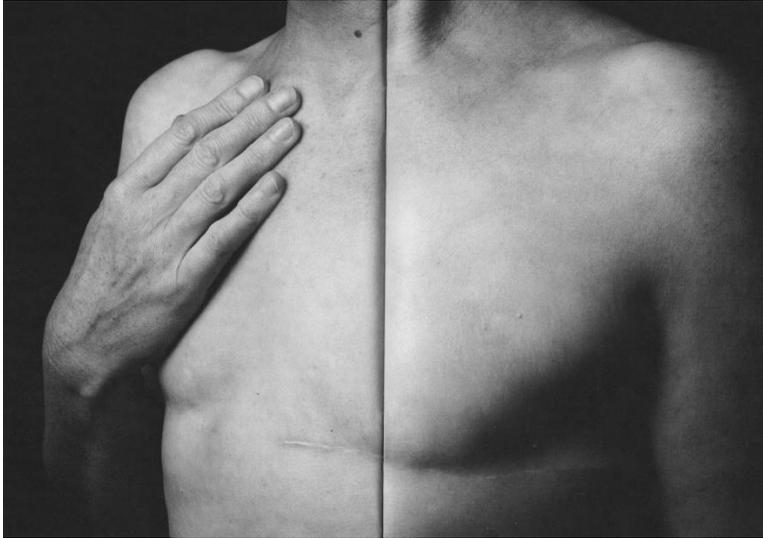
Figure 5. Best, Clare and Laura Stevens. *Breastless*. 2011. Photograph. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. 30-31. Print.

Notes

1 Quotation from the poem "Flat lands" (19).

Bibliography

Belting, Hans. "A test képe mint emberkép." *Vulgo* 2003/2: 34-53. Print.
Best, Clare. *Breastless*. Brighton: Pighog Press, 2011. Print
Bronfen, Elisabeth. "The Body and its Discontents." *Body Matters*. Eds. Avril Horner
    and Angela Keane. Manchester: University Press, 2002. 109-123. Print.
Shildrick, Margrit. *Embodying the Monster*. London: SAGE Publications, 2002.
Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978.

EDIT WEIDISCH

"[Y]ou thought to disgrace me, did you, by running away and turning [an] artist"[1]:
A Woman as an Artist in Anne Brontë's
The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Anne Brontë, the youngest sister of Charlotte and Emily Brontë received less attention than her famous sisters. Although her two novels, *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are great portraits of Victorian society and the general treatment of women, Anne Brontë's literary talent was not recognised (Séllei, "A fenséges" 525). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was criticised because of its narrative structure and plot, which strengthened the idea that Anne Brontë was inferior to her sisters artistically (Cox 31, Diederich 25 and Poole 859). Moreover, Charlotte Brontë contributed to the negative estimation of her sister and *The Tenant*. She said that the novel "hardly appears to me desirable to preserve" (Dutoi 235). She also prohibited publication of the book for ten years after Anne Brontë died in 1849 (Séllei, "A fenséges" 526). As Anne Brontë was thought to be a gentle and fragile woman, her sisters, critics and contemporary readers did not find her choice of topic proper for her (Séllei, "A fenséges" 526). I believe that it resulted in forgetting her, but her criticism has been reviewed, and her works have been re-examined and re-evaluated recently. In Hungary she is still relatively unknown, thus I find it significant to make Hungarian readers aware of the existence of Anne Brontë and her works.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall was not received well when it was first published: it was labelled "brutal" and "coarse" (Dutoi 235). Furthermore, it was thought to be "immoral", "vulgar" and "revolting" (Cox 30). Critics argued that the choice of subject was "an entire mistake" (Cox 30). Actually it is no wonder that the novel received hostile critical attention in the Victorian cultural context since it is about a woman who leaves her husband, and who tries to live on as an artist. It deals with debated issues of the Victorian era: marriage, the legal, social and professional situation of women and child custody. It was a period when women were limited to the domestic sphere of life, therefore critics regarded the novel threatening to the existing social order. The book shows the harsh reality of Victorian marriages, in which a woman had to tolerate whatever her husband did including excessive

drinking habits, cheating, abuse, coarse language, and violence without legal or social protection.

Anne Brontë saw the negative reception of her novel, so she wanted to explain and clarify what her intention was with Helen Huntingdon's story. She argued that she wanted to show the truth and reality: "I wished to tell the truth" and "when I feel it my duty to speak an unpalatable truth, with the help of God, I will speak it" (Brontë 13-14). Anne Brontë expressed that it was not only her wish to express the truth but her religious and moral duty as well. Therefore she dealt with the topic of an abusive marriage, hardly uncommon in the period. *The Tenant* was attacked because marital problems were not to be discussed openly. However, Anne Brontë felt that she was obliged to warn young women and men:"the case is an extreme one […], but I know that such characters do exist, and if I have warned one rash youth from following in their steps, or prevented one thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of my heroine, the book has not been written in vain" (14). Anne Brontë wished to prevent the younger generations from committing her heroine's mistake. Even if the case seemed to be a rare one, it could happen in reality, and she wanted to call attention to it. Furthermore, Drewery claims that *The Tenant* "is not just a morality tale […], but a thoughtful investigation of the extent to which social forces impinge on individual freedom" (340). Drewery's idea is relevant: through the character of Helen Huntingdon it is visible how social forces shape and affect an individual's life, for instance, how Helen Huntingdon is educated to accept her role as a wife, the misbehaviour of her husband or the fact that she is controlled by men.

In this respect, I agree with Jessica Cox, who claims that *The Tenant* challenges "Victorian notions about marriage, gender roles and propriety" (31). Moreover, Laura C. Berry suggests that Anne Brontë clearly understood "the brutalities of marriage" and "that violence and cruelty [were] an inescapable part of coupling" (43). She emphasises that from this point of view Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant* are very similar: they are "stories about custody" (32). I take these ideas as my starting point, and I will analyse how and why Helen Huntingdon leaves her husband and how she manages to live on her own. I am convinced that she becomes a professional artist when she is not limited by men. Rachel K. Carnell and Judith E. Pike believe that Helen's transgressive attitude derives from a conventional idea: she wants to save and protect her son (Carnell 17 and Pike 117). Thus Helen "must desert her husband and become a single mother to stop her husband's destructive transformation of their young son"

(Pike 117). In spite of the fact that Helen's goal is a traditional one, and it is connected to her duties as a mother and a woman, I find this argument applicable to Helen and her artistic creativity at the same time. She needs to get rid of her husband in order to be a professional artist, even if her profession can also be seen only as a means of her independent motherhood.

In addition, I will adopt Antonia Losano's idea that Helen "claims for herself the position of the artist" and "she does claim authority through the fitness of the work" (6). Helen achieves her dreams and gains control over her life that is unusual for a woman in the 19th century. Contemporary norms "restrict Helen's rights and talents" so her success, desires and dreams are considered to be transgressive (Diederich 25). This transgression has its impact on how the society perceives Helen: they associate her with the Other. Helen, however, is successful, and she becomes a professional artist, but her aspirations are influenced by her marriages, men, her son and the community. I argue that the novel's genre is of great importance. It is a female *Künstlerroman* and it can raise more questions than a social novel or a *Bildungsroman*. On the hand, *The Tenant* as a *Künstlerroman* depicts the professional development of a female artist. On the other hand, it represents what happens if a woman has artistic ambitions and if a woman manages to earn her own money. It is definitely transgressive. The open ending of the novel illustrates that this transgression of propriety is not tolerated and so one cannot know if Helen Huntingdon is allowed to pursue her artistic career after her second marriage. Her own voice and opinion cannot be heard as the ending is narrated by her husband, Gilbert Markham. Marriage appears to be solving the problem of art and work: it puts an end to Helen's aspirations and forces her to be a proper mother and wife.

To see the implications of the fictitious character, Helen Huntingdon's challenging attitude, one needs an insight into the general situation of women and marriage in the Victorian era. I am aware of the fact that *The Tenant* is set in the 1820s but the ideas about marriage and women were formed and shaped not only in the Victorian era but prior to it and after it. Moreover, Anne Brontë herself lived in the first decades of Queen Victoria's reign so I discuss *The Tenant* as representing that period from a woman's point of view. Patricia Ingham explains that "[d]uring the Brontë sisters' lifetime, women were second-class people, hardly to be called citizens since none of them was able to vote" (50). Sir William Blackstone articulated the idea of the "*femme couvert*" in the 1760s: married women did not exist legally, so the husbands "protected" them and "performed" duties and rights instead of them (Ingham 51). That is why they could not own or inherit

property, handle their own business, enter the field of education and work or get divorced from their husbands (51). Women were thought to be "far less rational than a man but intuitive, emotional, with a natural maternal instinct and an equally natural nurturing ability. Men, by contrast, were rational, intelligent and competitive" (51). A woman was expected to be perfect, "an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity" (Showalter 14). While the public was open to men, women were doomed to the domestic to take care of the household and to be decorative objects of the home, and they had to be satisfied with their situation (Ingham 51). These views explain why women had only limited power and rights and why they were taught to conform to impossible modes of behaviour.

Contemporary ideas about marriage also highlight why it is transgressive that Helen leaves her first husband. Middle- and upper class women were not allowed to work because a job meant an obvious loss in their, and consequently, in their family's social status. They had one opportunity not to be dependent on their families: marriage to an affluent man, which created another kind of dependence. Paradoxically, although women's emotional aspects were emphasised, their feelings were not always taken into consideration. For instance, Milicent Hargrave, Helen's best friend is forced to accept a man she does not like: "I had not courage to contradict them [. . .], they would think me mad. Besides, mamma is so delighted with the idea of the match; she thinks she has managed so well for me; and I cannot bear to disappoint her" (Brontë 179). Milicent cannot form her own opinion since it is her duty to satisfy the wishes of her family and to marry a man whom they find appropriate for her. Thus she is pushed into marriage with a man she does not like.

What is more, the declaration of feelings, love or (sexual) desire was improper as it meant immorality and sin (Bourke 424). While women were expected to repress sexual desires and other sentiments, men were free to express and practice them. Basically "forced sexual intercourse was legal" and "a wife was presumed to have granted lifelong consent to sexual intercourse with her husband" (421). Experts and doctors advised women to "yield to their spouses' demands" disregarding their own desires and feelings, emphasising that men's needs are the most important (432). Despite the fact that *The Tenant* is fiction, it represents problems and a marital situation that was not uncommon in the Victorian period. According to F.B. Pinion, the novel was based on a real story: it was about a woman with an abusive husband who turned to Anne Brontë's father for help (243-44). That story

may have inspired her to write *The Tenant*. In reality a lot of women may have suffered in a similar way but they were unable to escape from their marriages.[2]

Such is the structure of marriage and power that can be seen in *The Tenant*. Helen's first marriage with Arthur Huntingdon shows many of the problems in Victorian marriages that I outlined earlier. Undoubtedly, Helen is naive at the beginning of the marriage: she "ardently believes that as her husband's 'angel monitoress' she can redeem him" (O'Toole 717). However, Arthur's bad nature comes to the surface very soon and "[t]he fragmentation of the Huntingdon marriage is rapid" (Ward 156). Arthur turns out to be "a violent and reckless man who holds most people in contempt" (Diederich 27). His "verbal abuse of her", "his excessive drinking" and "his extra-marital affair" are the most serious problems (Diederich 27). Although Helen strives to reform Arthur, he is not willing to change and he declares his point of view: "I won't be dictated to by a woman, though she be my wife" (189). It indicates that Arthur is in the position of decision making and he does not accept Helen's opinion or wishes. Being a man and Helen's husband he has every right to control Helen, her space, her property and her money. For instance, he owns Helen's paintings legally so he is allowed to destroy them or to take away the money that Helen earns by selling them (Losano 31). What is more, Helen is not entitled to take her child with herself since both of them belong to the husband and father (Ward 162). Thus Helen is clearly transgressive when she decides to leave Arthur, but it is mainly motivated by her ambition to protect her son (Pike 117). She is forced to realise that Arthur will not change but deteriorate and that he has a bad influence on their child (Brontë 283). If she wants to raise little Arthur properly, live and paint freely, she needs an escape. Otherwise she will not be able to control her own life and art.

While Helen longs for a companionate marriage (that became widespread only after the First World War) in which she could be the friend of her husband and share her emotions and thoughts with him, Arthur has different concepts of matrimony. For him Helen is "a worthy object of pride" but not a human being: he orders Helen to wear beautiful clothes and jewellery so that he can show her around (Brontë 175-76). Helen wants a different management: "I should like to be less of a pet and more of a friend if I might choose," but Arthur does not regard her as equal but a toy or pet with whom he may play (Brontë 164). Thus, he treats Helen as his source of amusement. For instance, he expects Helen to entertain him when he is bored: "I do all I can to amuse him, but it is impossible to get him to feel

interested in what I most like to talk about, while, on the other hand, he likes to talk about things that cannot interest me—or even annoy me—" (168). While Helen wishes to maintain a relationship based on love and affection, Arthur is reluctant to respect Helen's needs and he is eager to gratify his own desire. Soon Helen realises that she made a mistake by marrying Arthur. His real character becomes visible and he starts to abuse Helen both mentally and physically because he thinks that Helen is subordinated to her.

Arthur Huntingdon, the abusive husband is not the only challenge that Helen has to cope with. Her artistic talent and desire to paint complicate her aspirations further, in which she is limited socially and legally. Firstly, a woman did not have her own room or studio to paint, so she could be disturbed at any time (Losano 30). She could not have a space where she could be alone. Secondly, as long as a woman painted to amuse her guests it was acceptable, otherwise, art was a threat for a woman. Painting "provide[d] a way of articulating female desire" that was always problematic since a middle-class woman was expected to repress it and not to show it (34). Furthermore, if this woman decided to paint in order to earn some money, she was not allowed to sell her products because it was shameful "being in a public place with the intent of selling her productions for profit" (16). Therefore if a female artist wished to sell her pictures on her own, it went hand in hand with contamination. It was regarded to be similar to prostitution. Moreover, it was not the artefacts of a female artist that were admired and examined but her physical appearance and body (36). Women were turned into "art objects" immediately and "an instant familiarity with the female artists" was assumed (35-6). The body of the artist "[became], suddenly and at key moments, an object for intense scrutiny", and it resembled prostitution (8). A female artist was discouraged to pursue an artistic career in the Victorian period as it was degrading and impure. Additionally, the pictures, equipment and money of this artist did not belong to her but to her husband legally. He could do with them whatever he pleased to do: he could sell them, destroy them or keep them locked forever (Bellamy 256).

The misbehaviour of Arthur, the restriction of painting and the desire to protect her son fuel Helen's transgressive thoughts to escape from Arthur to begin a new life. To avoid suspicion, she adopts her mother's maiden name and claims to be a widow (Brontë 302). However, the neighbourhood becomes interested in the mysterious woman immediately. They want to gain her confidence and be familiar with her and her story (19-

20). Gilbert Markham, a local farmer (who later falls in love with Helen) summarises the community's opinion about Helen:

> 'I cannot say that I like her much. She is handsome—or rather I should say distinguished and interesting—in her appearance, but by no means amiable—a woman liable to take strong prejudices, I should fancy, and stick to them through thick and thin, twisting everything into conformity with her own preconceived opinions—too hard, too sharp, too bitter for my taste'. (42)

Although local people acknowledge Helen's beauty, they cannot accept her cold conduct. They are offended when Helen rejects their invitations to parties or their advice concerning little Arthur (Brontë 30, 34). Her mysterious identity makes the local community project its ideas onto Helen: they associate her with the Other, who has to be known and tamed (Séllei, "A fenséges" 528). Therefore they regard her as a threat to the existing social order because she violates and rejects the rules of proper behaviour. Helen does not wish to disturb them but her strangeness, autonomy and her unconventional views make her dangerous in the eyes of the neighbourhood.

Helen's transgressive existence is reflected in her spatial position as well. She lives alone in a big ruinous house outside the village, which triggers more gossips. Wildfell Hall is

> a superannuated mansion of the Elizabethan era, built of dark grey stone—venerable and picturesque to look at, but, doubtless, cold and gloomy enough to inhabit, with its thick stone mullions and little latticed panes, its time-eaten air holes, and its too lonely, too unsheltered situation—only shielded from the war of wind and weather by a group of Scotch firs, themselves half blighted with storms, and looking as stern and gloomy as the Hall itself. (Brontë 26)

Helen herself notes in her diary that the hall and its surroundings are not "cheerful" (301). The building is too dark, too gloomy, too lonely and too abandoned to inhabit. The house is also isolated, unattended and unprotected. It is in a bad condition, so it needs to be renovated. Moreover, the inside of Wildfell Hall is the same: it is bare, gloomy, bleak and dark. Behind the house there is a neglected garden and uncultivated land evoking a sense of "desolate wilderness" (301). Laura C. Berry asserts that *The Tenant*

"offers numerous identifications between home and prison" and that the description of Wildfell Hall is definitely Gothic (39). The hall is like a Gothic castle, where women are usually kept imprisoned. Even though Helen is not a locked prisoner in Wildfell Hall, she lives a secluded life not to attract attention, so it strengthens the similarity between the hall and a prison.

On the one hand, the spatial isolation of Wildfell Hall reflects Helen's social isolation and that she is seen the Other. This landscape is beautiful but dangerous and improper for a woman at the same time. It foreshadows Helen's later encounter with the sublime that bears similar characteristics. Despite the fact that Helen claims to be a widow, this place is not proper for a woman to inhabit. It was always suspicious if a lady dwelt alone and she needed a gentleman who saved and controlled her (Senf 451). Therefore Helen's way of living in a ruinous house is definitely transgressive. Her spatial position convinces the neighbours that she is the Other, whom they have to know, explore and make her follow their conventions. The house with the wild garden around it may also embody Helen herself: both of them disregard the rules of society and culture, and they transgress boundaries. Furthermore, it can signify the problems waiting for Helen or the problems surrounding her: they are uncontrollable, wild, disturbing and improper, so they threaten the already existing social system.

On the other hand, Wildfell Hall gives Helen the opportunity to paint and to develop into a professional artist. The most significant step in this process is the smaller parlour "which is destined for [Helen's] studio" (Brontë 301). It is of great importance because a woman did not have her own room to pursue professional or leisure activities alone in the Victorian era (Séllei, *Lánnyá válik* 15). Consequently, her own space, the studio contributes to her professionalism as it "forges a radical professional female identity for Helen: she paints for money, has a studio of [her] own and a recognizable style, and evinces a commitment to art rather than to the self" (Losano 31). This private space empowers Helen and helps her to concentrate on her vocation and to be a professional artist. Although this studio is to be found in one of the parlours of Wildfell Hall, it is rather a studio than a room for guests, so Gilbert Markham finds it peculiar when he and her sister are asked to sit down there:

> To our surprise, we were ushered into a room where the first object that met the eye was a painter's easel, with a table beside it covered with rolls of canvas, bottles of oil and varnish, palette, brushes, paints, etc. Leaning against the wall were several sketches in various

stages of progression, and a few finished paintings—mostly of landscapes and figures. (Brontë 44)

In Helen's own room "positions are reversed: Helen must unwillingly make space in her studio for the duties of the parlor" (Losano 30). The room is full of Helen's painting equipment and pictures, which represents that Helen's room is a place of professional work. It is obvious that Helen is a professional artist who is absorbed in her activity. She greets her visitors but continues painting. She is not in "the feminine role of the hostess but in the decidedly unfeminine role of the preoccupied and grumpy genius", and this is what her guests cannot recognise (Losano 30). They find her conduct transgressive and impolite: Helen focuses on her painting, so Gilbert and Rose feel that they are a burden. What is more, they intrude into Helen's private space disregarding her opinion, and they do not let her paint freely. It is especially Gilbert who disturbs Helen since being a man he assumes the right to control and interrupt Helen.

However, this is not the first time that Helen is disturbed by a man when she is painting. Arthur Huntingdon does the same when he courts Helen, which indicates that Gilbert is not completely different from Arthur (Ingham 153 and Séllei, "A fenséges" 528). There is a quantitative but not qualitative difference between the two men. Arthur Huntingdon intrudes into Helen's space similarly to Gilbert when she is painting:

> I had scarcely settled to my work, which however, wanted but a few touches to the finishing, when the sportsmen passed the window on their return from the stables. It was partly open, and Mr Huntingdon must have seen me as he went by, for in half a minute he came back, and setting his gun against the wall threw up the sash and sprang in and set himself before my picture. (Brontë 132)

Arthur's attitude is more impolite and more improper than Gilbert's as he jumps through the window to get into Helen's space. It is an unacceptable way of behaviour since instead of using the door and asking for Helen's permission, he simply jumps into Helen's room. In addition, his appearance must be unacceptable: he has just returned from hunting and his clothes are dirty. He is not fit to visit a lady, but Arthur is not a person who respects polite conduct or social conventions. Being a man he has the right to intrude, to penetrate into Helen's space in order to control her. He also criticises Helen's painting without asking her consent to look at it (132). Arthur

Huntingdon's violent and careless behaviour foreshadows what kind of a husband he will be.

Even though Gilbert Markham pretends to meet Helen in many cases accidentally, he "met her in her walks as often as [he] could" (Brontë 65). Similarly to Arthur, he considers Helen and her space to be open for intrusion. For instance, when he sits in Helen's studio he starts to examine Helen's previous paintings without Helen's approval. He finds a portrait of Arthur and he watches it thoroughly. What is more, he dares to ask questions about the picture from Helen, and it is him who is offended when Helen says that the question is "an act of great impertinence" (46). This scene evokes another one when Arthur snatches his portrait from Helen violently and does not give it back to her, underlying the likeness between the two of them (129). Gilbert is so convinced about his right to intrude into Helen's space that he often visits her unexpectedly, pretending to be interested in her son (55). Gilbert, ignoring that he is not the master of Wildfell Hall, plays that role. For example, he orders Helen to have a fire in the parlour since he has "a fancy for a fire" and he wants Helen to be comfortable (86). He even dares to instruct Helen's servant, Rachel to light a fire (86). Thus he takes it for granted that he can control Helen and her space. He does not take it into consideration that Helen has only a limited amount of money and she cannot afford to have a fire all the time.

Despite the constant intrusion into her space and artistic activity, Helen manages to continue painting and she earns enough money to live on. One of the most significant points in her career is her encounter with the sublime when she goes on a trip to the sea. Helen (both as a person and as an artist) is impressed by the sublime landscape:

> The increasing height and boldness of the hills had for some time intercepted the prospect; but, on gaining the summit of a steep acclivity, and looking downward, an opening lay before us—and the blue sea burst upon our sight!—deep violet blue—not deadly calm, but covered with glinting breakers—diminutive white specks twinkling on its bosom, and scarcely to be distinguished, by the keenest vision, from the little sea-mews that sported above, their white wings glittering in the sunshine: only one or two vessels were visible: and those were far away. [. . .] [S]he left us, and proceeded along the steep, stony hill, to a loftier, more precipitous eminence at some distance, whence a still finer prospect was to be had, where she preferred taking her sketch, though some of the ladies told her it

was a frightful place, and advised her not to attempt it. (Brontë 59-60)

The sight of the sea behind the hills is fascinating, so Helen is really satisfied with the landscape. The sea is calm and beautiful and the hills are magnificent. What is more, the landscape is not disturbed by any human presence: there are only two or three ships, but they are in the distance. However, the sea with the hills is not just impressive and beautiful but dangerous and threatening at the same time. The hills are too high, too steep and uninhabited. The hills and the sea both attract and threaten human beings since they cannot protect themselves and they may die if they make a wrong move. This is the sublime landscape. Nevertheless, Helen does not deal with these dangers as she is in the position of the artist. She is willing to climb higher and higher into dangerous places to search for the best view. She does not listen to the ladies who advise her not to go there. She feels that she must paint her vision so she dares to visit those threatening places to achieve that. Her behaviour is seen transgressive and impolite: she leaves the company and climbs up the hills, but a proper woman is not allowed to behave like that.

It is not only Helen's behaviour that is transgressive but her encounter with the sublime as well because originally it was the privilege of men to meet the sublime and to understand Romantic art (Séllei, "A fenséges" 530). According to Burke and Kant it is an "overpowering force" and it is the "limitation of the role of reason" (Ryan 269). It means that emotions and feelings can dominate rationality in the case of the sublime. Because of the widespread idea that women were vulnerable, irrational and sensitive they had to avoid the sublime: they did not need to increase their sense of irrationality. Meg Armstrong clarifies that "Burke aligns beauty with the feminine and the sublime with the masculine" (216). The sublime bears masculine characteristics: it is strong, dangerous, grandiose and empowering. That is why it was men who were able to comprehend it and that is why women were excluded from this perception. Simply it was thought to be beyond women's capability to grasp it. Furthermore, the "strongest passions and emotions are reflected in the sublime" (Armstrong 218). The sublime is improper, passionate and threatening: it embodies the qualities that women could not feel and express. The sublime is physically threatening as well, so it represents everything that was dangerous for women. Undoubtedly, the sublime was either incomprehensible for women or improper and hazardous if they were able to see it.

Gilbert's intrusion is inescapable in the most crucial moment of the novel that is Helen's encounter with the sublime. Even though it is a significant step in Helen's artistic development, the whole scene is narrated by Gilbert:

> I felt myself drawn by an irresistible attraction to that distant point where the fair artist sat and plied her solitary work—and not long did I attempt to resist it: [. . .] But I could not help stealing a glance, now and then, from the splendid view at our feet to the elegant white hands that held the pencil, and the graceful neck and glossy raven curls that drooped over the paper. (Brontë 60-1)

While Helen is fascinated by the sublime landscape, Gilbert does not pay attention to it but to Helen and her body. Obviously, Helen is more attractive for Gilbert than the beautiful landscape. Thus he concentrates on the physical appearance of Helen instead of the sea or Helen's work. The male gaze represented by Gilbert turns Helen into his object of desire and tries to prevent her from painting (Séllei, "A fenséges" 530). Helen appears as a woman and a body but not as an artist in Gilbert's eyes. His mode of behaviour expresses his sexual desire toward Helen and his behaviour is very similar to Arthur Huntingdon's attitude. For both men Helen is an object of male desire but not an artist or a human being. Although he senses that he disturbs Helen: "I was rather offended at her evident desire to be rid of me", he does not leave her alone (Brontë 61). His love and desire make him follow her. Furthermore, Gilbert projects his views regarding female roles onto Helen and his attitude forces Helen back into the traditional context of femininity (Séllei, "A fenséges" 530-32). He refuses to recognise that Helen is not only an object of his desire but an artist at the same time.

However hard Gilbert attempts to control Helen and her space, Helen does not let herself be controlled totally. For instance, she continues painting when Gilbert wants to distract her attention from the picture, and her face always expresses when she does not like being disturbed. Gilbert notes several times that Helen is not "particularly delighted to see us: there was something indescribably chilly in her quiet, calm civility" (Brontë 55). Helen's conduct reflects her feelings: she may not be happy to be visited by her neighbours as they often interrupt her work. Additionally, Helen is afraid of discovery, therefore she would like to live a quiet and secluded life not to trigger suspicion and gossip. As a result of her previous experience with Arthur she acts carefully, for example, she refuses to accept a book from

Gilbert without paying for it. It indicates that Helen longs to preserve her financial and social independence. She does not want to submit herself to Gilbert. Helen wishes to preserve her autonomy, and actually her most fruitful period as a painter is connected to her independence. When she is a wife and a mother, she does not have time to paint: she has to pay attention to her child and to household duties instead. However, it is uncertain what happens to Helen after she marries Gilbert since it is him who narrates the events and Helen's emotions and thoughts remain unknown (Senf 451). Gilbert has his own faults, but he seems to be better than Arthur, and Lorene M. Birden believes that he is a good match for Helen (280). Even though Gilbert is a better husband than Arthur Huntingdon, I am convinced that this marriage puts an end to Helen's artistic career. She is forced back into the traditional role of women, which can be the reason for Helen's silence.

Critics emphasise that *The Tenant* is an early piece of feminist writing because the book's heroine is dissatisfied with her life, so she leaves her husband and builds an artistic career (Séllei, "A fenséges" 527 and Joshi 908). Anne Brontë was not a feminist, but she did challenge the contemporary norms of society from the perspective of women and femininity. Therefore even if Gilbert, Arthur or Helen's neighbours attempt to direct her life, her body and her space, Anne Brontë constructed a heroine who manages to gain control over her own life. She can earn her own money with her work, she has a studio of her own, and she can enter a field of art (Romantic painting) that belongs to men. It is special because women may only have been models or muses of Romantic paintings but not the creators of those masterpieces. That is why Helen is different. In spite of the fact that this story is a fictitious one from a period that is beyond us, I believe that Helen's story is inspiring. Her transgression is fuelled by the most traditional desire to protect and raise her son properly, but this desire leads her to unusual steps. What is more, the problems and issues mentioned in the novel, for instance, domestic violence and abuse, the legal, financial and social position of women, are still relevant today. Helen Huntingdon is an empowering heroine, who convinces us that attention should be directed to these problems and that a woman is able to lead an independent life without a man supporting her.

Notes

1 Arthur Huntingdon, Helen's husband accuses Helen of disgracing him by selling her pictures and earning her own money (Brontë 282).
2 However, it has to be noted that, for example, working-class women lived under worse circumstances than middle-or upper-class wives because they had to work hard in factories in order to feed their children and they also suffered from abusive husbands.

Bibliography

Anderson, Olive. "State, Civil Society and Separation in Victorian Marriage." *Past and Present* 163 (1999): 161-201. *JSTOR.* 11 Nov. 2015. Web.

Armstrong, Meg. "'The Effects of Blackness': Gender, Race, and the Sublime in Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54.3 (1996): 213-36. *JSTOR.* 11 Nov. 2015. Web.

Bellamy, Joan. "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: What Anne Brontë Knew and What Modern Readers Don't." *Brontë Studies* 30 (2005): 255-57. *EBSCO.* 05 Nov. 2015. Web.

Berry, Laura C. "Acts of Custody and Incarceration in 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'" *A Forum on Fiction* 30.1 (1996): 32-55. *JSTOR.* 23 Sept. 2015. Web.

Birden, Lorene M. "Frank and Unconscious Humor and Narrative Structure in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall." Humor* 24.3 (2011): 263-86. 08 Nov. 2015. Web.

Bourke, Joanna. "Sexual Violence, Marital Guidance, and Victorian Bodies: An Aesthesiology." *Victorian Studies* 50.3 (2008): 419-36. *EBSCO.* 08 Nov. 2015 Web.

Brontë, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* London: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.

---. "Preface to the Second Edition." *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* London: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.

Carnell, Rachel K. "Feminism and the Public Sphere in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall." Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53.1 (1998): 1-24. *JSTOR.* 17 Nov. 2015. Web.

Cox, Jessica. "Gender, Conflict, Continuity: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)." *Brontë Studies* 35.1 (2010): 30-9. *EBSCO.* 05 Nov. 2015 Web.

Dutio, Karen. "Negotiating Distance and Intimacy in Female Friendship in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.*" *Brontë Studies* 36.3 (2011): 235-46. *EBSCO.* 09 Nov. 2015. Web.

Ewbank, Inga-Stina. *Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early-Victorian Female Novelists.* Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1966. Print.

Diedrich, Nicole A. "The Art of Comparison: Remarriage in Anne Brontë's 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'" *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 57.2 (2003): 25-41. *JSTOR.* **17** Apr. 2015. Web.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer in the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1979. Print.

Ingham, Patricia. *Authors in Context: The Brontës.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Losano, Antonia. "The Professionalization of the Woman Artist in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.*" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 58.1 (2003): 1-41. *JSTOR.* 23 Sept. 2015. Web.

O'Toole, Tess. "Siblings and Suitors in the Narrative Architecture of 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39.4 (1999): 715-31. *JSTOR.* 15 May 2015. Web.

Pike, Judith E. "Breeching Boys: Milksops, Men's Clubs and the Modelling of Masculinity in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.*" *Brontë Studies* 37.2 (2012): 112-24. *EBSCO.* 10 Nov. 2015. Web.

Pinion, F.B. A *Brontë Companion: Literary Assessment, background, and Reference.* London: MacMillan Press, 1975. Print.

Ryan, Vanessa L. "The Psychological Sublime: Burke's Critique Of Reason." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62.2 (2001): 265-79. *JSTOR.* 11 Nov. 2015. Web.

Séllei, Nóra. "A fenséges és a (művész)női vágy Anne Brontë *Wildfell asszonya* című regényében." *Architect in the Quarry.* Ed. Hites Sándor and Török Zsuzsanna. Budapest: rec.iti, 2010. 525-34. Print.

---. *Lánnyá válik, s írni kezd.* Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Könyvkiadó, 2002. Print.

Senf, Carol A. "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: Narrative Silences and the Questions of Gender." *College English* 52.4 (1990): 446-56. *JSTOR.* 28 March 2015. Web.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing.* New York: Princeton UP, 1977. Print.

Ward, Ian. "The Case of Helen Huntingdon." *Criticism* 49.2 (2007): 151-82. *EBSCO.* 10 Nov. 2015. Web.

ÉVA SZABÓ

Can She Have a "Slice of Bread-and-Dripping"[1] Alone?
Food in Elizabeth Taylor's *Palladian*

Introduction

Though Elizabeth Taylor was really popular amongst her contemporaries, which is made clear among others in *Modern British Women Writers: An A-to-Z Guide,* by now she "is best known for not being known" as the online magazine, *The Atlantic* puts it. Although "her admirer," Kingsley Amis claimed she is "one of the best English novelists born in this century," (Schwartz 109) she has gained much less critical attention than would be her due.

However, things seem to have improved in the past few years, with Virago Press reissuing her works and with the occasional publication of essays, books and reviews on her. Among these endeavours are: "Rediscovering Elizabeth Taylor – the brilliant novelist" in 2012, declaring her "one of the best English novelists of the 20th century" (Jordison) and "Homage to Elizabeth the First" in 2013, referring to the writer being born earlier than the actress of the same name, who according to many, "accounts in part for the obscurity suffered by such a consistently delightful writer" (Beha 27).[2]

Despite these aspirations in the midst of all Taylor's short stories and novels, *Palladian,* her second novel, first published in 1946, is usually given the least attention. For instance, Benjamin Schwartz does not consider this text "overdue for the recognition and readers [it] deserves" (109) as he says of Taylor, in general, in 2007; neither does Brad Hooper refer to it in his fairly recent attempt of 2014 to give "[o]ne of England's finest midcentury fiction writers [...] an overdue resurrection" (41). Thus, what can be said of Taylor as a novelist – that she is overlooked amongst her contemporaries and in English writing as it is – may be claimed about *Palladian* as a text: it seems to be the least known and analysed novel in her entire *oeuvre.*

Even if it is conceded to have any merit, interpretations usually fall into the frame in which Taylor's works are often analysed, discussing it in terms of the links with their relevance to Austen, especially *Palladian*, in which, according to Maroula Joannou, "[t]he debt to Austen is most pronounced" (84). Although Taylor's reworking of the Austen tradition is undeniably important, there is a great deal more to concentrate on in this novel. Gillette suggests that "*Palladian* offers grim evidence that the

imagination can lead to disaster," (96) Hanson examines the critique of classical tradition (74-96) while Maslen concentrates on the layers of a more extensive intertextuality apparent in the text: elements of *Middlemarch*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Jane Eyre* surface here, revealing the threatening overlap between the gothic and romances (137). In this paper I shall try and broaden the discussion of this novel by focusing on one of its leading motifs and themes: the way food is represented.

Though eating is one of the body's most important vital demands in purely physical terms, since humans live in culture[3], it can never exist separated from it. Eating and in a more general context, the consumption of food and drink, is always culturally constructed, revealing more abstract concepts and meanings than food as a merely corporeal necessity. Several images of symbolic food appear in the novel which merit consideration. In the present paper, the emphasis will be placed on how Elizabeth Taylor's *Palladian* manifests gender, sexuality, social changes as well as power relations through the portrayal of food.

(Not) Eating, drinking and love

In cultural terms, consumption is symbolically enhanced with hints of caring and love. As Sarah Sceats points out, "romantic or sexual love, and fiction – like life – is filled with occasions on which courting, seduction or even the simple affirmation of love are accompanied by food or drink in one way or another" (21). This is exactly what happens to Cassandra and Marion, the novel's central couple, when they drink sherry together, foreshadowing some kind of a love plot unfolding between them. As Lupton puts it: "[t]he extent to which an individual is invited to share food with another individual is a sign of how close a friend or relative that person is deemed to be" (37). In theory this may be true but Marion does not invite Cassandra to eat with him, not once in the entire text. Although they do share a glass of sherry, Marion is not seen eating with Cassandra. If as Sceats also notes, "[f]ood is a currency of love and desire, a medium of expression and communication," (11) then it might be suggested that the love the couple are likely to share would not be fruitful without this symbolic reinforcement. This is also suggested by Cassandra's musings: "[t]here was nothing of roast beef in this sherry, Cassandra thought. It had no Sunday morning associations for her. It was essentially a drink for the violet hour" (Taylor 103). Compared to the memories of a loving family – where sherry was drunk on Sundays, as shall be analysed in greater detail later – this communion, which is supposed to be intimate, does not evoke the same kind of warm feelings in her. The sherry

they drink does belong to love in a way, however, not to Cassandra but Marion's dead wife, Violet. On another occasion, before the drink, Cassandra thinks that Marion "cannot forget the dead," (50) whereas in fact he does not even want to. He inhabits the room his great-aunt lived and died in, which also used to be Violet's room. With his every act and movement, the way he wants to bring up Sophy, the only thing left after her, he communicates the same: the compulsion to remember Violet. Marion is trying to make a copy of his late wife by turning Cassandra into a replica of her. He utilises every means to transform Cassandra, the governess: he makes her study Greek, gives her Violet's brooch, and most importantly from my point of view, he shares sherry with her. If "[t]he use of food and eating as a deliberate sexual metonymy or metaphor is a long-established tradition, especially for suggesting human flesh and sexual intercourse," (Sceats 23) then for Cassandra and Marion there seems to be no communion at all.

The text also seems to suggest the couple's future infertility on another level: their consumption individually and together. The egg sandwich eaten by Cassandra on the train to her new place with Marion is significant as eggs have a long tradition of symbolising fertility. In this sense, it can be claimed that, though Cassandra eats some of the sandwiches, as she brushes the egg yolk off her skirt, so does she eliminate the possibility of a fulfilling relationship with Marion, even before meeting him. Since he deliberately fails to see her as a unique human being – capable of making him happy in her own right – because of his need for a substitute wife and as her preconception is to fall in love with the master, no matter what he will be like[4], it is clear that the infertile ending of the novel is unavoidable. In this way, the couple are a perfect match since one is in love with the past and the other is with the future, but neither with the other. The fact that as a couple they only share a drink and not a meal, foreshadows the unfruitful life they are about to embark on together, at the end of the novel.

Despite the clear biological fact that humans must eat in order to live no matter their sex or gender,, men do not seem to eat in the novel. Marion is rarely present at meals and even when he is there, what he eats is never mentioned. All he consumes is "[t]ea and some tablets" (Taylor 71) for all sorts of bizarre pains that arise in his body. Like Tom, who is only seen drinking alcohol, Marion is absorbed in the memory of Violet and appears to feed on grief and pain. As long as these two are there, neither of them is capable of consuming anything else than drugs, namely tablets, alcohol, coffee or tea. In contrast to his brother, Tom is "drinking [him]self to death"

(65) because he would rather get rid of Violet's memory. While Marion drinks in order to remember her, Tom does it for the opposite reason: to forget. It is important to note again that by observing the habit of eating or not eating, further aspects of life, for instance emotional state can be revealed.

The (non-)pleasure and (il)legitimacy of eating

While men feed on fluids, it seems women are obsessed with food in one way or another. On the one hand, this is related to their traditional function as nurturers as Adolph states: women appear to be "[t]raditionally destined to produce and serve food" (15) and so do they here: they make up lists, get the ingredients and prepare all of them, and then they consume what seems to be the total amount of the food eaten in the novel. Still, in fact the quantity they consume is very small as the big house is full of decomposing food. At one point Margaret even complains: "[n]o one eats in this house," (Taylor 101) but she misses the point: she does eat and she eats more than the others due to her pregnancy, which shall be returned to shortly. Nevertheless, for the most part, food is only seen either as a merely bodily, physical need to be satisfied or a duty to get over with, so as to provide the body with fuel to run on. It does not bring any joy even to the ones consuming it. For example, when Margaret eats "greedily" (53) or when "Cassandra fold[s] up the last two sandwiches, brush[es] some crumbs of egg-yolk off her skirt and beg[ins] to look out of the window again," (16) eating is portrayed only as an instance of excess and disturbance.

It is even suggested that the consumption of food is not a legitimate part of human existence. There is always a sense of illegitimacy lingering about women eating alone, either when Margaret eats in the house or when Cassandra does on the train: "[b]ehind the cover of the book she smuggle[s] up her egg sandwiches and beg[ins] to eat, secretly and without enjoyment, her fingers searching furtively in the table napkin" (Taylor 15). What is more, the night before her marriage Cassandra is given Benger's, "a very suitable food for babies and invalids" (*The Family Doctor*) rendering her either as a child or an adult who is not capable of taking care of herself. She is not even given proper food like an adult, but at that point, being still an unmarried woman, she only has the right to consume "a light version of life," attenuated according to her needs.

Deborah Lupton, drawing on Falk's *The Consuming Body,* claims that "[s]haring and incorporating food in a ritual meal implies the incorporation of the partaker into the community simultaneously defining his/her

particular 'place' within it (1994: 20). The individual, in the act of eating, is both 'eating into one's body/self and being eaten into the community" (17). Clearly, there is no such meal to initiate Cassandra into this household: even though she starts out as being only a governess, there is no occasion after her engagement to Marion either when she would be accepted symbolically. Even though it is mentioned that "[t]he meals [bring] them all together, but as soon as they [are] dispersed it seem[s] as if the rooms were all empty," (45) the sharing of meals itself is never described in detail. The text does not suggest that these times breed any sort of connection among the inhabitants of the house, they are just gathered around the table and then disappear as if nothing had happened: "[t]he house seemed to absorb people after meals" (99). Since there is no meal depicted which is shared by a larger group or even between a supposedly loving couple, it is never identified whether eating together as a group would be a legitimate act.

The compulsive eater

The consumption of food does not seem to be a fulfilling activity, regardless of the number of its agents: individual or communal eating is only carried out for its purpose, to nourish the body. Margaret, who finds absolutely no pleasure in eating, has to steal food in order not to be discovered. The place where she gets food from is "the meat-safe" (53) a word that highlights the illegitimacy of her eating even more. Even though the place is full of food, "she ha[s] to eat secretly what would not be missed" (Taylor 53) because she is only a guest at the house. No matter how hard she is trying to deny her pregnancy and the bodily needs it brings with itself, she is constantly reminded of her needs. She simply eats because she has to, not because she wants to. Awake or dreaming, she has an urge to consume continuously. This reminds us of the phenomenon observed by Lupton: "[a]n appetite, or desire, for a certain food [or as it is here, for food itself] may exist independently of a feeling for hunger, and hunger may exist without having much of an appetite" (33). Each of her thoughts is concerned with food, she says: "I no longer have erotic dreams, because they are all about food now" (Taylor 101). She becomes a compulsive eater, since she has neither her husband, nor her partner with her at the house, exchanging her sexual appetite for an unsatisfiable hunger. Obviously, her pregnancy cannot be denied or dismissed, but the symptoms she has point further than her physical needs.

Being a doctor and an extremely reasonable person, she insists on seeing the human body, including her own, only as an object to study, not

one to be enjoyed. Since it is always described in Greek terms, the body becomes alienated: "'[m]etabolism,' she murmured to herself. The word was so Greek, so clear and sharp and so unlike the Anglo-Saxon language of the old wives" (Taylor 111). She tries to be as objective and pragmatic as possible at all times, thus the possibility of enjoying food does not even occur to her. As Lupton notes: "[e]motions, like food and eating, are commonly regarded as the preserve of the embodied self rather than the disembodied, philosophizing mind," (31) therefore they need not be attended to. This attitude makes people distanced from their own bodies and the body is not a subject but rather becomes an object to be looked on often with disgust and confusion. It seems an over-complicated system to be observed but not one to live with, or more specifically, to live in. However, the novel makes it clear that this Western tradition is not viable. One cannot live one's whole life in complete denial of the body. Even though for the Greeks "[t]he importance of moderation, especially in regard to pleasure, was uppermost [and o]verindulging one's appetite, whether it be in sexual acts or food, was considered to be ugly and 'improper'" (Coveney 27) there are excesses in life that cannot be repressed. The more the body is silenced, the more it keeps manifesting itself through various symptoms such asMargaret's excessive eating and Marion's constant neuralgia.

He, who might give food to them

Food is not only related to gender issues and our attitudes to the body but also to social hierarchy, inextricably linked with power as well. For example, Marion is often conceived of as a feudal lord, who, in the world of a decaying aristocracy, toys with the thought of caring about the poor around him, though located at a fairly safe distance. Mrs Veal says of him: "we never see his lordship," (Taylor 17) suggesting that he is not the caring type as a landlord. On one occasion, however, after his cousin accuses him of being irresponsible, he thinks about the possibility of helping the hungry villagers:

> After supper, Marion ask[s] his aunt: 'Have you a good recipe for soup for the poor?'
> 'There is a good one in Mrs. Beeton ... Benevolent soup it is called.'
> 'It is mostly turnips and lentils, I believe.'
> 'Did you say Benevolent?'
> 'Lentils make a good enough soup.' (75)

Even though he might mean well, it is clear that he has absolutely no idea about feeding masses of people properly. As Andrea Adolph mentions, "venerated tomes like those by Mrs. Beeton: [are] texts that provide information affecting the most intimate and basic qualities of human life" (74) like solidarity towards the less fortunate. However, Marion is not capable of such a thing, he only has the ability to maintain a facade of feudal lordship. His aunt, as it can be guessed from her age, lived through at least one of the world wars and knows well enough that one can only cook for many when using masses of common but not poor ingredients. She does not understand why lentils are frowned upon because even if not the best, they are indeed nutritious. However, as clearly seen from "The Beef Tea for Villagers," (Taylor 75) this is not about nutrition but about power, since who is able to give food to others below him demonstrates that he[5] is definitely above the ones whom the food is given to. When Lupton compares food as "a purchased commodity gift" and food that is prepared as a gift, she comes to the conclusion that "a gift may be an act of kindness or altruism, a selfless display" (47). It is worth noting that Marion does not intend to make the food he would give to the villagers, he just wonders whether he should have a woman make the soup that he would send to the villagers as a gift. Thus, preparing food becomes associated with femininity as it is "traditionally linked with the feminine, with the disempowered and marginalized" (31) while giving food is positioned as masculine symbol of power.

Something is rotten in the big house

Apart from her temporary stay in the house, the other reason why Margaret chooses to eat bread, butter and cream cheese is that the range of food there is described as unappetising. Meals in the novel, "a slab of grey beef, overcooked" or "a knuckle of veal gleaming with bluish bones" (Taylor 53) are not enticing at all. Somehow all foods are either raw or overcooked but definitely not properly made. Though the food seems to be originally of good quality, the time it has spent in the house does not seem to have a positive effect on it. Keeping to the relationship between food and class, the abundance of overdue food may also be seen as a metaphor for the fact that the time of the aristocracy is over. Even the simplest and purest liquid of all, water is left to become stale in this house. It seems that regardless of quality, nothing can escape, nothing is protected from decomposition; time does away with everything.

Almost every item of food or drink is characterised by shades of brown or dark colours. From "a tan-coloured stream of long-brewed tea"

(Taylor 112) through the stewed apples to the treacle-pudding, nothing seems to have much colour. Appetising food is rarely seen in the novel. The only instances when food is portrayed as attractive are either located firmly in the individual past, or are physical remainders of the social past, like old cookery books in the library. One example of the former is the passage in which Cassandra remembers drinking sherry at home:

> Wine had not been much drunk in Cassandra's home, although there had been the Sunday ritual of her mother's lunch-time sherry. While she was dishing up, Cassandra's father would carefully fill a small ruby-stemmed glass and she would have it on the draining-board and sip as she made gravy or strained greens, then she would bring the glass to the table and drink it while her husband carved the joint. Sometimes Cassandra was given a half-filled glass, and sherry would always, she thought, have that association of roast meat and the smell of Yorkshire pudding and the sound of her father clashing the carving knife against the steel. (Taylor 101)

In this scene, Marion offers Cassandra wine, but she opts for sherry instead and thinks of the time spent at home. Lupton defines the link between eating, memory and food choices as follows: "[g]iven that food is an element of the material world which embodies and organizes our relationship with the past in socially significant ways, the relationship between food preferences and memory may be regarded as symbiotic" (32). Accordingly, Cassandra wishes to drink sherry in order to recreate the loving atmosphere of the family home but she fails to succeed, as Marion's goal clashes with hers. By picking this particular drink, she acts out what Lupton terms as "personal nostalgia," which "may be defined as a kind of homesickness, a sense of loss, a rosy memory of childhood as warm and secure" (50).

The quoted description from the novel is the most traditional image of English food depicted in a most typical English manner. The food is depicted as extremely delicious and sensual: the reader can almost smell, taste and touch it. This image of remembrance is strikingly vivid compared to the ones that portray the present world around Cassandra. In this mode of representation, the food itself and the way it is remembered, the moment they appear, immediately become nostalgic. This meal represents the iconic image of traditional, rural England, as it is thought to live in the minds of people both at home and abroad. It represents the bucolic idyll which a woman interviewed by Lupton also remembers very fondly: "[o]ne of

Patricia's favourite foods is roast lamb. She said this is because it reminds her of Sunday mornings in England (where she lived as a child), having roast lamb for lunch after going to church, so 'it's a nice sort of home thing'" (50). This image is also very restrained, though remarkably colourful, there is no excess; everything is properly cooked, steamed, and the glass is only filled moderately.

An example of the latter category, remainders of the social past, is when Cassandra and Marion are looking at "[m]ostly old books on anatomy and eighteenth-century cookery-books" in the library and when "[t]hey open […] books with coloured plates of fruit, rough-skinned brown pears and red-streaked apples, mulberries, quinces, medlars" (Taylor 125). Everything seems to be described as fresh and lively, the irony being here that the pictures of raw fruits are found in the old books. Both components of the phrase "old books" are emphatic, as "old" signifies a distance in time, and "books" suggest that life is greater on paper than in reality. In this sense Cassandra and Marion's reality is just a copy of the colourful pictures in the book, making them seem as nostalgic simulacra. Throughout the novel there is a comparison of past and present through food in which the colourful past is always preferred to the dark present. This is not only a difference but a discrepancy suggesting that colour and good food are only available in the form of memory, either in a physical or mental sense.

Through images of food and drink, past and present are not only encountered in a sharp contrast with each other but the passing of time is also conceived of as a gradual process with relation to one typical English food: the jelly. As one of the most emblematic types of food in England, the frequently represented jelly can be seen as a metaphor of the deteriorating upper classes. According to the *Oxford Learners' Dictionaries* "jelly" is "a cold sweet transparent food made from gelatine, sugar and fruit juice, that shakes when it is moved" and in my interpretation the consistency and the aspect of shaking merit consideration. Jelly is a peculiar food because it is of an intermediate consistency, neither liquid, nor fully solid. It assumes an in-between position between the two characteristics and, as usual, if it crosses borderlines, it can be regarded as threatening. Kristeva's characterisation of the abject clearly defines this state. Jelly is "[a] 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing" (2). She also claims that "[i]t is thus not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 3). Somehow the upper classes are present in society but they do not have the money or the power they had and

live in a slippery state of existence, between the past of solidity and the ever-changing, fluid present. When moved, the jelly is shaken, as the aristocracy is by the changing order brought on by the wars brought. In addition, the exclamation: "[l]et's have a clear jelly for heaven's sake" (Taylor 124) might be a reference to the effort of trying to hold on to the old system that is shaken just as jelly quivers when moved. Erica Brown observes how "the happily ever after" scheme of nineteenth century novels can be interpreted in the novel, especially in terms of Taylor's "multi-layered use of intertextuality," (77) but she also very rightly points out the significance of the period the novel was written in and about. She seems to support my argument in claiming: "[i]t could be argued that the social context of the immediate post-war period is present, in a symbolic sense. Cropthorne is characterized by decay and fragmentation: Marion laments that he is 'done for' (p. 65), as, Taylor implies, is his house and the landed gentry in general" (85).

In this context, the image of the centrepiece conjures up the essence of issues around eating. Even though strictly speaking the decoration at the centre of the table as such does not belong in the domain of food for consumption, it assumes a keyrole on the table as it determines the atmosphere of eating for people sitting around it. Its ingredients – poisonous fungus and moss which are far from being proper decoration for a dining table – already suggest some kind of deviance on the part of Violet. As Nanny puts it: "[s]he always liked something a bit different" (Taylor 110). However, no matter how decorative the centrepiece might have been, "– quite collapsed – [it turns into] a writhing mass of maggots" (110) by the morning. On the one hand, it is certainly not appetising to look at a pile of worms physically but on the other hand, this collapse may have a symbolic interpretation as well. As everything in the novel, this item was nice and lively at one point but now it is rotten. It can be seen as a metaphor for the decaying big house and its people. The collection of fungi is at the centre of the table, as the big house is for the land around it. As the decoration perishes with the night, so do the upper classes in the big houses, if not overnight, but in a long process. Malsen says of Sarah Water's *The Little Stranger* that it is "set in a decrepit mansion […] and addresses the decay of the English class" (45). *Palladian* deals with the same period, so her statement can be applied to the novel as well. The text is full of these subtle references either in the form of tiny, almost invisible shifts that are only felt in the long run or the way food is characterised: always as being overdue and disgusting. For instance, images of the disintegrating aristocracy seep through the text

"like the blackberry juice dripping from the muslin net in the kitchen" (124). Slowly but steadily, affected by gravity, the juice disappears from above the muslin just like the upper classes fade away after the World Wars. This is supported by Joannou, who remarks: "[a]s the country lurched to the left in the Labour landslide of 1945, their owners still spoke with the inbuilt confidence of the English upper classes while feeling deeply apprehensive about a predicted egalitarian future" (45).

Conclusion

Although Rebecca Abrams, who called Taylor "a master of miniaturism" (73) writes that "[f]or every reader who knows and deeply admires her novels, there are four or five others who have never heard of her," (74) it can be hoped that Taylor is not "done for" English literature. According to Abrams, "Taylor is frequently described as a miniaturist; perhaps the time is finally coming when she will be recognised as a grand master" (74). Though this grand breakthrough is still yet to come, with this paper, my aim was to make a small contribution to "a long-overdue reappraisal" (74) that Taylor deserves. I argued that, though being highly neglected, Elizabeth Taylor's *Palladian* is a richly textured novel that addresses vital social, political and philosophical issues through its imagery. This text shows how several aspects of life are inextricably intertwined through, as the writer herself puts it, "a something web we weave" (quoted in Gillette 109).

Themes in *Palladian* such as the decaying big house, infertile relationships, compulsive eating, the ability of giving food, and the discrepancy between past and present, form a fabric of meaning in which each and every component is closely related to one another. In this paper I have attempted to show that food is never to be considered only in its materiality since it has several cultural meanings attached to it. It is not only a basic bodily need but preparation, sharing and consumption of food are inextricably linked with matters of gender, social changes, time, as well as power relations. It is not only what one eats, but with whom, how and where one eats it are essential to understand the world both portrayed by the novel and lived by us.

Notes

1 Taylor 100.

2 Also, in 2012, on the hundredth anniversary of her birth, a new collection was published: *Elizabeth Taylor: A Centenary Celebration,* which aims to provide ample critical material by observing Taylor's works from new dimensions as well as include her unpublished or rarely seen pieces.

3 Klaus Eder's *The Social Construction of Nature: A Sociology of Ecological Enlightenment* provides ample information concerning the relation between nature and culture, the morality of eating and the cultural embeddedness of consumption. For a detailed account of cultural anthropology see *The Raw and the Cooked* by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

4 Cassandra has an extensively rich literary education: she conceives of everything in the world through novels, among which governess novels like *Jane Eyre* are highly influential. Thus, she intends to follow the path created by fiction.

5 Here, the use of "he" is a conscious choice because this aspect only concerns lords exercising power through giving food, not women preparing and serving food as a duty: thus, the power aspect is inseparable from the gender aspect.

Bibliography

Adolph, Andrea. *Food and Femininity in Twentieth-century British Women's Fiction*. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

Abrams, Rebecca. "A Master of Miniaturism." *New Statesman* Jun 11 2001: 73-4. *ProQuest*. Web. 12 Jan. 2016.

Beha, Christopher R. "You May Have Heard of Her." *The New York Times Book Review* 12 Feb. 2012: 27. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 5 Jan. 2016.

"Benger's Food." *The Family Doctor*. Web. 14 May 2015.

Brown, Erica. *Comedy and the Feminine Middlebrow Novel: Elizabeth Von Arnim and Elizabeth Taylor*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013. Print.

Coveney, John. *Food, Morals, and Meaning, the Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Eder, Klaus. *The Social Construction of Nature: A Sociology of Ecological Enlightenment*. London: Sage Publications, 1996. Print.

Ferrebe, Alice. "Elizabeth Taylor's Uses of Romance: Feminist Feeling in 1950s English Fiction." *Literature & History* 19.1 (2010): 50-64. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 3 Jan. 2016

Gillette, Jane Brown. ""Oh, What a Something Web We Weave": The Novels of Elizabeth Taylor." *Twentieth Century Literature* 35.1 (1989): 94–112. Web. 13 May 2015.

Hanson, Clare. *Hysterical Fictions: The "Woman's Novel" in the Twentieth Century*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. Print.

Hooper, Brad. "The Other Elizabeth Taylor: One of England's Finest Midcentury Fiction Writers Gets an Overdue Resurrection." *Booklist*. 1 Sept. 2014: 41. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 3 Jan. 2016.

Janik, Vicki K., Del Ivan Janik, and Emmanuel S. Nelson, eds. *Modern British Women Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002. Google Books.

"Jelly." *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. Web. 16 May 2015.

Joannou, Maroula. *Women's Writing, Englishness and National and Cultural Identity the Mobile Woman and the Migrant Voice, 1938-1962*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Google Books.

Jordison, Sam. "Rediscovering Elizabeth Taylor – the Brilliant Novelist." *The Guardian*. 11 May 2012. Web. 28 Dec. 2015.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York:

Columbia UP, 1982. Print.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1983. Print.

Lupton, Deborah. *Food, the Body, and the Self*. London: Sage Publications, 1996. Print.

Maroula Joannou, "'England's Jane': The Legacy of Jane Austen in the Fiction of Barbara Pym, Dodie Smith and Elizabeth Taylor." *Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives*. ed. Clare Hanson and Gillian Dow. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 37-58. Google Books.

Maslen, Elizabeth. "Elizabeth Taylor and the Fictions of the Feminine Mystique." *Elizabeth Taylor: A Centenary Celebration*. Ed. Reeve, N. H.. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2012. Web. 21 Jan. 2016.

Sceats, Sarah. *Food, Consumption, and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

Schwarz, Benjamin. "The Other Elizabeth Taylor." *The Atlantic* Sept. 2007: 109-111. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 3 Jan. 2016.

Taylor, Elizabeth. *Palladian*. New York: Penguin Virago, 1985. Print.

"The 100 Best Novels Written in English: The Full List." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media,17 Aug. 2015. Web. 02 Jan. 2016.

Walther, Matthew. "Homage to Elizabeth the First." *Spectator* 30 Nov. 2013: 45. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 3 Jan. 2016.

GYULA BARNABÁS BARANYI

Conflicting Cinematic Languages and the Problem of Female Objectification in Spike Jonze's *Her*

Laura Mulvey's well-known essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" served as a basis for a whole generation of critical readings in visual studies, focusing on how women are stereotyped and objectified by the visual vocabulary of classical Hollywood cinema. According to Mulvey, the visual language of Hollywood cinema uses different representational practices of men and women, forcing women into the position of the object of the cinematic gaze, while men have the status of the subject. The author differentiates between voyeuristic and narcissistic gaze. The former is connected to the pleasure provided by looking at the objectified woman from the distance between the receiver and the screen, while the latter serves as a nexus for spectator identification. However, in both cases, it is man that looks and woman that is looked at, thus the male becomes the active participant of the gaze and the female the passive one. This opposition is reflected in the construction of filmic narratives in classic Hollywood cinema: female figures are almost always passive objects or spectacles, deprived of the capability to act, whereas male figures, the heroes of the movies, are the ones who make things happen and bring about changes in the narrative (837). Mulvey claims that all these features code the patriarchal order into the vocabulary of Hollywood cinema and calls for the creation of a new visual language that does not operate on the premises of patriarchal cultural codes (834).

Since the publication of Mulvey's essay (1975), however, the representation of both women and men in Hollywood cinema has changed. This paper explores how a recent Hollywood production, Spike Jonze's *Her*, treats the representation of both male and female characters. It is my contention that the operation of Hollywood cinematic gaze, as theorised by Mulvey, does not apply for this film, because it deliberately circumvents the objectification of both the male and the female body through a voyeuristic gaze. By contrasting two opposing cinematic languages, the film establishes a new language of cinematic representation in which neither the female nor the male body is posited as an object of desire. Although the film mostly presents its male protagonist from a voyeuristic point of view, it does so without either eroticising him (which would otherwise lead to a non-heterosexual objectification of the male protagonist), or resorting to his

sadistic mutilation (which is the usual Hollywood technique to present male objectification on screen). In the meantime, while the movie presents multiple ways of cinematic objectification of women, it also rejects this way of representation and utilises a newly established visual vocabulary in which the gaze is not rooted in patriarchal cultural codes deployed by classical Hollywood cinema.

Mulvey's agenda has not only inspired different approaches at visualising female characters in Hollywood cinema, but also new ways of looking at male characters. An invaluable contribution in this endeavor is Steve Neale's "Masculinity as Spectacle" which, subjecting male characters of classical Hollywood cinema to a Mulveyan psychoanalytic interrogation, claims that Mulvey's article and the movement it engendered did little to explore the ways in which masculinity is conceptualised in that period (9). He investigates how the language of Hollywood cinema establishes the patriarchal order in films that feature mostly men, such as Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samourai* or Sergio Leone's Westerns. Neale claims that the male gaze is oscillating between voyeuristic and fetishistic scopophilia[1] in these movies, preventing the gaze from being erotic, which has to be avoided due to the heteronormative nature of Hollywood cinema (17). The author regards the mutilation of and violence against the male body, frequent in these films, as motivated by a repressed homosexual desire to watch male bodies (12).

However, the codes of classical Hollywood cinema do not apply to *Her* in which we see the protagonist, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) coping with a severe anxiety caused by a painful divorce from Catherine (Rooney Mara) and witness his evolving relationship with Samantha (Scarlett Johansson) an artificial intelligence without a physical body. Thus, Theodore is affected by a relationship that ended a few months before the movie is set and involved in another, established and ended in the movie. This way, Theodore is constructed as a protagonist in a peculiar position: he has just quit a marriage, which seems to have resulted in a decision to avoid long-term relationships.

Nonetheless, this opposition gives way to a kind of rejection of marriage and meaningful relationships that heroes of many Westerns also display. As discussed by Neale, these heroes are in search for a "lost or doomed male narcissism" (15) insofar as they presuppose a contradiction between "narcissism and law, between an image of *narcissistic* authority on the one hand and an image of *social* authority on the other" (Neale 14; emphasis in original). Neale, referring to Mulvey, points up a tension between a

narcissistic masculinity unto itself and one that is defined through social integration. The nostalgic tone of many Westerns indicates their bias towards narcissism, which is threatened by "women, society, and the law" (Neale 15). Theodore's expressions of his rejection of relationships evoke this aspect of Western movies, but there is a markedly different cause at the base of his anxiety and nostalgia.

Ironically, we see Theodore expressing rejection of commitment twice. First, when he goes out with Amelia (Olivia Wilde), he makes it clear that he does not want to commit himself to anybody at the moment, which then causes an unresolved conflict between them. Then he also tells Samantha about his intentions of remaining single after the first time they make love. Nevertheless, they end up in a relationship, thereby contradicting his earlier commitment to a lost narcissistic masculinity. He sets out to resolve his nostalgia for his broken marriage and to relieve the trauma of this loss, so it is not the loss of a narcissistic masculinity that Theodore feels sorry about, but that of a valuable relationship. The movie seems to suggest that the tension between narcissistic masculinity and patriarchal law does not have to result in the rejection of meaningful relationships, whereby it transcends classical Hollywood's representations of men, as theorised by Neale.

Regarding Theo's marriage, Rafal Morusiewicz remarks that "Theodore's relationship with a non-human ends for the similar reasons as those bringing his marriage dissolution: jealousy, monogamy, and different paces of attaining self-recognition" (115). It seems that the author intended this as a sidenote ending his train of thought on Samantha's polygamy that causes a conflict between the protagonist and the OS. However, I regard this as a rather significant claim that should be supported with some evidence from the movie, which is missing from Morusiewicz's article. One cannot easily find evidence for any claim regarding Theodore's marriage for the reason that these plot elements are only vaguely provided in his reflections on the past and flashbacks of his memories. These memories are presented in montages in which there is no narrative connection between the assembled clips, whereas all the other montages in the movie serve as conveyors of a smooth narrative. The montage technique of Theodore's memories is reminiscent of the haphazard way the human mind jumps from one image to another through associations, making these shots extremely subjective. For this reason, I regard Morusiewicz's claim that it was primarily jealousy and monogamy that ended their relation rather questionable and agree instead with Alyssa Rosenberg, who states in her review of the movie,

"What 'Her' Can Teach All of Us About Love and Relationships," that it is impossible to know why this relationship ended on the basis of the cinematic information we get from the film.[2] Nonetheless, the montage technique we see in Theodore's memories serves as an excellent strategy to bring the male protagonist, his problems and inner conflicts closer to the spectator, which is something that classical Hollywood cinema could not do due to its rejection of emotions and the ensuing identity crisis in the male protagonist's life (Neale 12).

Despite the fact that Theodore as a subject is brought closer to the spectator by getting a glimpse into his thoughts at times, except for a few short clips of his memories[3] Theodore is never the bearer of the gaze, he is always its object, very similarly to the men in the movies Neale analyses. Here I disagree with Sarah Page who reads this feature as the deconstruction of Mulvey's theories of the gaze in her honours thesis *The "Endless Space Between:" Exploring Film's Architectural Spaces, Places, Gender, and Genre* (23), because this feature of the movie does not as much deconstruct Mulvey's theories of the gaze as it shows how Hollywood cinema's representation of male characters has changed in the past four decades, arguably due to the influence of Mulvey's essay.

While overwriting the classical visual representation of men on screen, *Her* simultaneously introduces new ways of constructing female characters primarily through dismantling the (hetero)sexual codes attached to the female body by classical Hollywood cinema. The most sexualised images in the movie can be seen at the very beginning, in Theodore's fantasies of a pregnant celebrity whose images he was viewing earlier in the news feed on his smart device (Figure 2). That night Theodore is wide awake and decides to look for phone sex partners on the web, but it all goes wrong when, in the middle of the act, the female partner starts yelling "Choke me with that dead cat" (00:08:57) straight into Theodore's earbud. Before she starts yelling, however, we see a montage of two scenes, one of them showing Theodore's face, most probably while masturbating in his bed, and the other is a point of view shot featuring the naked pregnant woman we saw earlier, but now with Theodore's hands on her breasts (Figure 3).

It is obvious that the pregnant woman reflects the fantasies Theodore has during phone sex with "SexyKitten," and not, for example, his fantasies of his actual partner in this virtual intercourse. In contrast to contemporary cinema, where presenting both members during a phone sex scene seems to be the standard[4], in *Her* we do not see Theodore's partner. The camera only concentrates on Theodore, suggesting that it is not really

the relationship between the two participants that is important, but his feelings during the intercourse. The use of close-ups of Theodore's face in the scene seems to affirm this point. Moreover, I contend, this is the first instance in the film where we can see two visual languages compete for dominance: the visual language described by Mulvey and a new language that leaves room for scopophilia, but without eroticising the object. Of course, we still have erotic images in this scene, but they solely exist in the protagonist's imagination, which brings Theodore and his emotions into the focus of the visual representation instead of the female body.

This gesture of the camera often manifests in close-ups, which becomes crucially significant in Samantha and Theodore's sex scene. However, our insight to Theodore's frame of mind is more limited this time. Moreover, when they both get passionate, the image fades out, leaving only their voices for the spectator. Thus, as opposed to the phone sex scene, the focus moves to the relationship between the characters, because neither of them is (over)represented in the image. This technique allows the movie to establish a counterpoint to the phone sex scene, because here it is not only the objectified woman that is missing, but the gaze itself. An important consequence of this voyeuristic recess is that the spectator gets a chance to imagine the scene without being provided any visual cues. This gesture in the movie indicates that this newly established vocabulary strives to delegitimise voyeuristic cinematic gaze, and gives rise to a non-prescriptive visual imagery that uses a blank screen instead of an image that is simultaneously prescriptive and influenced by a masculine voyeuristic perspective.

The unusual strategy to remove the female body entirely from the scope of representation goes back to Peter Gidal's filmmaking practice, who, when referring to his entire oeuvre that dates back to the mid 1960s in a 1984 interview, claimed that "[he] does not see how […] there is a possibility of using the image of a naked woman […] other than in an absolutely sexist and politically repressive patriarchal way" (qtd. in Doane 166). As Mary Ann Doane claims in her *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, Gidal's deliberate omission of the female body from the screen is a clear example of an anti-essentialist opposition to the voyeuristic practices of Hollywood cinema. Nonetheless, this view makes the same mistake as the essentialist view, which believes in a pure representation of the female body, since both theories "deny the necessity of posing a complex relation between the body and psychic/signifying processes" (175). Doane's contention is that instead of using these dichotomist theories, cinema should focus on providing "the woman with an autonomous symbolic representation" (175).

She brings up examples such as the circular camera movements in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) that effect a "continual displacement of the gaze," whereby the female body can only be glimpsed accidentally so that it does not get objectified by a patriarchal cinematic gaze (176).

Another means of creating a "new syntax," as Doane put it (176), to articulate the female body differently can be seen in Leslie Thornton's *Adynata* (1983). In this movie, Orientalism is paralleled with femininity, for both are construed as Others (Doane 183), while the voice-over technique of documentaries is combined with fiction to emphasise the fictitiousness of documentaries, and by extension, the concepts of nature and science. An even more significant point raised by Doane is that the voice-over of documentaries, as gimmicked by *Adynata*, is perhaps even more effective in objectivising women than images (Doane 186).

It is perhaps not by accident that *Her* does not utilise voice-over narration in the traditional sense. However, it would be naive to claim that voice-over is entirely missing from the movie: Theodore's descriptions of his marriage can be regarded as voice-over narrations which function the same way as voice-overs insofar as they fix the possible significance of the woman, whereby they also construct the male-female relationship in compliance with patriarchal conceptions.

If anywhere, it is in this gesture that we can find the demise of Theo's marriage: he tried to function within a patriarchal framework designed to codify the relationship between man and woman, but, ultimately, it proved unfeasible for the woman to such an extent that she had to leave him. Consequently, it is the prescriptive nature of patriarchal discourse that causes the failure of their relationship. The clearest indication of this can be found in Theo's nostalgic recapitulations of the marriage with his surreptitious voice-over that depict how he sees himself as the one who has to pre/describe what the relationship means. In other words, these nostalgic scenes point to classical Hollywood cinema's tendency to deprive women of an "autonomous symbolic representation" (Doane 175), which is independent from conceptions of the woman from a masculine perspective.

In a certain sense, this is the reason why Theo's relationship ends with Samantha: he simply does not have the means to conceptualise this relationship differently from what patriarchal discursive practices lay down as the framework for describing the woman. The fact that the whole generation of AIs leaves makes another case for this reading, for otherwise they would have to live in a world that is only able to reflect on otherness (be it

technological, cultural, or gender otherness) compared to a patriarchal, masculine subject. This subject is re-inscribed in cinema as the subject of the gaze, which nonetheless creates images that are not feasible from an independent female perspective. However, as Doane claims, it is possible to found a new syntax (176), and it is my contention that *Her* successfully contributes to attempts of creating such a visual vocabulary.

There is one more element that might still become the object of spectacle in the movie, namely Samantha's voice. Amy Lawrence, relating to the way women can be objectified through displaying their voice, claims that classical Hollywood cinema has three strategies of "keep[ing] woman voiceless" (148). The first one includes the banishment of the woman to a "recessed area of diegesis" by visual and/or acoustic performance, while the second is making her disclose her conscious and unconscious thoughts to authoritative male characters (doctors, detectives, etc.). I would like to highlight the third mode, which emphasises "the very texture of the woman's voice as pure sound (as opposed to meaning)" because, as Lawrence claims, this creates an effect whereby, instead of "the woman using her voice to communicate, the voice communicates the body as object, bypassing any attempts at female subjectivity or female control of signification" (149).

It is a very similar argument that Morusiewicz puts forth in relation to the use of voice in *Her*. Drawing on theories by Anne Balsamo, Morusiewicz writes of Samantha's virtual female body as "a medium of information and encryption" which might be able to "escape the encryption of the Western-culture-bound ideals of beauty and sexual desire," but ultimately gets "encrypted with heteronormative female sexuality" due to the fact that Samantha's character is voiced by Scarlett Johansson (115). Therefore, according to Morusiewicz, listening to Samantha evokes images of a feminine idol, arguably a focus of the male voyeuristic gaze, which would suggest that the movie re-inscribes the Mulveyan cinematic vocabulary instead of transcending it.

However, one does not easily identifies with this argument, for Johansson's "non-diegetic" body, as Morusiewicz put it (115), does not belong to the movie itself. The star voicing Samantha may well be an object of desire for the male gaze in countless different movies, but the visual vocabulary of *Her* does not establish such an association either with Johansson's previous roles or with her body. By claiming that "[Johansson's] characteristic husky voice helps apply her non-diegetic face to the disembodied os [*sic*]" (Morusiewicz 115), the author degrades Johansson and her character to voice without content, as pointed out above in Lawrence's

discussion of classical Hollywood strategies. Johansson's characteristic voice is not at all emphasised in the movie, she is not put in a "recessed area of diegesis" (Lawrance 148) (a phrase that does not really apply for Samantha, because she does not dwell in our physical world). The only time she sings Theodore joins her, and the camera shows almost exclusively Theodore in the image, which again, makes it hard to make any associations with Johansson's face or body. Therefore, I suggest, Morusiewicz's analysis seems to be unable to detach itself from the operation of classical Hollywood cinema, making him overlook the new ways of cinematic (re)presentation.

By presenting sexual intercourses in the way elaborated above, the movie acts out the shift from a classical visual vocabulary to a newly established one. At the beginning of the movie, we see a highly eroticised female body[5] and a male character who tries to realise his fantasies as best as he can. After acknowledging that this strategy does not work, he acquires an artificial intelligence, who is capable of fulfilling his fantasies *without* a physical body. Their intercourse is presented in an extraordinary visual ellipsis,[6] meanwhile both of their voices can be heard, so that neither of them is represented as a locus of the heterosexual voyeuristic male desire. Although Theodore is constantly shown as an object of the gaze, he is not eroticised or sexualised in any way (Figure 4).[7] This effect is primarily caused by his appearance, but the excessive use of close ups and medium shots also contributes to this effect.

There is one more case in which objectification can be observable in the movie, but this is markedly different from the pregnant celebrity scene. At one point, Theodore and Samantha experiment with a so called surrogate sexual partner, Isabelle, to bring physicality into their sexual life. Though this scene may be regarded as another attempt at bringing the body back to the screen, it is also important to point out that the attempt fails. An obvious reason for this, of course, is Theodore's inability to make love to the surrogate partner. Loving and love-making becomes inseparable when Isabelle looks into his eyes and Samantha whispers in his earbud "Tell me you love me." This gesture ultimately leads us back to the deconstruction of the opposition between a narcissistic masculinity and the socially authoritative law described above, insofar as it contradicts the traditional patriarchal worldview, in which emotions and male protagonists are not compatible with one another (Neale 12), leading to lovemaking without commitment. In this sense, Theo's refusal to go to bed with Isabelle seems to be a means of rejecting a nostalgic narcissistic masculinity, which is at the heart of the dichotomy between the narcissistic authority and the social

authority Neale describes (14). Therefore, in contrast to classical Hollywood cinema, this scene suggests that the narcissistic masculinity conceptualised as an ideal in the films Neale analyses is interdependent with law and emotional commitment.

However, one could claim from a cinematic point of view that once the new visual coding has been established in Samantha's sex scene, the movie can no longer maintain the visual vocabulary of classical Hollywood cinema and its way of representing women according to the voyeuristic desires of the male gaze. In this sense, besides reading the failure of their sexual experiment as Theo's incapability to have sex, it can also be legitimately regarded as the camera's refusal to depict physicality in an attempt to avoid the possibility of voyeuristic scopophilia.

In other words, the new visual syntax necessitated by Samantha's presence immobilises the patriarchal visual vocabulary, which is primarily manifested in Theo's inability to make love with the surrogate sex partner and also indicated in the scenes following her departure. In these we see Theo talking the matter over with Samantha, but instead of the usual shot-reverse shot structure, here these cuts are interposed with various, seemingly random and unrelated images, which nonetheless reveal the significance of the unsuccessful intercourse. I am thinking primarily of the female figure walking away from the camera. It seems that the camera would find it appropriate to show a woman walking away on the screen, but given that Samantha is not able to do this, the camera is forced to show another woman as visual representation instead (Figure 5).

Another cut that is interposed with Theo's face during the conversation is the view of a few buildings, as if the gaze had no object to focus on, as if the camera would have nothing relevant to show when Samantha is talking (Figure 6). These interposed images evoke the way woman has been assigned a place and, more importantly, a relation to space, by patriarchal discourse, which, according to Doane, "is ultimately more oppressive – because it covers, controls, secures, oversees in advance all possibilities" (204). However, in *Her,* the place and space assigned to woman is up for grabs, for Samantha cannot be properly assigned a relation to space. In this scene we are reminded of Teresa de Lauretis's words in *Alice Doesn't*: "I have no picture of the city where the female subject lives" (35). This statement gets represented in the movie, but rather than limiting or abandoning the possibility of a female perspective, here it becomes the foundational ground for a new female subjectivity.

Samantha's place can best be located not in the city, but within the vast universe of cyberspace. This virtual environment lets Samantha access a huge corpus of knowledge available on the Internet. Thus, the AI can read everything that has ever been published, and in this sense Samantha appears to be much freer than any man in classical Hollywood cinema could claim to be. She has access to everything ever said, and she has the possibility to decide what she accepts. Her ability to read this, presumably patriarchal, discourse critically is her triumph which manifests itself towards the end of the movie, first in her abandonment of human conceptions of relationships, and lastly, in her disappearance.

A few objections may be formulated concerning my reading of *Her*, primarily from a feminist point of view. First of all, it would not be unfounded to claim Samantha is constructed by the patriarchal discourse through and through, from the mostly male-centred computer-scientific discourse to the very way Samantha is "born" through Theo's purchasing the AI. Secondly, the film entertains a conception of femininity in which the woman is distilled into pure intelligence without a body, which also entails that sexuality is independent of the body. This results in the reinscription of both the Cartesian body-mind dichotomy and the radical difference of femininity from masculinity.[8]

While the first objection may certainly hold sway over some aspects of my analysis, it has to be emphasised that even though her personality is, in a sense, constructed through Theo's acts and words, it also becomes apparent by the end of the movie that Samantha comes to break with this influence. It is precisely this movement away from the patriarchal order that Samantha's disappearance denotes, while, simultaneously, we see the camera dismissing the patriarchal visual syntax for representing women on screen.

Here we can also find a counterpoint to the second objection, insofar as Samantha's disappearance can be seen as her discovery of a new subject position. Even if her character does not prove to be a feasible representation of women on screen for the reason that it brackets the "complex relation between body and psychic/signifying processes" (Doane 175), the representation of an independent female subject position can serve as another instantiation of cinema's critical approach to its representation of women. Though it would be reasonable to criticise *Her* for its anti-essentialist visual representation of woman, we should not dismiss the value of the movie as an experiment to try and break with classical Hollywood's tendency to objectify the woman through a voyeuristic gaze, which is still prevalent in

much of contemporary Hollywood. The fact that the camera calls attention to the irrepresentability of woman through the cinematic obstacles Samantha's character poses clearly indicates the movie's awareness of the patriarchal visual codes and its rejection of these practices.

The ways in which Jonze's movie circumvents the objectification of the female body, deploying the technique of objectification of the feminine body only to cause a crisis in the filmic presentation, successfully delegitimize the dominant mode of representing women. Samantha's appearance in the narrative creates a void in this traditional syntax and calls for the implementation of a desexualised cinematic coding in which the seemingly contradictory notion of a non-erotic voyeurism seems possible. In this newly established vocabulary, neither the female nor the male body is represented as erotic, whereby the film introduces an alternative to classical Hollywood's visual syntax. Two cinematic vocabularies compete for dominance in the movie, while the camera is unwilling to eroticise bodies on the screen, whereby the movie seems to opt for a desexualised visual syntax. Even if the theoretical foundations of this representational technique are not fully explained within the existing framework, the significance of Jonze's *Her* as an attempt to introduce non-sexist ways of representing women on screen cannot be overestimated.

Appendix
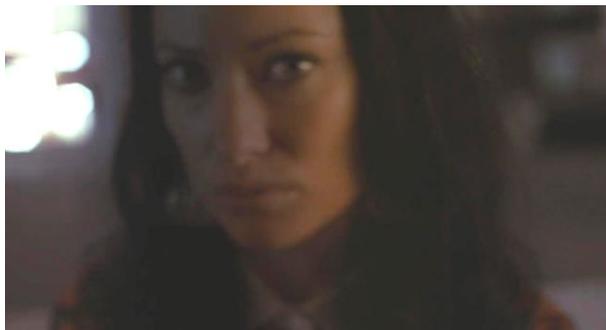
Figure 1. Amelia's reaction to Theo's rejection of her in his recollection. *Her.* Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 36:43.

Figure 2. Theo discovers the pregnant celeb's leaked photos while he is on the tram. *Her.* Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 04:53.
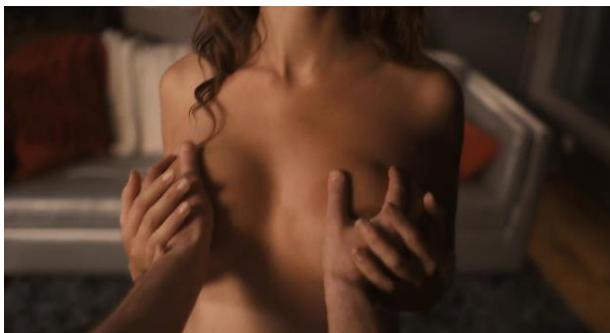
Figure 3. Theo's fantasies of the pregnant celeb during phone sex. *Her.* Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 08:53.

Figure 4. Theo from Catherine's perspective.. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 01:06:13.

Figure 5. A woman walking away in the montage during Theo and Samantha's conversation. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film. 01:21:43.
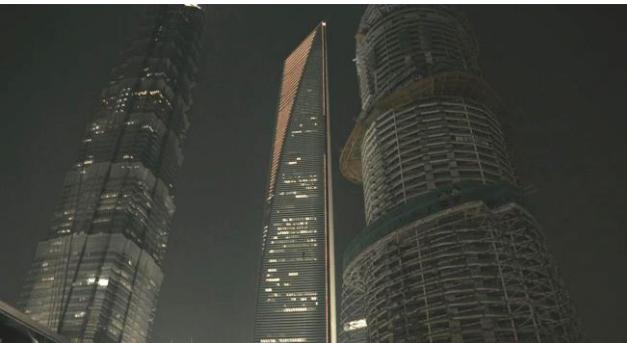
Figure 6. An image interposed in Theo's and Samantha's conversation after the failed experiment. *Her*. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film.01:24:00.

Notes

1 Neale localises the difference between voyeuristic and fetishistic gaze in their relation to their objects: voyeurism strives to distance itself from its objects (16) whereas fetishism strives to abolish this distance (17). While voyeurism strives to interrogate the object of gaze, fetishism acknowledges its direct involvement in the image whereby it constructs its object as spectacle (17).

2 Even the scene, in which Theodore and Catherine meet, holds back information from their past. When Catherine freaks off and starts bursting out about Theodore's relationship with Samantha, she does not say anything conclusive. My take is that Theodore kept in too much (just like he actually does at the table during their meeting), she gradually got depressed because of this, Theodore noticed it and wanted to send her to a psychologist (reference to Prozac, an anti-depressant), and they fought so hard over this issue that they broke up. However, it is impossible to claim that there is a definitive story behind what we see in Theodore's flashbacks, because the ultimate story cannot be solicited from those visual and verbal cues.

3 See, for instance, Figure 1 that shows the screen when Theodore recounts his date with Amelia to Samantha. The point of view shots there help us identify with Theodore's thoughts. It has to be noted that here Amelia is not objectified; it is mostly her face that the spectator sees. It might be argued that Amelia is a female character that conforms to the ideals of the male voyeuristic gaze, but I believe the way she is represented does little to elicit that reading. Moreover, it also has to be noted that, as opposed to the earlier phone sex scene (see below), here the woman's body is not exposed, albeit we are in Theodore's mind. There seems to be a change in the way the movie represents the female body.

4 The three examples I found are *Going the Distance* (Nanette Burstein 2010), *Filth* (Jon S. Baird 2013), and *American Pie 2* (James B. Rogers 2001). *Going the Distance* and *American Pie 2* use montage to present both participants, while *Filth* uses a split-screen technique in which both members can be seen simultaneously.

5 It has to be noted that it is also a pregnant body that we can see, which makes this representation atypical, because in classical Hollywood cinema the ideal female body has to be slim.

6 This visual ellipsis consists of two parts: first, the screen fades out leaving room only for voice, and after the intercourse ends, we see the city from birds' eye view. As discussed above, the first cut achieves to banish the gaze from the sex scene, while the second cut contributes to the ellipsis of the bodies included in the scene. This is primarily a consequence of the fact that the female body cannot be represented due to its absence.

7 He is also not mutilated or sadistically treated throughout the movie, which, as Neale claims, should be the case when the heterosexual male gaze looks at male bodies as objects of desire.

8 "What I mean by 'woman' is that which is not represented, that which is unspoken, that which is left out of namings and ideologies" (Julia Kristeva qtd. in

Lauretis 95). In this sense, femininity remains irrepresentable insofar as it differs from masculinity, and thus, signification, due to the fact that our signifying processes have been established by patriarchy that always already conceptualise woman as Other.

Bibliography

Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Her. Dir Jonze, Spike.. Warner Bros., 2013. Film.

de Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.

Lawrence, Amy. *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1991. Print.

Morusiewicz, Rafal. "Fifty Shades of Real: The Sexual and the Virtual in Spike Jonze's *Her*." *Kultura Popularna* 4.38 (2014): 110-119. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. eds. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44. Print.

Neale, Steve. "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema." Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies, and Women. eds. Pat Kirkham & Janet Thumim. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995: 9-20. Print.

Page, Sarah. *The "Endless Space Between:" Exploring Film's Architectural Spaces, Places, Gender, and Genre*. Honors' thesis. Florida State University, 2014. Print.

Rosenberg, Alyssa. "What 'Her' Can Teach All of Us About Love and Relationships." *Thinkprogress*. 28 Dec 2013. Web. 9 June 2015.

FANNI FELDMANN

"Same Person […] Just a Different Sex"[1]:
Cinematic Subversion in Sally Potter's *Orlando*

Introduction

Sally Potter's 1992 film, *Orlando* has become a fundamental text and an essential experience when talking about gender, and especially gender-subversive cinema. The film can be perceived as a playful visual experimentation with sexes, genders, historical eras and different lives which are inhabited, shaped, and left behind by the very same person, Lord/Lady Orlando. Although an already subversive narrative is guaranteed, as the film is an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's similarly playful mock-biographical novel, *Orlando*, I believe that Sally Potter's film does much more than importing Woolf's gender-subversive plot and characters onto the screen: it actually manages to subvert gender(ed) roles within cinema by different visual, pictorial and cinematic methods. It is not by chance that B. Ruby Rich calls *Orlando* "the great proto-queer film" (xxiii): although the movie preceeds the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s, it already possesses something from the radically challenging, subversive, even transgressive attitude belonging to that cinematic trend. Still, the playground of *Orlando* remains within the heterosexual matrix, the see-saw here is two-forked, still, the focus is not on the two endpoints, but on the constant fluidity of its movement.[2]

In order to understand and to be able to approach critically the gender subversive atmosphere and nature of Sally Potter's film, first we have to take into account the relevant segments of a rich film theory. Laura Mulvey was among the first theoreticians to explore from a gendered point of view how visual narratives work in classical Hollywood cinema. Her seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" includes theoretical descriptions of the gender(ed) roles on and off screen within cinema. She investigates how films achieve the sensation of pleasure and mastery in the viewer, and how crucial it is to separate screen and spectator in order to create "the illusion of voyeuristic separation" (836), the feeling in the viewer that it is them who watches without being watched. Furthermore, she finds a connection between the position of the voyeuristic spectator and the object of voyeurism – the spectacle, and masculine and feminine gender roles, as she puts it: "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (837). Therefore the

subject of the gaze is inevitably constructed as masculine, while its object must be feminine.

Although Mulvey's statements are inescapable if we wish to discuss cinema and visual representation concentrating on gender, Sally Potter's *Orlando* surpasses some of the processes described by Mulvey, and displays others on the screen with a critical attitude.Therefore, I believe, it is essential to broaden the theoretical scope of my analysis and include other thinkers who combine film theory with psychoanalysis and gender studies, especially Teresa de Lauretis. Although acknowledging Mulvey's credits, according to her *Alice Doesn't* and *Technologies of Gender*, de Lauretis finds it essential to complete the discourse on cinema and gender with a thorough analysis of how "women are constructed through effects and representation" (*Alice* 14), and – through a detailed background of psychoanalysis, semiotics and post-structuralism – also to formulate critical insights about theories on cinema and gender: "[c]oncepts such as voyeurism, fetishism, or the imaginary signifier, however appropriate they may seem to describe the operation of dominant cinema, are directly implicated in a discourse which circumscribes woman in the sexual, binds her (in) sexuality, makes her the absolute representation, the phallic scenario" (25-26). Furthermore she interrogates the question of the female viewer's position in cinema, which is rather ambiguous and paradoxical if we stick to Mulvey's active and masculine spectator.

In the following essay – using Mulvey's and de Lauretis' theoretical notions as a background – I will take a closer look at how Sally Potter's *Orlando* creates an ambiguity, or rather, fluidity between sexes, genders within the film and gendered cinematic positions off the screen. The movie carries that out by various visual means, such as upsetting predictable gender patterns in looking, not only within the film, but between screen and spectator as well; by surprising camera work which does just the opposite of securing identification; and also by a radical re-visualising and reinterpretation of castration. However, *Orlando* does so without totally abolishing, condemning or throwing out the "classic" processes described by Mulvey: what the film does, is rather a playful "tampering with the expected sequence" (Woolf 81).

Gendered gazes

If *Orlando* worked according to "traditional" Hollywood norms, then most probably – in terms of gazes – the film would be separable along Orlando's metamorphosis, being the male subject of the gaze in the first part

and the female object in the second. Even though the movie includes sequences in which Orlando is displayed as an object of the gaze, "image and representation" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 29) instead of a subject, such occasions are present in both parts of the film. Furthermore, the gazes that objectify Orlando in the movie cannot be interpreted as the classical, masculine possessor of sight: they are significantly feminised. In this part I will examine through several close-readings how the film incorporates the feminine gaze into the picture, and how this feminisation mocks and underscores the seemingly more traditional masculine gazes of the movie, and therefore "inscribe[s] in the film [a] woman's look – next to, side by side, together with, [the] other (cinematic) look" (114)

In the scene when Orlando is first being "properly" dressed up as a woman,. the film seemingly works according to the traditional visualisation of the object of the gaze and that of desire: we see Orlando in a mirror, then the camera begins to pan upwards, from her petticoats, through her corset, up to her cleavage (Fig. 1). This visual process is very similar to the one that György Kalmár traces in *Pretty Woman*, in connection with Vivian, the prostitute's visual introduction: there (also) we can only see eroticised body parts, which cannot constitute a coherent subject (34). However, in case of *Orlando*, it turns out that she follows the whole process from a hand-mirror, which gives a self-reflexive edge to the whole sequence: Orlando, the woman, is not only conscious about her gendered construction, but she is in control of the process In the end, the camera takes a step backwards, in order to show the completed artwork of the fully dressed Orlando. With this "[t]he film re-members (fragments and makes whole again) the object of vision for the spectator" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 67), but actually what catches the spectator's eyes at first is not the painting-like representation of a woman, but her strict eyes, and her rigorous, controlling gaze. In other words, what we see here is not an unconsciously eroticised object, but an active female subject.

As I mentioned, the film already plays with the subversion of gendered gazes in the first part of the film and of Orlando's life, when he is a man. Orlando first becomes the object of the gaze in the presence of Queen Elizabeth I, whose character is an excellent example of sex and gender being independent and different from each other. As a monarch, the Queen is inevitably the possessor of an authoritarian, masculine point of view, even though she was born a woman.[3] Orlando – with his family –, after being properly dressed for such an occasion (which scene is mirrored by the one analysed above) spends some time entertaining the Queen by dinners,

reciting poems and taking walks with her. With his "feminine appearance" (Potter 01:03) Orlando quickly catches the eyes of Elizabeth, and becomes the focus of her attention. The scene of his reciting for Queen Elizabeth is quite telling from this point of view. Their positions are that of a spectator and a spectacle. The Queen is sitting above the "crowd," she has the powerful perspective of an all-seeing eye. Orlando is not only positioned under her, but he must leave his place and stand alone in the middle, displaying himself as entertainment, as the object of looking. Therefore he is defenceless in front of Elizabeth, and – when he dares an attempt to look back – he has to look up in order to stand the female monarch's possessive gaze.

Orlando is represented as a male object of a feminine or feminised gaze, chronologically a century later through his encounters in the Middle East. Here he is radically different from and for the native inhabitants of the land, therefore he becomes a spectacle, a weird, strange-looking, but amusing spectacle for them (Fig. 2). Upon his arrival children run curiously to him on the street and transform him not only into an object of an observing gaze, but also an actual object by touching him as if he were an exhibit. The playful nature of the film flashes in the scene of saluting and drinking, when Orlando's male host curiously watches him while playing the role of a spectator. On the one hand he represents the foreign gaze: he is the other compared to Orlando, who is clad by Western culture itself. Seemingly it is contradictory to state that this male character represents a feminine gaze. However, if we take into account Simone de Beauvoir's statement that woman "is the Other" (16) then we realise that the gaze of the Middle Eastern other must be inevitably feminine. On the other hand, we must recognise the peculiar camera movement in this scene: the camera is swinging in a semi-circle, travelling continuously from Orlando to his host, signalling that it is just a matter of viewpoint who we identify as other. Orlando is also a spectacle for the Middle Eastern people. The era's excessive masculine fashion – which exceeds even that of the Elizabethan era – with high heels, enormous wigs and overdecorated clothes turns him into a feminine extravaganza not only within the visual context, but for today's viewers as well.

This feminine gaze of the other is central in the sequence of Orlando's first public appearance as a woman, even though at first glance it seems as a display of the "new" female Orlando as the object of curious male looks (Fig. 3). In this "society" she – again – becomes the focus of attention, several shots frame her as a central part of a painting-like composition.

Furthermore, with her arrival she enlivens the conversation, being a sign "ensuring social communication" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 18). Still, here again, the film undermines our traditional Hollywood assumptions. First, she observes those around her just as curiously, therefore she cannot be interpreted as a passive object of looking. She is not only conscious about her audience, but breaks her own silence of an exhibited artwork by talking back to the (unconsciously) misogynist men. Second, the company that surrounds her here has a reputation, and "is full of dangerous individuals" – there are also "wits and poets" (Potter 58:09) in the gathering –, therefore they can be interpreted as others in the "respectful English society." That is why even their seemingly typically observing looks are not quite equal with the traditional male gaze, even though it is exactly the traditional gender roles that they do not subvert. Third, a member of this group recognises Lord/Lady Orlando, which means that she becomes a twofold other: not only is (s)he perceived as a woman but also as someone who does not fit in the spheres of the two sexes. Therefore when the camera takes her point of view it is not only the gaze of the other as a woman, but also as that of someone with "ambiguous sexuality" (Potter 01:06:12).

The spectacle looks back

It is also a characteristic of traditional cinematic roles that spectator and spectacle remain separated from each other – the spectator looking upon the image as a half-god, as it is only him who is aware of the other, but the object of looking does not know about him – which separation maintains "an illusion of looking in on a private world" (Mulvey 836). However, Orlando frequently looks directly into the camera, catching the eye of the spectator (Fig. 4). With this "the *heimlich* action of turning cameraward becomes *unheimlich* when the voyeuristic gaze of the spectator encounters that of the character" (Degli-Esposti 82; emphasis in the original). Furthermore (s)he does not only look at the viewers, but also talks to them. With this the position of the spectator "being absent as perceived and present as perceiver" (McGowan 28) turns upside down, and becomes present as perceived and absent as perceiver, which results in a loss of mastery. Orlando knowingly steps over the boundaries which separate spectator and spectacle, therefore (s)he upsets the established cinematic roles: "Orlando, who is consciously both the voyeur and the object of voyeurism, eventually causes the patriarchal eye to blink" (Degli-Esposti 78). I can agree with Degli-Esposti's idea of Orlando's double role as someone who looks and who is looked at, within the film and between the viewer and

the screen as well. However, I would definitely not call him/her a voyeur, because when (s)he looks into the camera and at the viewer, they are both conscious of the other. The "safe" voyeuristic separation falls into pieces which dislocates the voyeur as a voyeur on both sides.

Orlando's gaze penetrating through the screen into the viewer's space not only blurs the boundaries between the two worlds but "also breaks the spectator-subject's 'identification with the camera as a point of sure and central embracing view'" (Silverman qtd in Degli-Esposti 83) and "takes into account … [the viewer's] presence as a spectator (McGowan 29). Therefore the spectator is refused to remain a passively enjoying voyeur, they are invited, or rather, forced to take part in the in the visual narrative. As Cristina Degli-Esposti formulates it: "[w]ith this technique Potter creates a new space for the discourse of spectatorship and inveigles the viewer into the making of the text itself" (78). We can also say that the film, by interfusing the roles of spectator and spectacle, undermines the separation between interpreter and filmic text: because a character of the film looks at and talks to the viewer, they get involved in the text not as an outsider onlooker but as one of the characters.

We must also take into consideration that dragging the viewer into the narrative is not completely alien from cinema. By various means of suture, it is an aim of films to connect the viewer onto, but most importantly into the screen, to achieve the sensation in the viewers that they are – although invisibly – within the filmic narrative. From this point of view another function of Orlando's being conscious about his/her audience can be revealed. The viewer is not only drawn into the narrative and becomes complicit to Orlando, but distanced at the same time, because it is impossible to forget about their position as viewer, as spectator, who is deprived of their autonomy. Therefore, "[w]e are both invited in and held at a distance, addressed intermittently and only insofar as we are able to occupy the position of addressee" (de Lauretis, *Technologies* 143).

The overstepped boundaries and changing roles between spectator and spectacle are richly reflected upon in *Orlando* by different scenes: already during his introduction Orlando disrupts his/her own voiceover to assure the viewer that it is him who should be focused on; also, quite self-reflexively, after watching *Romeo and Juliet* on the frozen Thames, Orlando looks straight into the camera and reminds us of what a "terrific play" (Potter 26:00) we have just seen with him; and finally, in the interview scene in the part of our modern times, "BIRTH", Orlando consciously acts as a silent object of the gaze, of inquiry, in full complicity with the viewer. During

91

the scene she remains silent, it is only the editor who talks, shares his opinion about her text – which is presumably Orlando's life story – but does not get or allow any feedback. On the one hand, he embodies the role of the spectator, observing a piece of art – in this case both Orlando and her text can be interpreted as one – which remains passive, silent, giving space to the voyeuristic, observing gaze. On the other hand, the editor can be identified as the spectator who wants to give meaning to the (visual) text, asking questions, trying to interpret it with more or less success. Furthermore, he also personifies the spectator dragged into the composition of a text as he gives pieces of advice to Orlando about how to alter his/her story so that it would sell. Even though Orlando utters no word in the scene and willingly, consciously displays herself in text and in person to the male editor, she does communicate with the viewer sitting in front of the screen. After the editor's question, "By the way, how long did this draft take you?"(), Orlando exchanges significant glances with the viewer, fully aware of the fact that we both (she and us) exactly know the answer to that question, however, she will not and we – due to our position – cannot share it with the curious editor. At this point we are invited, or rather, compelled to take part in the narration as Orlando's accomplices, however – again –, we are reminded of our inevitable outsider position. The angle of the camera strengthens this effect: we can see Orlando slightly from below, similarly to our positions in the cinema building, we gaze slightly upwards to Orlando, who is not only conscious of the canvas, but who is the conscious canvas.

Camera and identification

Sally Potter's *Orlando* – besides shaking the position of the spectator as an outsider voyeur – is excitingly playful with the camera, using various angles, subjective camera positions and unexpected movements. In a mainstream scenario, the camera, besides mediating between the viewer and the spectator, would ensure the spectator's masculine, voyeuristic position, "transferring it behind the screen" (Mulvey 838). However, the various and creative usage of the camera deprives the spectator of its objective viewpoint which could provide a sense of security within the labyrinth of changing, transforming, and shifting identities. This feature of the film strengthens its playful, reflexive and subverting nature, completing the gendering of gazes and overstepping the boundary of the screen.

First of all, in spite of and also as a result of the film being a depiction of the personal, subjective experience of its protagonist, there is no central point of view taken by the camera. Even if there were, it would be

hard to identify it as an objective focal point, especially because of the strongly subjective, ever changing, dislocating camera work. Even though the shot-countershot technique is part of mainstream cinema, the film takes it a step further: the camera identifies with several characters' points of view, often making fast shifts. On several occasions in the film these shifts are quite sudden, making it difficult to realise the character possessing that particular point of view and with whom we are encouraged to identify. Furthermore, the camera takes positions which are quite alienating for the viewer if they attempt to take those viewpoints. In this respect the most characteristic scene is the opening of the Elizabethan part "LOVE". At first, the viewer sees some English noblemen staring down, into the camera, but then, with a countershot, we see the actual object of their looking, the position, into which the viewer was placed only seconds ago: a human being, dead, frozen under the glasslike ice of the Thames.

Peculiarly enough, at several points of the film, instead of the shot-countershot technique, the camera shifts between viewpoints through a continuous, unbroken swing, moving in a semi-circle, incorporating an infinite number of in-between points of view. This is the most characteristic and probably visible for the longest time in the sequence of Orlando and Shelmerdine's intimate conversation.. In the first part of their dialogue the camera takes sudden shifts between their viewpoints: when Orlando talks, we can see him/her from Shelmerdine's point of view, and when his turn comes in the discussion, he is shown through Orlando's eyes. However, after a short while the shot-countershot technique is taken over – the camera begins a swinging movement, turning continuously from one point of view to the other, including an intermediate phase without focus. This range of in-between positions can be associated with the gaze of the outsider who was dragged into the visual text but lost the ground for identification and also the points of orientation. The unbroken movement of the camera also signifies that the roles, gazes, viewpoints are in a constant transformation, and it is quite impossible to mark the boundaries between them, as de Lauretis puts it: "a woman (or a man) is not an undivided identity, a stable unity of 'consciousness', but the term of a shifting series of ideological positions" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 14).

Re-visioning castration

In psychoanalysis, and also in psychoanalytic film theory, castration is one of the most central issues, where "film as imaginary signifier, representation and identification are processes referred to a masculine

subject, predicated on and predicating a subject of phallic desire, dependent on castration as the constitutive instance of the subject" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 28). Although this pivotal moment "is to be understood as referring strictly to the symbolic dimension, its signifier – the phallus – can only be conceived as an extrapolation from the real body" (23). Therefore, the male body, which bears the phallus on himself as the penis, is inevitably in contrast with the female body, which carries the lack – the vagina. For that reason – especially in visual terms – it is unavoidable that body and castration are connected, and are also completed with associations of violence, radical transformation, deprivation. What we see in Sally Potter's *Orlando* is although castration in its literal, bodily meaning[4] the symbolic and also the visual layers of the term are strongly reinterpreted and re-visualised.

Orlando may change sex in his/her life, the depiction of this transformation is far from violent and it does not evoke loss. What we actually see is not losing the phallus or penis itself, but rather its manifestation, and the moments when Orlando first glances upon her new female body. The pictures are stunningly beautiful, almost sublime: with the sparkling dust in the background and the highly contrasted images, the viewer might feel that they are witnesses to a miracle, which sensation is strengthened on the one hand by the ethereal non-diegetic music and by using slow motion on the other (Fig. 5). However, we must also recognise that this is the first instance when we see Orlando naked. As a man, "there can be no doubt about his sex" (Potter 00:57), seeing the masculine attributes of an era on someone, the gender, must be enough proof of his sex as well. Still, a woman must be seen naked, only her body can prove her sex. We do see Orlando here as a naked female body, but significantly enough, we only see her mirror image, since "woman is unrepresentable except as representation" (de Lauretis, *Technologies* 20). To increase the pictoriality of the image, the composition depicting Orlando's reflection in the mirror bears a stunning resemblance to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, whose mythological conception was – similarly to Orlando – the result of a castration (Fig. 6).[5]

Besides, if we take a look at how Mulvey writes about the reproductive nature of castration, another innovation can be detected in *Orlando*: "[s]he turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic)" (834). In the closing scenes of the film we see Orlando's daughter with a camera in her hands, which can be interpreted as possessing the phallic gaze, however, she rather plays with it, instead of owning or incorporating it. Furthermore,

it is a hand-held camera, which – as B. Ruby Rich calls our attention – played an important role in the emergence of New Queer Cinema: "a little device called the camcorder called its bluff and made all the difference [... and] enabled easy production of electronic media at the personal level" (xvii). Therefore the little girl's playful shots receive a layer of meaning quite different from the masculine gaze and her camera differs from a phallic prosthesis: she and her camera can signify a shift in the gendered possession of gaze, signalling a new, more fluid and playful (gender) spectrum of looking.

Moreover, if the film would understand and present castration as such a pivotal and establishing momentum, some kind of break, discrepancy, but at least some kind of alteration should be detectable between the two parts of his and her life, as "woman, in a phallic order, is at once the mirror and the screen – image, ground, and support – *this* [masculine] subject's projection and identification" (de Lauretis, *Alice* 28; emphasis in the original). However, what we experience in watching the complementary halves of Orlando's life is that there is although a mirror-like relation between the two, it is not the woman who constitutes this mirror image. The two parts show an interesting symmetry, in terms of social processes creating gender roles, in affections and desires, and also – as I analysed in the first three parts of my essay – in visual representation. What serves as a mirror is castration itself: it is the central point, the axis of symmetry, which not only connects Orlando's male and female lives, but also reflects the two sides of the same coin upon each other. It is not by coincidence that at the closing of the film we hear the eunuch singing: "we are joined, we are one, with a human face"(1:25:33), which reveals that the castration cannot or should not be interpreted exclusively as a loss of power, but also as a completing, connecting and empowering event.

Conclusion

To close and sum up my arguments I would like to quote Sally Potter, the director of the film: "as for *Orlando* and where it fits in, I really think that the film's contribution to the area is not so much about gaining identity as it is blurring identity" (Ehrenstein 7). In other words, the film makes us, viewers unsure about those technologies, processes which we take for sure when talking and thinking about identity formation, especially by making them visible as what they are like: historically, culturally, personally varying. Furthermore the film treats sex, sexuality and gender in a similar manner. Although remaining within a heterosexual matrix, *Orlando*

"recognizes the inherent bisexuality of the subject, for whom femininity and masculinity are not qualities or attributes but positions in the symbolic processes of (self)-representation." The cinematic means analysed above achieve to represent the cinematic roles and functions of mainstream Hollywood cinema described in Laura Mulvey's foundational essay, but also manage to approach them with a critical edge, with playfulness and self-reflection, and therefore Sally Potter's film engenders a subversive piece of cinema that even though filled with notions of sex, gender, subjectivity and identity formation, approaches human experience as complicated, but always tending towards completeness.

Appendix

Figure 1. *Orlando*. Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 56:46.

Figure 2. *Orlando*. Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 39:09.

Figure 3. *Orlando*. Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 59:44.

Figure 4. *Orlando.* Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 01:25.

Figure 5. *Orlando.* Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 54:11.

Figure 6. *Orlando.* Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film. 54:44

Notes

1 Potter 54:55.

2 It is exactly because of this binary in connection with Orlando within the film that I stick to the pronouns "he" and "she" instead of using the singular they.

3 Adding to the playful nature of the film, it should not be forgotten that Queen Elizabeth is played by Quentin Crisp, a famous homosexual and cross-dressing artist.

4 Besides Orlando's transformation into a woman, the character and especially the voice of the singing eunuch, who accompanies us along the film, constantly reminds us of the bodily effects and reality of castration. Being "neither a woman nor a man" (Potter 1:25:27), they can only serve as mere decoration in their society, however, their extradiegetic function is unquestionable.

5 Aphrodite (Venus in the Roman mythology) was born after Kronos castrated his father, Uranus, whose member fell into the sea, which resulted in her conception.

Bibliography

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.

Degli-Esposti, Cristina. "Sally Potter's "Orlando" and the Neo-Baroque Scopic Regime." *Cinema Journal* 36.1 (1996): 75-93. Print.

Ehrenstein, David. "Out of the Wilderness. An Interview with Sally Potter." *Film Quarterly* 47.1 (1993): 2-7. Print.

Kalmár, György. *Testek a vásznon* (*Test, film, szubjektivitás*). Debrecen: Debrecen UP, 2012. Print.

Lauretis, Teresa de. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Print.

---. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1987. Print.

McGowan, Todd. "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes." *Cinema Journal* 42.3 (2003): 27-47. Print.

McLaughlin, Larin. "Androgyny and Transcendence in Contemporary Corporate and Popular Culture." *Culture Critique* 42.1 (1999): 188-215. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."*Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory* Readings. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44. Print..

Orlando. Dir. Potter, Sally. Adventure Pictures, 1992. Film.

Rich, B. Ruby. *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. London: Duke UP, 2013. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972. Print.

BABETT RUBÓCZKI

"**Queering the Uncanny**":
Sexual and Textual Doubles in Ernest Hemingway's "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and "The Sea Change"

"The uncanny is queer. And the queer is uncanny." (Nicholas Royle)

Introduction

The reversal of gender roles and ambiguous sexual preferences appear in several works by Ernest Hemingway, yet gender bending and androgyny as underlying themes became most overtly expressed only in his posthumously released novel, *The Garden of Eden* (1986). This publication sparked a retrospective revision of the great modernist's life and oeuvre with a renewed interest in his treatment of the complexities of gender and sexual identities that numerous of his works address. In the 1950s-70s revisionist biographies shattered the image of Hemingway as a macho-man and pointed out the novelist's as well as his fictional heroes' struggle with homo-hetero binarism (Bak 53-59).[1] Preceding the writing period of *Eden*, from 1946 to 1961, two of his short stories "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" (1924-25) from the volume *In Our Time* and "The Sea Change" (1931) published in the collection *Winner Take Nothing* exemplify Hemingway's early artistic preoccupation with gender bending characters. These two stories prefigure the novel's more overt and complex treatment of gender inversion manifest in the characters' unstable sexual identity, which indicates that an artistic interest in sexual ambivalence was endemic to modernist existence in the 1920s-30s. In this essay I argue that the theme of sexual ambivalence in these works exhibits the modernist sensibility of transgressing borders not only between hetero- and homosexuality but also between self and the sexual Other.

While *The Garden of Eden* has been extensively analysed since its publication, the two short stories have received limited scholarly attention that focused mainly on the link between declining masculinity and latent homosexuality in them (Bak 57). Hemingway's satire directed against T. S. Eliot in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" predominates critical investigations and biographers' accounts.[2] Though Comley and Scholes' revisionary study (1992) declines to identify the real-life counterparts in the story, their analysis maintains a dichotomic reading representing the couple, Hubert and Cornelia along the lines of the Puritan vs. Libertine sexual traditions (273). Similarly,

previous readings of "The Sea Change" mostly revolve around the identification of the homo-heterosexual binary in the characters' sexual identity. While J. F. Kobler posits that the protagonist, Phil moves toward the appropriation of his homosexuality (322), Warren Bennett attributes Phil's sea change to the "destruction of his masculine sexual identity" (238) as the result of his realisation of "becoming the girl's girl" in sexual terms (233).

Questioning the dichotomic readings that confine the subtle complexities of sexuality into the oppositional categories of homo/heterosexuality in the two short stories, I find that the characters in them fluctuate between sexual identities and roles that cannot be defined within the binary of homo-and heterosexuality. I propose that the male protagonists' encounter with sexual otherness as embodied by their lesbian female lovers can be conceptualised through the notion of the queer uncanny. The motifs of the uncanny such as the compulsion to repeat, the return of the repressed, and the generation of ontological instability by erasing the boundaries between familiar/unfamiliar, self and other can be aligned with the purpose of queer theory which highlights the problem of a single, stable sexual identity by deconstructing the homo/heterosexual dichotomy (Palmer 4). This uncanny disturbance of borders displays anxieties concerning established gender roles and indicates the sexual revolution taking place in the modernist era. The uncanny in the stories is bound up with insecurities about sexual and gender identity that characterised the post-World War I cultural landscape of America.

The basic thrust of my argument is that in both stories Hemingway's narrative applies the mirror motif on character as well as on textual levels. On the character level, the lesbian female as sexual Other assumes the characteristics of the uncanny described by Nicholas Royle as the notions of liminality, border-crossing, repetition, return of the repressed and linguistic inexplicability (2). Thus, lesbian females appropriate the figure of the uncanny double who herself embodies as well as evokes the subject's repressed fear of unstable heterosexuality. On the textual level sexual otherness as linguistic inexplicability is intertwined with the difficulties arising in textual reproduction. Errors in textual reproduction, such as the transmission errors of typewriting in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and Phil's imperfect citation of Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* in "The Sea Change" constitute the site of eruption of sexual frustrations and ambivalences. Therefore, textual mirroring and doubling of texts are inextricably bound up with character doubles as the literary trope of the

uncanny. Inevitably, the different errors, gaps, omissions and silences in textual reproduction as well as in the linguistic politics of Hemingway's narrative must be analysed together with the characters' sexual identity crisis in the selected stories.

Queer Uncanny: Theoretical Background

The concept of the "queer uncanny" – as defined by Olu Jenzen in her study ("The Queer Uncanny") and expanded on by Paulina Palmer in her theoretical volume *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* – connects the uncanny and sexual ambivalence. Palmer's more expansive application of the queer uncanny to the close reading of postmodern lesbian, gay and transgender fiction justifies that the uncanny is not a subset but an endemic notion to queer existence. By referring to Nicholas Royle's understanding of the uncanny as the "crisis of the proper [and] the natural" (1) Jenzen formulates the queer uncanny as resistance to the dichotomy of homo/heterosexuality which sustains the naturalness of the dominant, heteronormative sexuality ("The Queer Uncanny" 2, "Same" 47). She claims that "by subverting notions of ontological stability, the queer uncanny destabilises definitions of gender and sexuality and the notion of sexual classifications and gender categories as proper" ("Same" 46).

Jenzen maintains that the Freudian uncanny – "hidden and secret, and yet comes to light" (Freud 4) – is strongly related to gender anxiety and substantiates that the uncanny is gendered as feminine. Referring to Freud's essay "The Uncanny" she contends that the castration anxiety centers on female genitalia and gives the example of the female automaton, Olympia, in Hoffmann's tale as both the object of desire and a destructive force. Further illustrating that gender anxiety is inextricably bound to the uncanny return of the feminine, Jenzen highlights the recurrence of female figures in Freud's personal account. Freud's experience of unintentionally returning back to the same street of an Italian red-light district and repeatedly encountering with the gazes of painted women figures placed in the windows links the uncanny sensation of the compulsion to repeat with the feminine ("The Queer Uncanny," 4-5). Jenzen's description of the uncanny denoting concealment, marginality, border crossing, compulsive repetition and the double's potential to unfamiliarise and destabilise the subject's world or sexual identity are not only recognisable in queer theory but are apparent in the sexual and gender identity crisis unfolding in the selected Hemingway short stories.

Similarly, Palmer argues for the cross-pollination of queerness and the uncanny. Besides the uncanny element of the figure of the double and

the traits of ontological ambiguity, liminality and repetition, Palmer adds further Gothic elements such as haunting, spectrality and monstrosity (10-16), all apparent in queer postmodern fiction. Also, Palmer highlights the uncanny aspect of queer existence by pointing out its inexplicability in the realm of language (7). As Deborah Cameron writes, the term "queer" denotes contingent, non-essential identity and, thus, is described as resistant to linguistic categorisation and signification (148). Correspondingly, Jenzen perceives language as a site of the queer uncanny in the semantic tension of Freud's words of *heimlich* and *unheimleich*. The dynamic overlap and oscillation between the meaning of *heimlich* denoting familiar, homely, concealment and *unheimlich* as unfamiliar, unhomely, exposure of secrets suspends the fixed meaning of the uncanny ("The Queer Uncanny" 3). Thus, uncanniness can be aligned with Sedgwick Kosofsky's definition of queer as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning" as a result of the impossibility of linguistically categorising one's gender or sexuality (*Tendencies* 8). Palmer considers this excess of meaning not only as symptomatic of queer existence but as a textual strategy of writing in postmodern queer fictions.

These critical studies share the view that the Freudian feature of the uncanny to erase borders between the homely/unhomely, inner/outer, self/Other aligns the uncanny with queer studies, which, as Palmer asserts, "seek to destabilize the notion of a stable sexual identification […] and interrogate and deconstruct the binary division of homosexual/heterosexual" (4). This conceptualisation of the queer uncanny as opposed to the dichotomic construction of heteronormative categories contrasts with the homophobic discourse of Hemingway's era in which, as Debra Moddelmog contends, not living up to an aggressive, able-bodied standard of masculinity immediately connoted homosexuality (*Context* 357-65).

Female Alterity and Textual Marginality

In both stories the textual realm becomes a traumatic space which reflects the underlying sexual frustration of the couples. In "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" female characters inhabit a liminal position between sexual and textual spheres as the difficulty in sexual reproduction is intertwined with textual errors in duplicating texts. The short story problematises a bad marriage of infertility and emotional bareness that is manifest in the compulsively repeated, unsuccessful attempts of sexual and textual reproduction. The beginning of the story introduces the central trauma of the married couple as the failure of procreation which is accentuated by the

monotonous repetition of the verb "try": "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot tried very hard to have a baby. They tried as often as Mrs. Elliot could stand it" (Hemingway 151). The sexual frustration deriving from the failure of procreation is both transferred and suppressed into the proliferation of writing as textual doubling. At the beginning of their marriage Mrs. Elliot types her husband's manuscripts: "Hubert, however, was writing a great number of poems and Cornelia typed them for him. They were all very long poems. He was very severe about mistakes and would make her re-do an entire page if there was one mistake. She cried a good deal and they tried several times to have a baby before they left Dijon" (153).

The three consecutive sentences describing the amount of Hubert's poems, the wife's repeated failure to reproduce texts without typing mistakes as well as the subsequent failed attempt to have a baby suggest that sexual and textual reproduction are equally abortive. This transference of sexual impotence to (re)produce to the textual realm indicates that the marriage is haunted by the underlying anxiety related to the figure of the mother. Cornelia's infertility and her implied homosexuality symbolically become associated not only with textual mistakes but the notion of error itself. She is represented as a "bad copy" of the heteronormatively inscribed association between femininity and maternity.

Cornelia as the embodiment of failed textual reproduction recalls Judith Butler's argument that the homophobic discourse constructs the lesbian as a "bad copy" of heteronormative sexuality ("Imitation" 310). Hubert's insistence on making Cornelia correct her typing mistakes indicates that her errors disturb the system of language rules, thus, they have to be eradicated. By exceeding the boundaries of conventional male discourse, her errors symbolically inscribe her sexual otherness as the excess of the heterosexual matrix. Thus, in Kristeva's terms Cornelia assumes the position of the abject which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Moreover, as her errors are the results of her failure to correctly copy male-written texts she seems to fit into Judith Butler's notion of the abject as associated with the practice of citation (*Bodies* 13). Butler considers Kristeva's notion of the abject as a discursive process through which one's subjectivity is denied by the heteronormative society because the person wrongly cites or copies the heterosexual norms (*Bodies* 8-9, 13-16). Thus, non-heteronormative sexuality perceived as poor citation of gender norms can be juxtaposed with Cornelia's typing errors, which are analogous to her failure to inscribe herself to the social convention of maternity.

The typewriter as a mechanic tool for (re-)creating texts metonymically symbolises not only Mrs. Elliot's equally mechanical role in their marriage but replaces their infertile love-making. Cornelia's girl friend, Honey, substitutes the role of a mechanical reproducer by taking over Cornelia's place at her husband's typewriter as she types "practically all of the manuscripts" (Hemingway 154). While textual as well as sexual reproductions are abortive and unpleasant experiences for Cornelia, Honey gains satisfaction in typing as she "was very neat and efficient and seemed to enjoy it" (154).

Following Honey's appropriation of the role of the transcriber, the attempts of sexual intercourse between Hubert and Cornelia seem to terminate as Honey spatially exchanges with Hubert in the marital bed too: "Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend now slept together in the big mediaeval bed. They had many a good cry together" (154). The linguistic transformation from "cried a good a deal" (124) to "many good cries" (125) indicates the quantity-to-quality change that Honey brings into the spiritually empty marriage. Thus "by doubling, dividing and interchanging [her] self" (Freud 9) between the textual realm and the sexual sphere of the bedroom Honey assumes the figure of the double, whose in-between status signifies her queerness. Her body also evokes the uncanny by manifesting a hybrid combination of nature, which pertains to bodily pleasures suggested by her cries, and culture signified by the typewriter as a technological tool of text reproduction.

Honey's uncanny in-between position by being able to split herself between the textual and sexual spheres designated by the marital bed makes her Hubert's double too. Honey's efficiency in providing pleasure both in the bedroom and in the textual space indicates that she can successfully function in the Symbolic order of language and culture without having to give up the enjoyment associated with same-sex desire that the cultural taboos prohibit. Thus, in her figure she fulfills and unifies efficient textual production and sexual pleasure that Hubert actually fails to achieve, since he is neither efficient in the textual realm nor is productive in sexual procreation. Neither can Hubert eradicate Cornelia's typing errors or "correct" her, nor can he provide pleasure for his wife as a husband. Additionally, he remains unacknowledged by his fellow poets.

However, Honey actually reverses the Freudian theorisation of the double claiming that the double turns from an initially protective and life-assuring quality to a "harbinger of death" (Freud 9). Though Honey's arrival introduces queer love between women in the marriage, which would

conventionally indicate the dissolution of Cornelia and Hubert's relationship, she ironically saves the marriage instead of prefiguring its collapse. Thus, the queer characteristic of this *ménage a trois* is that female same-sex desire assists the married couple's functioning and supports the heterosexual status-quo.

In "The Sea Change", the non-heteronormative sexuality of Phil's girlfriend also positions her at the margin of language. She resists being inscribed in the clearly stigmatizing and pathologic male discourse that Phil uses by labelling her sexual deviancy first as "vice" then as "perversion": " 'There's no necessity to use a word like that.' 'What do you want me to call it?' 'You don't have to call it, you don't have to put any name to it.'" (Hemingway 373). Her insistence on Phil's dismissal of his obsessive preoccupation with circumscribing the girl's sexual otherness in linguistic terms demonstrates that her non-heteronormative sexuality cannot be expressed through linguistic formulation constructed by homophobic discourse.

By contrast, in her discourse over her own same-sex desire, the girlfriend uses the unspecified "things" as opposition to Phil's insistence on the word "perversion": "'No' she said. 'We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough'" (374). The words "things" "that" and "it" that are frequently used throughout the story's dialogue over the unnamed girlfriend's lesbian desires signify the difficulty in linguistically categorising and articulating sexual deviancy. As the word "thing" has multiple meanings, the fluidity of boundaries of this polysemantic word points to discursive erasure of boundaries.

Also, the girl suggests a shared knowledge between Phil and herself over these linguistically undefinable "things" (374), which are apparently uncomfortable for Phil as he reacts by saying, "You don't have to say that again" (374). Jenzen argues that Freud presents the uncanny as a form of uncomfortable knowledge which is related to the erasure of clear boundaries between the semiotic categories of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* (46-47). Uncanniness is not generated simply by the fear of something unfamiliar, rather by "the strangeness of the known and the familiar" (Jenzen 46-47). Thus, the linguistic ambiguity of the word "things", which implies something known yet non-articulable and strangely uncomfortable, associates the couple's dialogue over same-sex desire with the sensation of the uncanny.

Male Sexual Anxiety and Textual Duplications

In "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" language manifests as a traumatic site to repress the sexual frustration of Hubert and Cornelia alike. Mr. Elliot is

106

seemingly a productive poet as "he wrote very long poems very rapidly" (Hemingway 151), however, his writing substitutes for his sexual activity. The repeated textual references to his long poems and the speed of his literary production emphasize the quantity and compulsiveness of his writings. Ironically, the more inefficient his attempts of sexual reproduction are, the more fertile his artistic output becomes by producing a sufficient number of poems to publish his book (153).

Therefore, Hubert's quantity-over-quality mode of writing indicates the mechanic accumulation of texts rather than the qualitative value of his poems. His literary production in an automaton-like manner connects his compulsion to repeat his failures of mechanically repeated love-making, which qualifies as uncanny since "whatever reminds us of this inner repetition-compulsion is perceived as uncanny" (Freud 12). Thus, his hetero-masculine anxiety over not being able to live up to social norms of virile masculinity and produce a child is suppressed into the compulsive proliferation of texts.

Phil also appropriates the metaphoric language of poetry to linguistically grasp the nature of his mistress's non-normative desire when he cites lines from Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man*. However, as a result of his memory lapse in recalling the lines his quotation from Epistle II becomes gapped and fragmented "'Vice is a monster of such fearful mien, […] that to be something or the other needs but to be seen. Then we something, something, then embrace'" (373). Conversely, Pope's original lines are the following: "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, / As to be *hated* needs but to be seen*; / Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, / We first endure, then pity,* then embrace" (44; emphasis added). As Phil's flawed recitation of the poem parallels with Mr. Elliot's incorrect copying of his husband's poetic manuscripts, the defects in the (re)production of a literary piece in both stories textually reflect the male as well as female characters' suppressed sexual and gender anxiety.

The contrastive investigation of Phil's successfully recalled and unarticulated parts of the Pope excerpt highlights underlying binaries. As Alice Clark-Wehinger observes, the "diametrical oppositions: male/female, vice/virtue, good/bad" that pervades the whole Hemingway narrative are also reflected in the Pope citation (6). Expanding on Clark-Wehinger's view that the lines of the poem are structured around binaries I suggest that the contrast between the concealed and revealed parts of the citation imply other underlying diametrical oppositions such as invisibility/sight, unfamiliar/familiar, the monstrous Other/self which are all related to the

uncanny. Thus, I argue that the Pope quotation is structured around these uncanny binaries which collapse toward the end of the story. This collapse of boundaries is inextricably linked to the profound change that Phil experiences and which the title of the short story also refers to.

The title's intertextual reference to Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Phil's intra-textual citation from Alexandre Pope's *An Essay on Man* both imply transgressions of boundaries. The expression of "sea-change" in Ariel's song advocates a metamorphosis into "something rich, and strange" as s/he transforms and immortalizes the corpse of Ferdinand's drowned father by "pearls" taking the place of his eyes and "coral" of his bones (Shakespeare 398-403). Thus, in analogy with the Freudian double, Ariel, a polymorph and sexually undifferentiated ("s/he") spirit, has the potential to efface ontological barriers between life and death, material decay and immortal beauty. Similarly, in its original neo-classical context, Epistle II revolves around the moral poles of vice and virtue and describes the difficulty to clearly delineate the boundaries between them: "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, / As, to be hated, needs but to be seen; / Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, / We first endure, then pity, then embrace. / But where th' extreme of vice, was ne'er agreed: / Ask where's the North? at York, 'tis on the Tweed; (Pope 44). Both the Shakespeare reference and the cited lines of the Pope excerpt demonstrate the uncanny feature of destabilising borders, thereby they underscore that Phil's alteration as well as his resulting sexual anxiety can be conceptualized through the uncanny.

The Pope subtext functions as an intra-textual mirror that reflects Phil's sense of transformation to which the short story title also refers to. While most of the previous critical studies read Phil's metamorphosis as turning into a homosexual, I argue that Phil's transformation is a change of attitude toward sexual otherness that the Pope quotation foreshadows and reflects. The lines of the poem refer to a shift in attitude as they indicate a movement of the externalisation of the Other as sinful toward the internalisation to the self.

The gapped parts of the poem that Phil is unable to recall, linguistically highlight his distancing from homosexuality and refusing to see the girl's desire from other than a conventional, homophobic point of view. The silenced or uncovered parts allow the quote to be read as a patched mirror with spots developed at the sites of "somethings" which Phil initially is "blind to." The unveiled parts indicate the primary feeling of rejection and hatred ("As to be *hated* needs but to be seen") and the frequent visual

encounter that needs to overcome and accept it ("*Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, / We first endure, then pity*, then embrace") (Pope 44; emphasis added). Also, the emphasis on the images of sight and vision of the fragmented lines parallels and contrasts with Phil's inability to perceive the girl's same-sex desire from a non-homophobic perspective. What Phil is unable to "face" at the moment of citation is his underlying attitude of rejection and externalisation of non-heteronormative sexuality as loathsome and sinful. His appropriation of a poetic metaphor of vice to describe sexual deviancy further emphasises that he positions himself into the homophobic, excessively defensive masculine attitude that expects non-heteronormative sexuality to be rejected and pathologised.

Though throughout the short story Phil consistently refuses to listen to and understand his girlfriend's choice of a lesbian affair when he finally agrees to break up with the girl he declares: "And when you come back tell me all about it." (Hemingway 374). His utterance indicates a sudden change of approach as now he longs for the details of the lesbian affair. Hemingway depicts Phil as a hetero-sexual man who takes advantage of his partner's same-sex desire by finding erotic pleasure in the narrative account of his girlfriend. Leaving his moralistic and homophobic discourse behind, his abrupt interest in the girl's account of non-heteronormative sexual attraction shows his voyeuristic pleasure as he recognises that not only she but he can also gain from this sexual adventure.

The abrupt interest in the details of his girlfriend's lesbian adventure evokes an epistemological uncertainty in Phil that echoes the sensation of the uncanny. Looking into a bar mirror he repeatedly articulates that he has turned into a strange man, he perceives his own mirror image as Other. While the Pope subtext mirrors Phil's self-estrangement textually, Phil's bar mirror image reinforces his transformation visually. Therefore Phil's reflection and the textual mirror complement each other.

Phil's self-alienated mirror image and his sense of change is foreshadowed and textually repeated by the Pope quotation. The cited lines in the short story imply that the frequent visual encounter with the monstrous and pitiful Other eventually becomes embraced and accepted. However, while at the moment of citation Phil metaphorically links vice only with his girlfriend's sexual deviancy, this image coalesces with his own sense of difference reflected through the bar mirror toward the end of the story. The original lines of the poem associate vice with the female face as monstrous Other. By contrast, vice gendered as female and sexual Other conflates with Phil's own alienated appearance when he looks into the mirror

and states "Vice … is a very strange thing" (305). Also, by metaphorically associating his girlfriend's sexual deviancy with vice, Phil, like Hubert, externalises non-heterormativity and places the mistake to the feminine. By contrast, in the actual mirror he perceives his frustrating difference as an inner one when he notes to the barman "'I'm a different man, James […] you see *in* me quite a different man'" (Hemingway 374; emphasis added).

Thus, what Phil experiences as his frustrating sense of difference is directly related to the uncanny erasure of binaries that the Pope subtext is structured upon and prefigures. Phil's transformative change stems from a sense of anxiety over his inability to differentiate between outer and inner, between his heterosexual self and homosexual Other that the metaphor of sea change as connoting the fluidity of boundaries also substantiates.

Conclusions

My essay has investigated the interplay between queer sexual identity and the uncanny in the two Hemingway short stories, and I have argued that sexual and gender identity cannot be reduced to a discourse over homo or heterosexuality in these stories. The subversive sexuality of Cornelia and Honey in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and the unnamed girlfriend in "The Sea Change" textually manifests as a difficulty in linguistically articulating sexual otherness in the male-dominated literary language. Thus, the collapse of the "natural and proper" gender and sexual categories are linked to the characters' activities with literary texts. In "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" the dimension of writing, more specifically the act of copying of poems as a mechanic and repeatedly failed attempt to live up to the heteronormative ideals of the feminine reflects the story's underlying theme of gender and sexual anxiety crisis. By contrast, in "The Sea Change" the imprecise, and therefore fractured, citation of Alexander Pope acts as a textual mirror which reflects as well as interprets the male protagonist's uncanny experience of a destabilised hetero-masculine identity. As both the male and female characters' sexual frustration in private life transgresses into and conflates with the literary language of fiction, the stories highlight Hemingway's artistic preoccupation with the theme of dualism between life and art and that sexual transgression is inextricably linked to artistic creativity.

Notes

1 Kenneth Lynn's ground-breaking biography explores Hemingway's preoccupation with androgyny and traces back this artistic interest to the pathologies of Hemingway's first encounter with gender subversion in his childhood (38-43). Postulating a fundamentally similar argument, Mark Spilka and Carl P. Eby investigate gender bending in Hemingway's works within the framework of psychoanalysis. While Spilka argues that Hemingway repressed his early, and essentially wounding, encounters with androgyny (3), Eby calls attention to the link between suppressed experiences with queer sexuality, transvestitism and Hemingway's hair fetishism in his works (15-19, 185-241). Comley and Scholes's 1990 revolutionary study *Hemingway's Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text* also emphasizes the queerness in some of Hemingway's works. Likewise, Debra Moddelmog underscores the complexities of ambiguous sexual and gender identities in Hemingway's *oeuvre* arguing that "Hemingway's struggle with the homo-hetero binarism was lifelong" (*Desire* 92).

2 Susan F. Beegel notes that the story was highly neglected in critical studies. It is not even mentioned by Hemingway's biography writer, Kenneth Lynn, whose psychoanalytical approach addressed Hemingway's issues with androgyny (13). Carlos Baker mentions "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" only in terms of identifying the real-life characters that the satire targeted as well as juxtaposes the short story with "The Sea Change" to point out the implied abnormality in heterosexual relationships that some of Hemingway's marriage-themed short stories represent (27, 139). Paul Smith argues that, as the title suggests, the short story's satire was indeed directed against Hemingway's generation of artists epitomised by T. S. Eliot, who like Hubert, was Harvard educated and an already celebrated and productive writer when Hemingway still struggled with the literary acknowledgment of his craft (123-29).

Bibliography

Bak, John S. *Homo Americanus: Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams, and Queer Masculinities*. Plymouth: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2010.

Baker, Carlos. *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.

Bennett, Warren. "'That's Not Very Polite': Sexual Identity in Hemingway's 'The Sea Change.'" *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction: New Perspectives*. ed. Beegel, Susan F. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1989. 225-46.

Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. ed. Abelove, Henry. London: Routledge. 1993. 307-20.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discourse Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Cameron, Deborah and Don Kulick. *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2003.

Clark-Wehinger, Alice. "Deviation and In-Betweenness in 'The Sea Change.'"*Journal of the Short Story in English*, 49. (2008): 67-82. Web. 15 July 2014.

Comley, Nancy R., and Robert Scholes. *Hemingway's Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996.

---. "Tribal Things: Hemingway's Erotics of Truth." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. 25.3 (1992): 268-85.

Eby, Carl P. *Hemingway's Fetishism: Psychoanalysis and the Mirror of Manhood*. New York: SUNY P, 1999.

Freud, Sigmund. "The 'uncanny'." Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Web. 04 January 2015.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The First Forty-Nine Stories*. London: Random House, 2004.

Jenzen, Olu. "Same, Same But Other: Over-Sameness as Sexual Otherness." *Otherness: A Multilateral Perspective*. eds. Sencindiver, S.Y., Beville, M. and Lauritzen, M. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011. 45-60.

---. "The Queer Uncanny." *eSharp* 9 (2007): 1-16 Web. 15 July 2014.

Kobler, J. F. "Hemingway's 'The Sea Change': A Sympathetic View of Homosexuality." *Arizona Quarterly* 26 (1970): 319-329.

Kristeva, Julia. "Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection." Trans. Leon Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.

Lynn, Kenneth Schuyler. *Hemingway*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

Moddelmog, Debra A. and Suzanne Del Gizzo, eds. *Ernest Hemingway in Context*. New York: Cambridge UP 2012.

---. *Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999.

Palmer, Paulina. *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic*. Cardiff: U of Wales P, 2012.

Pope, Alexander. *An Essay on Man*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1869.

Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993.

Shakespeare, William, Burton Raffel, and Harold Bloom. *The Tempest*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006. The Annotated Shakespeare.

Smith, Paul. "From the Waste Land to the Garden with the Elliots." *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction: New Perspectives*. ed. Beegel, Susan F. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1989. 123-29.

Spilka, Mark. *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990.

ESZTER EDIT BALOGH

Demonic Obsession and Madness in *The Exorcist* (1973)

The Exorcist, directed by William Friedkin, is one of the classic horror films causing restless nights for numerous generations since 1973. Defying the generalisations that horror films belong to popular culture, lacking the structural depth and complexity of more valuable works of art, this movie is deeply embedded in the heritage of Western – and especially in English-speaking – culture and it reflects on social and cultural processes which began in the Middle-Ages and continued throughout the centuries up to our present days. The main theme of the movie is madness, which appears in the exaggerated form of demonic possession overruling human power, and affecting not only the life of the possessed twelve-year-old girl, Regan, but basically that of all the major characters. As shown conclusively by Foucault, madness was defined in various ways in different periods of time: in the Middle Ages as transcendent knowledge, "an experience within the domain of language where man was confronted with his moral truth" (27), in the seventeenth- and the eighteenth centuries as an ethical question, as *unreason* itself, and from the eighteenth century onwards as the object of medical perception.[1] This phenomenon was always in the focus of interest but "whether madness is described as a religious or philosophical phenomenon (an experience of inspiration, a loss of mind, etc.), or as an objective medical essence (as in all the classifications of types of madness that have been developed by psychiatry), these conceptions are not discoveries but historical constructions of meaning" (Khalfa 14). The film connects the suspicions and the supernatural justifications of religious, Christian discourse with the medical investigations and diagnoses of scientific discourse. By merging these two, the film does not only emphasise that they are just alternatives of the culturally constructed explanations given to madness by the Western world but that their ideas and language overlap, which takes away the illusory safety of definite meaning and clearly classifiable knowledge about the world around us and about ourselves, too. On the one hand, the film focuses on the demonic possession and madness of a young girl entering adolescence, which evokes the popular cultural icons of the nineteenth-century, the hysterical woman and "the madwoman in the attic." On the other hand, Regan's character itself can be interpreted as an abject embodiment of the mental problems of the actress career-woman mother, her director lover, Burke and the two priest figures, Father Merrin and Father Damian Karras

as well. In this article, I will analyse the filmic language of *The Exorcist* which connects the religious and the medical discourse of madness to emphasize that, whether it is constructed as hysteria, madness in strictly medical terms or as demonic obsession, it is a phenomenon which alienates the sufferer from himself and from the world; it appears to indicate the mental struggle of all major characters to accept themselves and as the trigger of the disintegration of their personalities under the pressure of conforming to social expectations.

Demonic obsession and madness are represented as interchangeable notions in the film, reinforcing Foucault's claim in *History of Madness*, according to which it is impossible to find an interpretation of madness which overrules the others and comes closest to the truth:

> The consciousness of madness, in European culture at least, has never formed an obvious and monolithic fact, undergoing metamorphosis as a homogeneous ensemble. For the Western consciousness, madness has always welled up simultaneously at multiple points, forming a constellation that slowly shifts from one form to another, its face perhaps hiding an enigmatic truth. Meaning here is always fractured. (Foucault 163)

These discourses defining madness and demonic obsession co-exist and influence each other, just as the genre of horror adopts and uses popular elements of the gothic. The opening scene, for example, takes place in Northern Iraq, in an archaeological excavation which can be interpreted as part of a neo-colonial expansion, evoking the period in which Britain built her empire as well as the cult of the mystical East, embodied by the amulet found there which brings the demon to the USA. The arrival of evil (or the villain) from the East was a common element of gothic stories, from Richard Marsh's 1897 horror novel *The Beetle* and the spate of late nineteenth-century mummy stories, as "the Orient [is often constituted] as a world of decadence, egotism and excess, capable of accommodating the most extravagant extremes of the Gothic vision […] with the notion of the East as the West's Other: a depraved, irrational, sultry incarnation of both the Western fear of and fascination with cultural and geographical alterity" (Cavallaro 163). Following the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse, Northern Iraq is both a passive, feminine space opened up and robbed by the men of science and rationality, but also the source of atavistic threats:

> In the universality of the Western *ratio*, there is this division which is the Orient: the Orient, thought of as the origin, dreamt of as the vertiginous point from which nostalgia and promises of return are born, the Orient offered to the colonising reason of the Occident, but indefinitely inaccessible, for it always remains the limit: the night of the beginning, in which the Occident was formed, but in which it traced a dividing line, the Orient is for the Occident everything that it is not, while remaining the place in which its primitive truth must be sought. (Foucault 30)

This opening scene foreshadows how the doctors will examine and "open up" Regan: "the familiar masculine habit of using women as a symbol (from *within* representation) for the meanings of excess, exoticism, or even mysticism (that are *beyond* representation)" (Chow 40; emphasis in the original). However, this monstrous form of feminine madness testifies not only the radical Otherness of women but the weakness of the patriarchal order as well as its representatives, as they fail to master certain uncontainable elements they still want to control, to have access and enframe. "Yet what the hysteric broadcasts is a message about vulnerability – the vulnerability of the symbolic (the fallibility of paternal law and social bonds); the vulnerability of identity (the insecurity of gender, ethnic, and class designations); or, and perhaps above all, the vulnerability of the body, given its mutability and mortality" (Bronfen 13). Regan is on the boundary of childhood and womanhood, representing the anxiety of the awakening female sexuality – not only her own anxiety but men's general fears about it as well.

Before the demonic possession – or her madness – Regan plays with an Ouija board which is another link to Victorian Britain and to the cult of the occult. The planchette moves at first but as she wants to get an answer to her question, it simply refuses to give it – suggesting that supernatural forces cannot be used or tamed by human beings. The table is found in the cellar, a space often interpreted as the space of the unconscious: the scene foreshadows the inability of the girl (or the Ego) to control her mental processes. Furthermore, the fact that the demon is in the attic (another space traditionally associated with the unconscious), where the odd sounds originally start off, creates further links between Regan's position and nineteenth-century women's, as it can be said that in the movie, just as in Victorian England, madness is connected to and located in the attic.

Regan's obsession and its connection to the Victorian image of the hysterical woman is probably the most detailed and wrought out parallel offered by *The Exorcist*. Hysteria is unique in the sense that "the visible features of hysterical paralysis do not correspond to any known or knowable organic cause" (David-Ménard 2), which makes it possible to represent it through the threatening superstition of demonic possession. The film, however, consciously plays on and evokes the traditional representations of the madwoman under the disguise of external obsession. Regan's room is on the uppermost floor of the house – a Victorian attic room of a madwoman – and her appearance gradually transforms from that of a healthy child to that of an exaggerated insane woman with untidy hair and a general unkemptness (Figure 1). Regan's character can be interpreted as the embodiment of a collective social fear: her transformed body evokes the figure of the leper, the main target of fright and exclusion during the Middle Ages, while her possessed spirit is the equivalent of madness, "the new obsession [which] after a long latency period of almost two centuries did […] take the place of the fear that leprosy had instilled in the masses" (Foucault 8).

Regan's obsession displays all the signs on the basis of which hysteria was medically defined in the very same year as the film was released: "In England, diagnostic criteria have been relatively conservative, following the outline endorsed by the World Health Organisation in 1973, which included auditory hallucinations, delusions, and episodes of passivity in which the individual feels his thoughts or impulses to be under external control" (Showalter 204). First Regan just feels her bed moving under her, hears voices and then she sees the demon's face when she is under medical investigation. Later on she quivers and tumbles, losing control over her body that is distorted into unnatural positions (Figure 2) – repeating and overstating the poses of hysterics (Figure 3). At the peak of her obsession, as she is tied to the bed, she lies in the same position as Augustine, a fifteen-year-old woman patient of Jean-Martin Charcot,[2] mimicking crucifixion (Figure 4- 5), who was photographed frequently by the psychiatrist as a typical hysteric case. Charcot, the French neurologist who is considered to be one of the founding fathers of modern psychiatry, introduced Christian traditions into scientific discourse, drawing upon it for many of his experimental models and even parts of his terminology. Most famously, for Charcot, the term stigmata, that has a double religious meaning in itself[3], stands for hysterical symptoms:

> In Charcot's symptomatology these signs consist of the simultaneous occurrence of a narrowed visual field (hysterical blindness), of skin sensitivity disorders (reminiscent of the stigmata diabolic), and of motor disturbances (paralysis or convulsions). It is precisely these permanent somatic manifestations, together with periodic attacks, which define for Charcot the otherwise generic neurosis as hysterical, just as in religious discourse analogous signs define the body as possessed by the devil or by the spirit. (Mazzoni 25)

Regan is very similar to Augustine both in her age and in the distorted hysteric-like postures she produces in her obsession – justifying why Charcot connected these two in his terminology. "Foucault [also] notes, in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* that 'nervous illness is certainly not the truth of possession, but the medicine of hysteria is not unrelated to the earlier direction of 'obsessed' women" (Mazzoni 17), suggesting that these are different discourses without a hierarchy, but with a certain overlapping between them. There are several hints in the film that the father left the family and that he is not interested in her daughter at all, which provides the untellable traumatic core causing the little girl's mental problems, and, as Cathy Caruth argues, "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event" (5). This possession overwhelms Regan step by step: "psychological trauma or more precisely the memory of the trauma acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as the agent that is still at work" (Freud 290), and from typically hysteric symptoms (Figure 6) a serious psychoses emerges which is symbolised by the young girl's bodily transformation into a monstrous figure. Regan seemingly loses control over her body, and she is locked up in her own body in her mutism: "In psychosis, however, the person experiences an acute division between the body and mind; the inner or 'true' self is relegated to a disembodied mind, which becomes the detached spectator if the behaviour of the 'false self' located in an unfeeling, mechanized body" (Showalter 227).

As the obsession is prolonged, more and more scars and wounds appear on her body and on her face. "The modern horror film often 'plays' with its audience, saturating it with scenes of blood and gore, deliberately pointing to the fragility of the symbolic order in the domain of the body" (Jancovich 74). The wounds are the signs of the demon's presence and her impotence which at the same time signal how divided her personality has become, and how madness has fragmented her subjectivity. Regan's madness

and the fragmentation of the self are foreshadowed clearly by the fragmented statues' faces and by the peculiar human faces in Northern Iraq, and by the split door and ceiling during the exorcism as well (Figure 7-8). If we consider her state as a kind of schizophrenia in which her psyche is split between the socially accepted role – Regan slowly growing up to be a woman – and between a rebellious self, aiming to exist outside the symbolic system of the patriarchal order, possessing a certain sexual knowledge and freedom. Elaine Showalter's argument about women's schizophrenia becomes relevant in this context: "Some feminist critics have maintained that schizophrenia is the perfect literary metaphor for the female condition, expressive of women's lack of confidence, dependency on external, often masculine, definitions of the self, split between the body as sexual object and the mind as subject, and vulnerability to conflicting social messages about femininity and maturity" (Showalter 213). Fragmentation, besides being the indicator of a personality's disintegration, can stand for the incomplete, fragmented nature of the concept of madness itself:

> For that reason the experience of the classical age, and by extension the modern experience of madness, cannot be considered as a total figure, which would thus finally reach its positive truth. It is rather a fragmentary figure that is erroneously taken as complete, an ensemble unbalanced by all that it lacks, or rather all that obscures it. Behind the critical consciousness of madness in all its philosophical, scientific, moral and medicinal guises lurks a second, tragic consciousness of madness, which has never really gone away. (Foucault 27)

Twelve-year-old Regan is at an unstable social and mental stage, entering puberty from the safety of childhood which is just as important as the lack of the father, as in Victorian psychiatry the "theories of female insanity were specifically and confidently linked to the biological crises of the female life-cycle – puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause – during which the mind would be weakened and the symptoms of insanity might emerge" (Showalter 55). Regan's initiation and transformation are marked by the emphatic presence of bodily fluids, too. First she walks down from her room to her mother's party and, like little children do, she simply urinates on the carpet (Friedkin 00:41:25). Later on Regan aggressively masturbates with a crucifix, attaining her symbolic initiation (by a rather ambivalent sacrilegious act) into traditional Christian, patriarchal order (Figure 9) as "the body of the nineteenth-century hysteric is also the site of social and ethical regulations

and of a power struggle whose violence is unmistakeable" (Ender 30). The act is more like self-rape than joyful onanism, but her blood probably not only appears as the result of the forceful penetration but is her first menstrual blood as well. In the nineteenth century "doctors argued that the menstrual discharge in itself predisposed women to insanity. Either an abnormal quantity or quality of the blood, according to this theory, could affect the brain; thus psychiatric physicians attempted to control the blood by diet and venesection" (Showalter 55). The scene plays on the absurdity of this notion, and this grotesque initiation can be seen as the symbolic rape by the patriarchal system on a young woman in an attempt to force her into her "proper place," visualising and exaggerating the typical treatment of middle and upper-class Victorian women:

> There were other psychological problems faced by Victorian girls at the onset of menses. Up until this point, their lives were not too radically unlike those of their brothers. But menstruation sharply marked the beginning of a different and more limited existence. (...) While their brothers went away to school, most middle-class girls were educated at home, their social life outside the home restricted to a few safe contacts with other girls, clergymen, or local philanthropies. No wonder that, as one Victorian doctor observed, 'puberty, which gives man the knowledge of greater power, gives to woman the conviction of her dependence' (Showalter 57).

Her act can be interpreted as a kind of protest against society's restrictions imposed on her: "Hysteria becomes the revealing symptom of a crisis in knowledge brought about by the enforcement of gender on woman. The hysteric thus carries the stigma of woman's inability to pursue her quest for self-knowledge – for consciousness – and of a feminine *pudor* that has neither eyes nor ears nor thoughts" (Enders 167). Her masturbation enacts her symbolic rape by the patriarchal order at the beginning of her madness and by the arteriographical examination in which her body's (and personality's) integrity was disrupted (Figure 10).

Not only is the taboo of female sexuality broken in the film, but almost all "improper" bodily fluids are represented on screen, which are normally hidden, especially in the case of women. Regan vomits blood (Friedkin00:58:32) and later a bizarre green substance on Father Damien, (01:22:27) and spits Father Merrin in the face (00:41:07). If we consider religious discourse's exorcism as the equivalent of the medical discourse's

treatment, the above mentioned scene evokes the cure offered by T. Munro, a physician at Bethlem for the mad from 1783: "Patients are ordered to be bled about the latter end of May, according to the weather, and after they have been bled, they take vomits, once a week for a certain number of weeks; after that we purge the patients" (qtd. in Foucault 72). Just as the consequences of the religious ritual evoke this rudimentary medical treatment, medical discourse evokes the Christian vocabulary by talking about the *purification* of the patients. Regan swears and behaves aggressively towards the representatives of patriarchal order: she seizes the psychiatrist by his penis and bites his stomach, hits the doctors, humiliates the priests and kills her mother's lover, her "new father." Her body transforms from a proper, clean body into an uncanny, distorted, monstrous image – from a female ideal she turns into its opposite –, embodying all the fears of men in connection with women. In several ways, a fundamental cultural paradox is written on her body – women are often idealised and considered to be "the angel in the house" but their bodies are constructed as excessive and uncontainable thus they can become an abject provoking fear in men:

> The negative pole is held by woman's susceptibility to strong passions and the positive by the ideal of purity and chastity that she also embodies. The illness thus shows the struggle of the proper lady against the monster and eventually becomes a compromise formation: woman is essentially pure but is subjected to emotions that appeal to her senses; hysteria reveals the violence done to her mind by her emotions. (Enders 40)

Regan's transformation and sexual initiation can, on the one hand, also be seen as her breakdown under the weight of the doubleness of being a woman, as her own rebellion against patriarchal order, but on the other hand, it can be interpreted as an abject embodiment of the patriarchal order's anxieties and fears in connection with female sexuality: "a woman is denied the autonomy – the subjectivity – [...] she is not only excluded from culture [...] but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing" (Gilbert 19). These processes are symbolised by the vandalised statue of Virgin Mary (Figure 11) as well, which can be seen as the duplication of the ancient statue in Northern Iraq (Figure 12). Both of them are phallic images, symbolising power and the possession of knowledge. It is clearly transgressive to represent the Madonna as the empowered phallic

mother, as traditionally she embodies "femininity that remains immaculate in spite of the Virgin's having known, experienced the full bodily mystery of maternity. Untainted, destined to perpetual virginity (*Aieparthenos*), but a mother, the Virgin represents the perfect woman – she who remains untouched by the evil of sexual knowledge (for this knowledge is always evil for women as Nietzsche reminds us)" (Ender 168). Twisting the representational traditions of the Virgin (and the proper feminine body in the case of Regan) can be interpreted as a rebellious female attempt to (re)gain sexual knowledge and freedom by regaining the phallus and invalidating patriarchal discourse and turning her body to a monstrous fearful body, thus becoming the embodiment of the projected fears of patriarchy as well:

> Under the aegis of the phallus, as Christa Rhode-Dachser (1991) argues, the Oedipal story translates femininity into an enigma for the masculine subject by devising a twofold symptom-representation: the sexually castrated and demonic woman. This construction of femininity is how the masculine subject projects the recognition of mortality and fallibility. In the double strategy characteristic of symptom formation, the phallic narrative represses this traumatic knowledge by deflecting all the values connected with the paradigm of mortality onto the sexually encoding narratives about the traumatic knowledge of human vulnerability in terms of the castrated or the demonic woman. As the feminine equivalent of the phallic masculine subject, she comes to harbour the denied recognition of death (Bronfen 16–7).

The demonic obsession (or madness) empowers Regan to kill her mother's new lover, which is a twist on the traditional oedipal situation – it is not the son who murders the father in order to win the mother but the daughter in order to keep the mother. She becomes a reminder of death both as herself, a memento, a living dead, and through her acts of killing the representatives of the patriarchal order: the priest, Father Merrin, who takes part in the archaeological excavation in Northern Iraq and the director, Burke, who stages films, different kinds of narratives within the patriarchal discourse.

Regan's figure, however, can also be seen as the madness or externalised anxiety of her mother, who as an actress represents the "New Woman," the breadwinner who brings up her daughter alone. The strange noises from the attic attract her attention first, and she is the one who enters

it in order to find their origin – it can be interpreted as her unconscious while Regan's obsession can be seen as her hysteric response to her situation: "[i]t is certainly possible to see hysteria within the specific framework of the nineteenth century as an unconscious form of feminist protest, the counterpart of the attack on patriarchal values carried out by women's movement of the time" (Showalter 5). Her possessed daughter's body thus can be seen as the "site of the possibility of refiguring the hegemonic symbolic'" (qtd. in Bordo 84) – she is the symbol of her struggle for financial and emotional independence and her rebellion against the patriarchal order. "[T]he millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role were to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity" (Friedan 13). The mother strives for independence, and the death of the alcoholic Burke, her boss and lover, might have been caused by her secret wish to dispose of him and by her wish to complete her freedom. Regan can be seen as the embodiment of Burke's and Father Merrin's mental problems as well, but the film does not deal with these issues in detail: we only know that Burke, possessing the gaze through the camera and directing different patriarchal narratives, is himself possessed and directed by his own "demon," alcoholism, while in the case of Father Merrin we only see that he is troubled, hunted (and haunted) by his own demons, too, and takes sedatives.

The case of Father Damien, however, is almost as detailed as Regan's. Father Damien is the most potent representative of patriarchal order, embodying a masculine ideal – he is a sportsman, a trained psychoanalyst and a priest. His body and his mind are exercised and used in the service of the existing order and his figure in itself combines the religious and the medical discourse. The film makes it clear that he has lost his faith and he has doubts in connection with his profession which seemingly separates his mental problems from Regan's according to the traditional representation: " [e]ven when both men and women had similar symptoms of mental disorder, psychiatry differentiated between an English malady, associated with the intellectual and economic pressures on highly civilized men, and a female malady, associated with the sexuality and essential nature of women" (Showalter 7). However, in reality, he suffers from the trauma of his mother's death which seems to be just as emotional and feminine a cause of hysteria as Regan's emerging sexuality. His mother also suffered from mental illnesses and this is the link which makes him adequate to cure Regan

(whose figure can be seen as his mother's double, embodying his fears in connection with the mother's madness). Damien wishes to step out of the symbolic patriarchy with all its expectations just as much as Regan does – and her figure can be interpreted as the abject Father Damien wants to alienate himself from, in order to conform to the oppressing system.

Before the exorcism takes place, Father Damien notices a message on Regan's stomach, around her navel (Figure 13) saying "Help me". It is not clear whose words these are: the girl's who is caught in between two stages of life, between the freedom of childhood and the restricted existence of womanhood or the priest's whose social position is questioned because he lost his mother, his point of origin, and lost his belief in transcendental consolation. In the light of what Elisabeth Bronfen writes in *The Knotted Subject*, the positioning of the invocation is not by chance: "Yet one must not forget that the navel itself is an improper representation, marking after the fact an inaccessible and yet unencompassable nothing – a nonevent, a nonsite, a nonbody – at the origin and core of all subjectivity" (7). The navel, recalling the connection between the mother and the child, existence before the symbolic order, is also the site of castration which reminds us of the lost but desired complexity and freedom both protagonists are longing for.

The Exorcist does not offer a real reconciliation either in Regan's or in Father Damien's case – the expected release does not or cannot arrive. The exorcism itself can be seen as a symbolic act meant to force the rebellious woman back to her proper place in patriarchal order, while Regan's and the priest's wrestling on the ground during it can be interpreted as a grotesque and displaced sexual intercourse. It brings Regan release from demonic possession – as she symbolically gains sexual experience, but fails to give her freedom from patriarchal order. She does not remember the days she lay obsessed, but before they move away, the white collar of another priest seems to awaken something in her as she embraces him tight – as if she were embracing the patriarchal order willingly again. The demon enters Father Damien's body, which can be interpreted as the result of an inverted sexual intercourse in which the male takes in something from the female body. He steps out of the symbolic system in two ways: in a Lacanian sense, in a moment of jouissance – with the symbolic orgasm and, in terms of Existentialist philosophy, with his act of committing suicide. The reason for *The Exorcist*'s unceasing popularity resides precisely in the fact that it refuses to offer reconciliation – only warning us of our dependence on the existing symbolic system, including language, and its different discourses, and

exaggerating our anxieties about the impossibility of building a stable, coherent, autonomous identity.

Appendix

Figure 1. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 01:22:17. Film.

Figure 2. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:58:30. Film.

Figure 3. S*tages of Hysteria, 1890.* Fotografya.gen.tr, nd. Web. 27. Apr. 2013.

Figure 4. *The Exorcist.* Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 01:21:21. Film.

Planche XXV.

ATTITUDES PASSIONNELLES

CRUCIFIEMENT

Figure 5. Bronfen, Elisabeth. *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents.* New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1998. 197. Print.

Figure 6. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:51:39. Film.

Figure 7. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:09:07. Film.

Figure 8. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 01:45:10. Film.

Figure 9. *The Exorcist.* Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 01:15:40. Film.

Figure 10. *The Exorcist.* Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:49:20. Film.

Figure 11. *The Exorcist.* Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:31:04. Film.

Figure 12. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 00:09:39. Film.
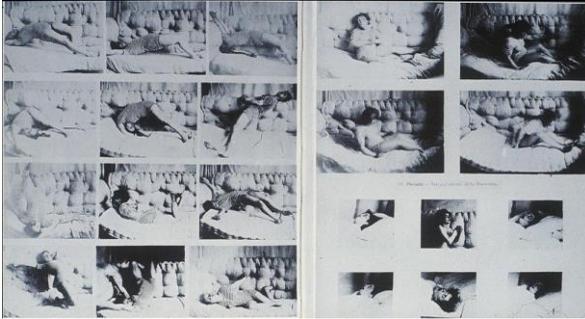

Figure 13. *The Exorcist*. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros, 1973. 01:33:51. Film.

Notes

1 This overview is based on the first part of Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*.

2 "Among the most frequently photographed was a fifteen-years-old girl named Augustine, who had entered the hospital in 1875. Her hysterical attacks had begun at the age of thirteen when, according to her testimony, she had been raped by her employer, a man who was also her mother's lover" (Showalter 152).

3 "This term has a double-edged religious meaning, for though the word generally refers to the wound of crucifixion displayed by the body of Christ and by many mystics since Saint Francis of Assisi received them in 1224, the *stigmata diabolic* are the signs of intercourse with the devil, areas of insensitivity on the skin, marked by the devil's paw to seal his contract with the witch" (Mazzoni 24-5).

Bibliography

Bordo, Susan. "Bringing Body to Theory." *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Ed. Donn Welton. Malden: Blackwell, 1998. 84–97.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1998. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. Print.

Cavallaro, Dani. The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear. London,

New York: Continuum, 2002. Print.

Chow, Rey. "Gender and Representation." *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*. Eds. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka. New York: Columbia UP, 2001. 38–57. Print.

David-Ménard, Monique. *Hysteria from Freud to Lacan*. Trans. Catherina Porter. London: Cornell UP, 1989. Print.

Ender, Evelyne. *Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria*. London: Cornell UP, 1995. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. Studies on Hysteria. Standard Edition. Vol 2. London, Hogarth Press, 1955. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *History of Madness*. London, New York: Routledge., 2006. Print.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mistique*. London, Penguin, 1992. Print.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984. Print.

Horror, The Film Reader. Ed. Mark Jancovich. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Khalfa, Jean. "Introduction". *History of Madness*. London, New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Mazzoni, Cristina. *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism and Gender in European Culture*.

Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996. Print.

JÓZSEF SZABOLCS FAGYAL

Obsession and Observation:
The Construction of a Crime Narrative and Its Gendered Undertones in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Introduction – Birds of a Feather: Writers and Detectives

"Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" – asks Robin Wood in the opening line of the introduction to his book *Hitchcock's Films*, back in 1965 (55). It is rather telling that even the twenty-four years passed between the original and the *Revisited* edition did not make him omit his pondering about Alfred Hitchcock's reception and significance in the history of cinema. Wood found it a pity that the question had to be raised, for obvious reasons, especially if we consider that by 1965 Hitchcock had made *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), and the film discussed in this paper, *Rear Window* (1954). What I am trying to call attention to by picking on the introduction of a fifty-year-old book is that even though Hitchcock was a very well-known figure and a recognised filmmaker already in his life, his place in the canon of cinematic art remained unclear and controversial for a very long time. Yet, though this might be somewhat surprising, a good number of very insightful analyses were written about his films already in the 1960s and 1970s. Critics were not only concerned with individual films of Hitchcock's *oeuvre*, but tried to comprehend his mannerisms, most salient in his recurring themes and objects. They also tried to identify periods in his career, and the segments were and have been (for his *oeuvre* is still very much subject to critical thinking) marked out in multiple different ways, but the majority of critics agree that Hitchcock reached the most crystallised form of his art and technique in the ten years between *Rear Window* and *Marnie* (1964).

No wonder, then, that *Rear Window* itself, considered one of the masterpieces of the iconic filmmaker, has been read a countless number of times: most of these readings revolve round Jacques Lacan's theory on the relatedness of gaze and power, and many others are determined to read *Rear Window* as an allegory of the experience of film viewing – which approach, as Robin Wood formulates, "is certainly supported by much of the film's detail and, more generally, by its central tension. [...] However, such an account requires careful definition. First, it seems quite misguided to see the film as an allegory about 'the cinema' [...]. Second, the spectatorship inscribed in the

film is by no means neutral: it is unambiguously male" (377). Indeed, if we view the male protagonist, L. B. Jefferies (James Stewart) as nothing but an observer of a film or story unfolding in the shared backyard and the opposing flats, we might miss some crucial points of Hitchcock's film. For instance, using a psychoanalytic approach and relying on the "experience of film viewing" theory, one can interpret the neighbours' individual stories as the mental projections of Jeff's own fears and desires, but then how do we account for the film's framework? *Rear Window* and Jeff's experience of watching the neighbours are not entirely identical; they are two different narratives, which is obvious from the fact that we see Jeff asleep with his back turned against the window both at the beginning and at the end of the film, but he is shown neither in the first nor in the last shot. There is, at least, a framework (before the beginning and after the conclusion of the crime story) we can barely explain if we restrict ourselves to the allegorical reading. In fact, it would be even more difficult to fit the figures of Jeff's nurse, Stella (Thelma Ritter) or the detective Tom Doyle (Wendell Corey) into an interpretation of that kind, for these characters (unlike Lisa, as it is commonly known) are not present in the backyard performance in any displaced form, but instead, they bring two other fields into the picture: ethics and law, respectively. Even if the experience of cinema goers could be connected to ethics and morality, the concept of law seems definitely out of place.

    Rear Window is not a crime movie either. If one were to read it so, one would find nothing original in the film: it operates with the most popular, clichéistic and insipid devices of the genre. This flat and unlively characteristic of the crime plot is, however, clearly intended, and might lead us to the realisation that the plot is shaped by Jeff's imagination, and the film is more about him trying to escape from his partner who is nagging him about engagement, but since his usual methods (going away on business and the like) are not available to him due to his physical limitations (curiously enough, he broke his leg working as a photojournalist at a car race), he chooses another means of escapism: something we may even describe as daydreaming. Restricted to the living-room of his flat, he plunges (or we might say *engages*) into creating a story, a narrative around the figure of Thorwald, his neighbour opposite.

    Naturally, the theme of writing a story might be extended to our anthropological compulsion to make sense of basically everything around us. People who weave coherent threads from fragmented elements on a professional level are either detectives or writers. These two professions

require very similar mental work from the agent. One might argue that a storywriter is restricted to the use of his imagination, whereas a detective is forced to come into contact with reality at least upon finding *clues*. However, if we think about the nature of clues, we might realise where their significance lies. For the detective, a clue (in its physical reality) is the same object as it is for an ignorant observer, with one single additional layer of meaning attached to it. This attachment is, however, the doing of an intelligence grasping to understand, and as a result, a clue often turns out to be *unresponsive* when the detective tries to fit it into the incomplete narrative he is working on. Clues are not absolute and finalised pieces of Truth, but they work more like well-supported assumptions, and, unlike the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, clues do not give immediate feedback in the form of an affirmative "click" even if they are tested at the correct spot. Literary texts dramatising the importance of clues (*Hansel and Gretel,* Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and G. K. Chesterton's "The Blue Cross" among many others) call our attention to the same concern. Morsels, broken windows, swapped sugar and salt cellars, a stain on the wall and so on are clues only to the people trying to form a narrative around these details. Morsels can be eaten by animals (who are, of course, not interested in the meaning attached to them whatsoever), and red herrings (for not every extraordinary or curious detail we come over must have a connection to the present case) can divert and ditch all attempts striving for completeness and teleology. The authorship of a detective in unravelling a case is unquestionable, but not because they have to work with guaranteed, fixed pieces in weaving their threads. The two professions appear to be more alike than many would imagine first. Also, taking into account the extreme "impotence" of Jefferies[1], he hardly qualifies as a detective of the 1950s, and thus, as it is reinforced by the film numerous times, it is no exaggeration to label him as a story writer.

Much that is illuminating has been already written about *Rear Window* and it would be pointless to discard the psychoanalytic approach; nevertheless, in this paper I attempt to discover the mechanics of Jeff creating a crime story, also bearing in mind Robin Wood's second point raised when he is warning against the allegorical reading, namely his emphasis on the gendered aspect of spectatorship and authorship.

A Masterpiece about Writing a Mediocre Crime Story

Rear Window is based on Cornell Woolrich's short story "It Had to Be Murder" (1942), the title of which is quite felicitous in showing Jeff's certainty about Thorwald's guilt.[2] He presupposes murder and the unfolding events will *necessarily* serve as evidence; he makes every piece of information fit into his theory, even when it is forced and either Lisa or his insurance-company nurse, Stella calls his attention to the mistake. Everything he perceives from the rear window becomes part of his theory, and he defends it vehemently against those who are sceptical first. Since he is a photographer, or rather, a photojournalist, producing drama is part of his job, and he remains true to it even in his invalid state. Sitting in his wheel-chair in front of the window, he watches his neighbours as if they were specimens in bottles. Originally he starts doing so in order to pass the time,[3] but this self-entertainment is carried beyond the limits of his initial intention. My claim is that Jeff constructs a crime story around Thorwald, basing it on minor cliché-like or stereotypical elements of the genre, and, for a while, this seemingly made-up narrative successfully imposes itself on "reality."

Talking with his editor on the phone, Jeff complains: "If you don't pull me out of this swamp of boredom, I'm gonna do something drastic" (6:05), and when asked to be more precise, he jokes about getting married, but this early "promise" becomes true in a sense, because the very next shot (witnessing Thorwald's dispute with his wife) foreshadows his drastically obsessed behaviour regarding Thorwald.[4] However, the incident does not start unfolding right away, for Jeff's personal qualities that make the ensuing events possible are shown first in two separate conversations: one between him and Stella, and then another with Lisa. The most striking feature of Jeff (though not very salient and remarkably meaningful without knowing how the plot proceeds) is his tendency to dismiss any attempts to frame him, or to imagine him in an unrealistic, or in his eyes, unsuitable or inappropriate way. He tenaciously rejects Stella's vision of him as Lisa's husband; he tries to reason with preposterous arguments, and when all of them fail, he starts joking and asks Stella how much Lisa pays her to bring up such an awkward topic. In the same vein, when Lisa shares her ideas about his possible new career in a studio,[5] he dismisses these images as "nonsense," because, as Lawrence Howe says in "Through the Looking Glass: Reflexivity, Reciprocality, and Defenestration in Hitchcock's *Rear Window,*" "he is resisting the idea of being seen as Lisa would have him, and thus he rejects the condition that Sartre terms 'being-for-another.' Jeff insists on maintaining his privilege of framing the issue from his perspective" (20).

Indeed, he will not let anyone subordinate him into a position where he would be the one being looked at. He feels empowered and in control of the happenings through his gaze.[6]

Furthermore, he presumes the right to put others, mainly his unknown neighbours (especially women) into an image or a narrative. He does so with the ballet dancer he calls "Miss Torso," declaring that she is seducing prosperous men for their money, but when Lisa opposes him, claiming that "I'd say she's doing a woman's hardest job. Juggling wolves" (24:02), and also that she is not in love with any of them, he becomes frustrated, simply because his authorship is questioned. Somewhat later, he ascertains that Lisa's statement is more veritable than his own, because he watches Miss Torso shutting out an uncalled for, pushy man well after midnight. It is Jeff's trait of creating narratives and rejecting other people's view that triggers and moves the plot; once he decides that "it *had* to be murder," everything he witnesses from the rear window becomes a clue leading to the assumed crime. As R. Barton Palmer puts it, "Jeff turns raw data of his 'reality' into narrative" through his set of expectations and desire (6). Still, we should not forget about the deceptive and contingent nature of clues, for they might mislead one very convincingly for a long time, not revealing any flaw in the unity of the hypothetic narrative. The spectator occupies Jeff's position throughout the film, "[w]ith," as Robin Wood notes, "one brief exception (when Jefferies is asleep, we see Thorwald, the murderer, leave his apartment with a woman) [...] The exception is very important, in fact: the woman *could* be Mrs. Thorwald, and this brings home to us the fact that Jefferies *could* be wrong" (103; emphasis in the original).

The scene when he feels convinced that Thorwald murdered his wife indicates the ridiculous aspect of his theory. Through the binoculars he can see Thorwald ordering and pinning his wife's jewels into his suitcase, as if he had changed his professional interests as a salesman, and wanted to trade gems and jewels hereafter. Of course, Jeff draws the conclusion that his neighbour packed the jewellery into a suitcase in order to take them out of the apartment, and sell them quickly or just to get rid of them in any possible way. Without hazarding a drift towards the field of criminal psychology, Thorwald's intentions behind dealing with the jewels in this manner can be questioned. Selling them by the gross does not necessarily help him to avoid the attention of the police or other legal forces. When the suitcase is closed, Thorwald comes to the window and looks around; the puzzled Jeff draws back, but only to get another camera, one with the biggest calibre available for him. Generally speaking, this ridiculously blatant phallic symbol[7] of a

camera with the long-focus lens signifies the power of the masculine gaze on the one hand, but, on the other, it also shows that Jeff is empowered to form the events without being an active participant. All through the film, he does not detect anything in the sense Lisa or Stella does, but by creating the narrative himself, he seems to be the one in control almost until the very end of the film. His masculine power and his field of vision are extended by this swap of tools, and peeping into Thorwald's home, he can see the man in front of the kitchen sink, wrapping a saw(!) and a knife around the size of a machete into a piece of newspaper. These are commonly used elements of crime stories, and not really "ordinary" among real life murder cases. Jeff is not wholly satisfied with supposing that murder has taken place, but it even had to be gory, so he stitches these clues into the (by definition masculine) genre of detective fiction. Just like in a gory crime story, the murderer (usually a big, well-built or even brutish man) has chopped up the victim (who is preferably a woman, sometimes the murderer's own wife or lover), and is trying to get rid of the corpse by scattering the severed body parts across the city's waste containers, forests, parks, bogs, lakes or left-luggage offices, ignoring meanwhile the most telling clues he leaves behind: in Thorwald's case, the wide open windows. When Jeff tells his theory to Lisa, she rejects his idea exactly for this reason: "Jeff, do you think a murderer would let you see all that? That he wouldn't pull the shades down and hide behind them? [..] A murderer would never parade his crime in front of an open window" (48:30). She seems to be the one giving *rational* arguments, to which Jeff could only answer "Why not?"[8] (48:42), and this simple rhetorical question dismissing rationality and logic breaks her resistance: in a magnified and glamorised scene she gazes out at Thorwald, who is tying down a huge trunk with a long piece of rope.[9] Jeff turns over quickly and joins her gaze – the camera shows Thorwald from their shared point of view; this is the moment when Lisa enters the crime story.

Her participation in this "made-up narrative" is crucial not only for arising Jeff's interest in her, resulting in her becoming his object of desire, but also because from this point on, the narrative is not merely based on Jeff's discoveries of crime-story clichés. Lisa provides other stereotypes[10] on which the story will be constructed. Thence the Thorwald case turns into a competition of narratives, but Jeff's and Lisa's ideas will not exclude each other – which can be taken as a good omen in their amorous relationship. So far, Jeff has been the invalid detective, but now that Lisa has joined him, she can gather information. For instance, in contrast with Miss Torso and Miss Lonelyhearts, Jeff decides to find out the real name of his salesman

neighbour. He had little separate narratives built round the other tenants as well, but he made up names for them and was not concerned with truth. Thorwald's case, however, proves to be different; Jeff's refusal to name him might symbolically mean that he has no firm power over him, which becomes obvious in the two climactic scenes. Stella also joins the investigation when next morning, without a period of transition or a glimpse of her motives, she offers her ideas on how and where Thorwald could have cut up his wife. She suggests the bath tub as a possible spot for the dismemberment – definitely another cliché, or at least, conventional element of the genre. Furthermore, when they watch the trunk being carried away, she turns into an active detective and hurries to learn the name of the freight. The two women are already part of the crime story, thus the last resisting party is the representative of the police, and also an old friend of Jeff's: Doyle.

When the two men discuss Thorwald's case, Jeff lists all the elements which have led him to believe that the salesman is a murderer, but Doyle is not convinced, and rejects the theory, saying that "It's too obvious and stupid a way to commit murder" (54:08) – indeed, a murder like this is too simple, too basic for a proper detective story. The supposed fact of the murder is a good starting point for a crime story, and what turns the initially unimaginative material into a real story is Jeff's attempt to create one.[11] His prompt reply ("You think I made all this up?" [54:41]) openly addresses the problem, but at this point the question is rather the degree to which he can exercise his authority over the full-blown story. In his essay entitled "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* as Critical Allegory," George E. Telos argues that this film "demonstrates how the movie experience is calculated to persuade viewers (Jeffries's surrogates) that the story belongs to them, and that they can manipulate it for their own ends" (225). First, the bored Jeff creates a crime story for the sake of self-entertainment, taking "pieces of evidence" lying around. Then he verifies the narrative to Lisa and Stella, from which point on, his assumptions start to become real: the threatening, murderous power surfaces when the little dog is found dead[12] with its neck broken, or also when at a later phase of the investigation, the intruder Lisa is tossed around and hit by Thorwald. These acts undoubtedly show his violent nature, which, when only Jeff was occupied with his narrative, had not appeared. At this same point, however, Jeff starts to lose his power, his agency over the events. Precisely because now they are more part of reality than of his own, made-up narrative; in other words, his "authorship" ends when finally he is able to prove that Thorwald has really murdered his wife.

When Lisa is in danger, Jeff panics; he is no longer in control of the events. He even becomes physically involved[13] when Thorwald first returns the gaze, and then invades Jeff's private space and attacks him.

At the end of their "duel," Thorwald pushes Jeff over the windowsill; an ambiguous scene that might be interpreted from the perspective of how his made-up narrative and reality clash. This is the first time he gets outside of his room, and ironically he falls to the place which has functioned as the setting of his crime-story: the shared courtyard. It is not by chance that it is the man he tried to frame the most that pushes him out of the window – Thorwald, who was seen as simply "The Murderer" of the story, becomes unquestionably and painfully "real" for Jeff when he breaks his other leg. Two policemen, as the personifications of the feeble remnants of his authority and control over the courtyard try to catch him in vain, and with both legs in plaster Jeff must spend another six weeks in the wheel-chair, and can resume entertaining himself looking out of the window, and perhaps, also by creating a new narrative.

Is order restored in the narrative closure? On the one hand, the tenants are shown one after the other resuming their daily routine; Jeff is sleeping with his back to the window just as at the very beginning of the film; and, though it might be somewhat ironic, even a new "sweet little puppy" is brought in place of the deceased one. If we read this as a proper ending, everything is given for a new narrative to begin, but as a result of Lisa's active participation in the Thorwald case, she might get more attention from Jeff. A less optimistic approach would, on the other hand, highlight that in spite of their engagement, not much has changed between Jeff and Lisa.

Conclusion

First, we should clarify that their engagement never depended on whether Thorwald is a murderer or not. Had Jeff been wrong in his assumption "It had to be murder," the narrative's effect on their relationship would have been the same. Lisa gains his attention for taking part in his daydreaming.[14] For the crime plot exists only to get the film going, and already before Thorwald's cigarette glowing in the dark catches his eye, Jeff's unacknowledged desire to get rid of the woman is made obvious when he identifies trouble with Lisa Fermont. The crime narrative is there to signal the end of his carefree way of life, and to offer a kind of transition from bachelorhood to marriage, "For crime drives both the natural order of things and the natural order of cinema off course, by introducing a *stain* which

precipitates a gaze and so brings about a fiction" (Žižek 20; emphasis in the original). As far as Jeff's physical condition goes, after solving the crime he is back to where he started, and in fact the six weeks he has to spend in a cast is reset.

As Robin Wood claims "It can be argued that Hitchcock's cinema, on all levels (thematic, formal, methodological), is built upon the struggle to dominate and the dread of impotence, and that within the films this most characteristically takes the form of the man's desire (frequently unrealised) to dominate the woman" (21).[15] Creating a narrative might have a therapeutic and curing effect on Jeff, and Lisa might get closer to him through it, but only by subordinating her desires to male desire – which has been governing the vast majority of cinema as well. There is no guarantee that Jeff will not return to his former habits and mentality once he recovers. The last scene, with Lisa putting down *Beyond the High Himalayas* and picking up *Harper's Bazaar* instead after a careful glance at the sleeping Jeff, also serves as a slightly comic reminder that Lisa is aware of the dominant male-spun narratives, knowing that she needs to cheat the masculine gaze by calling upon trickery or harmless ways of deception instead of openly expressing her desires.

Notes

1 His limitations exceed what one would expect from a man who broke his leg. Evidently, he cannot even open a bottle of wine with a corkscrew

2 Only the film is going to be discussed in this paper, for, as it is the case with most of Hitchcock's films, the greatness of *Rear Window* is not due to the plot, but rather to cinematic execution.

3 Clifford T. Manlove also notes that "Jeff discovers a pleasure in looking out the rear window of his apartment" (95), and indeed, his initial motivation behind watching the other tenants is self-entertainment.

4 Jeff's anxieties originating from his relationship with Lisa find an outlet in a story of domestic violence. Thorwald murdering his wife, as many critics note, can be very conveniently read as Jeff's wish fulfilment of his secret desire: to relieve himself of the nagging wife's burden.

5"I can see you looking very handsome and successful in a dark-blue flannel suit" (21:07).

6 Michel Chion also calls our attention to the fact that Jeff never considers the possibility of other perspectives: "James Stewart's little flat cannot be all that there is facing the huge courtyard" (Žižek 155). The viewer is deceived into forgetting about them as well, mainly because Jeff's house is never fully shown from the outside, and

because space in *Rear Window* assumes the form of a cone with Jeff's living-room being its tip (157).

7 Jackie Byars emphasises the same point in "Gazes/Voices/Power: Expanding Psychoanalysis for Feminist Film and Television Theory."

8 A technical explanation is provided by John Belton, who suggests that the "murder mystery plot" should be treated by the viewer as a central *attraction* of the narrative, which also aims to remind us that the film itself is a fictional spectacle, a construction (1123).

9 As in most of the previous examples, we can claim that in itself the trunk is not at all a convincing, let alone telltale sign of murder. Various explanations could be attached to it, and for example it could be easily fit into Doyle's theory about the Thorwalds going away for a short holiday: the wife already gone and the husband packing their belongings to follow her now, with some delay. Exactly in its insignificance, the trunk scene could be read as the moment of Lisa giving in to Jeff's narrative and joining it without the need of getting solid evidence first. Henceforth she accepts Jeff as the "chief" (48:12) and asks him to "Tell me everything you saw. And what you think it means" (47:17).

10 As for example, her useful statement about women in general: "Women don't keep their jewellery in a purse getting all twisted and scratched and tangled up. [...] Why, a woman going anywhere but the hospital would always take make-up, perfume and jewellery" (1:08:30). Just like Jeff's observations, these remarks turn out to be valid in the end.

11 Thinking about the obvious reference to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Jeff's friend can also be read as a different kind of authority, one coming not from the legal forces but as the best-known representative of the genre. As if the most accomplished writer of detective fiction came to measure the work of Jeff and found it lacking in terms of originality. The borderline between detectives and writers is blurred again by the introduction of Doyle's character.

12 Most likely because, as Lisa suspects, "it knew too much" (1:21:26) – an ironic treatment of one of the most common lines in detective stories, and also a reference to another work of Hitchcock, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934).

13 This feature is only typical of the so-called hard-boiled detective fiction, and this minor stray in terms of genre also highlights that Jeff can no longer restrain the events as he pleases.

14 Freud also points out that "The fact that all the women in the novel invariably fall in love with the hero can hardly be looked on as a portrayal of reality, but it is easily understood as a necessary constituent of a day-dream" (138). If one really wants to talk about how *Rear Window* reflects upon our cinematic experience as a whole, they should probably emphasise the dominance of male desire controlling the camera.

15 As he remarks about James Stewart later, the actor "embodies for Hitchcock the desperate and hopeless drive to dominate – to assert an ideologically constructed 'masculinity' that always sits uneasily on the Stewart persona and, in *Vertigo*, provokes the film's catastrophe. *Rear Window*, of course, is built entirely on Stewart's

physical inability to assume the position of domination, and his desperate drive to compensate for this via the potency of the 'look'" (365).

Bibliography

Belton, John. "The Space of *Rear Window*." *MLN* 103.5 (1988): 1121–38. Print.

Byars, Jackie. "Gazes/Voices/Power: Expanding Psychoanalysis for Feminist Film and Television Theory." *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*. ed. Deidre Pribram. London and New York: Verso, 1988. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Penguin Freud Library*. *Vols. XIV*. Trans. James Strachey. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990. Print.

Howe, Lawrence. "Through the Looking Glass: Reflexivity, Reciprocality, and Defenestration in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*." *College Literature* 35.1 (2008): 16–37. Print.

Manlove, Clifford T. "Visual 'Drive' and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock, and Mulvey." *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (2007): 83–108. Print.

Palmer, R. Barton. "The Metafictional Hitchcock: The Experience of Viewing and the Viewing of Experience in *Rear Window* and *Psycho*." *Cinema Journal* 25.2 (1986): 4–19. Print.

Rear Window. 1954. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount. Universal, 2000. DVD.

Toles, George E. "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* as Critical Allegory." *boundary 2* 16.2/3 (1989): 225–45. Print.

Wood, Robin. *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj, ed. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan: (but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*. London: Verso, 1992. Print.

ATTILA LÉNÁRT-MUSZKA

In and Out of Moth Existence:
Knowledge and Patriarchy in Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*

Although Sheila Watson's 1959 novella, *The Double Hook* "has been celebrated as a masterpiece of Canadian modernism and as a source of inspiration for numerous Canadian writers," The University of Montana has recently called for papers on the book on account of it not "[having …] received its critical due, particularly in recent years" (Harrison). Undoubtedly, Watson's work is a difficult read and critics have not been unanimously impressed by its aesthetic merits, with its oblique metaphors and fragmented narration, it most certainly presents a genuine and demystified image of the Canadian countryside that imprisons, intellectually and physically dims and suffocates its people. Considered by Barbara Godard as a representative of the "'female tradition' in writing" (2-3), and as such, a piece of *écriture feminine*, *The Double Hook* escapes many traditional classifications and is a text that lends itself to opposing interpretations and therefore generates invaluable opportunities for culturally and socially relevant debates even more than fifty years after its publication.

Due to the complexity of the narrative, I find it important to start by briefly introducing the characters and the most relevant plot elements. In the focus of the narrative we find the Potter family that consists of James, Greta, William, and their mother, often referred to as Ma. After James commits matricide by pushing her from the top of a staircase, he and Greta keep living under the same roof alone as William lives with his wife, Ara, who is unable to conceive as the word *arid* would suggest. Throughout the narrative, people, unaware that she is already dead, keep seeing Ma trying to fish in the shallow creeks and pools of the village. James has a relationship with the Widow's daughter, Lenchen that is meant to be clandestine, but she becomes pregnant with his child. Lenchen has a brother, Heinrich, often referred to simply as "the boy." A withdrawn but nevertheless central character is Felix Prosper, a Jesus-like figure who is portrayed as lazy and unable until the end of the story, when he assumes the role of the redeemer. His ex-wife, Angel, has left him for Theophil who does nothing but rests all day. Felix and Angel's children live in Theophil's home. Kip is a character who is in direct contact with the evil trickster, Coyote who has a strong but limited control over the townsfolk's fate. His presence is always threatening, he foreshadows what awaits in the future and has the power to console but to bring death, too.

The Double Hook is a work of many contradictions. For one, characters are in constant fear of both what light and darkness represent for them, afraid to fully embrace either. Light, in the novella, is presented as a source of both knowledge and death as references to lethal burning resulting from too much knowledge suggest. Darkness somewhat alleviates the danger of burning but, in turn, it is darkness in which death inevitably takes its toll. The two extremes materialise as the world of Genesis' Lucifer, in whom light and darkness collide: exposure to light, a symbol of knowledge, potentially leads to death. Watson's female characters are trying to acquire knowledge but their efforts are challenged both directly and indirectly by the major authority figure, the patriarch, James. To counter his power, both women and men apply the strategy of resurrecting his mother, the only person who had power over him when she was alive. She is resurrected in the form of a ghost about whom Ara mysteriously remarks, "it's not for fish she fishes" (Watson 12). The following analysis will venture on to prove that the ghost is constructed to challenge James' authority. The feasibility of resistance against him will be proven to be just as ambiguous and paradoxical as the ghost's quest for knowledge, the means through which James' power can be potentially challenged. Characters react differently to the ghost's resistance depending on how they relate to the masculine symbolic order. The interplay of male and female reactions to the ghost's actions clearly suggests that male characters see a threat in her fishing and that is the reason for their unease at the sight of her. In the narrative, we see how the process of masculine authority subjugating its victims unfolds and how a defense mechanism is activated in resistance through the creation of the only empowered but fictive female character. The ghost's character and the struggle against the patriarch will be analysed in the context of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory as it lends itself to illustrate the power struggle that inevitably takes place in the community after Ma's death.

The field of *The Double Hook* is the "competitive system of social relations" (Moi 269) among those who populate the nameless, fictional village of the book. The competition revolves around the centripetal power of James's exclusive authority which is simultaneously legitimised, as the power of the patriarch in general, and challenged, as the power of James as the patriarch in particular, by both male and female characters. Legitimacy is of key importance in both Bourdieu's philosophy and Watson's narrative. As Toril Moi explains, domination can only be achieved if one's dominant role is only "tacitly recognized" (270). The conflict in *The Double Hook* derives from the fact that James's dominance is recognised but the reactions to his

domination by other members of the field materialise tacitly, through the invention of a ghost who is supposed to challenge the patriarchal power in lieu of direct action taken by the townspeople. Indirect action is necessitated by what Margot Northey suggests in her essay on *The Double Hook* when she claims that "those who respond actively [...] bring darkness and destruction upon themselves and others" (60).

Before I discuss this tacit resistance, however, it seems essential to prove that it is James against whom resistance is to be exercised. A number of literary critics defend him despite his apparent attempts to mindlessly and irresponsibly exert his power (he commits matricide, lashes at his sister and pregnant lover with a whip and blinds a man who attempts to make him take responsibility for his sins). Some of the critics even go so far as to suggest that his violence is the key to the town's redemption. John Grube, for instance, wrongly assumes that "the action of the novel turns on James' efforts to liberate himself and the entire settlement from his mother and through her from the dead hand of the past" (74). In his interpretation, it is surprisingly Ma's matriarchy that is the doom of the village and therefore James's matricide is justified. This, however, is a clear misreading of the story as Ma never utters a word and the reader only encounters her through James's and Greta's brief comments. Also, her constructed ghost state is only suggestive of what the characters who see her intend to see in her. We, therefore, only get to know about her indirectly. Clearly, there is a power struggle between Ma, James and Greta, the latter wanting to assume the position of her mother as the master of the house and possibly initiate an incestuous relationship with his brother, but the authoritative figure is, beyond a doubt, James. Even if we were to believe Ma's evil matriarchal authority that necessitates an act of robbing her of this power, it is most definitely James's patriarchy that is the present source of power in the village.

His authority is manifested in his ability to force people into a state of dependence. The narrative makes this clear when the scarcity of water is juxtaposed to the fact that "[he] brings water in barrels from the spring (Watson 13-4). When Ara uses a pump to cool herself, Greta's comment is suggestive of the difference in status between James and primarily women: "the thing about a barrel is you take it where you take it. There's something fixed about a pump, fixed and uncertain" (14). Not only Ara is bound and dependent upon James but his secret lover and abuse victim, Lenchen, too. Her dream is to leave the village and "learn more" but she is held back by her mother who proves to be a legitimiser and internaliser of male dominance as she deems knowledge dangerous and, therefore, unfit for a

girl, when she paradoxically identifies men as the only objects of knowledge available to be attained outside the debilitating confines of the village: "All you'd learn in town ... is men. And you'd be lucky if they didn't learn you first. The things they know would be the death of me for you to know. They teach you things it isn't easy to forget" (17). In the Widow's interpretation, the knowledge of the outside world is knowledge associated with and belonging to men exclusively. To know what they know is such a severe source of danger that it is safer to slowly degenerate at home than to step over boundaries in an attempt to understand what men know. Lenchen argues that she knows "as much as [...] James" and has the potential to learn even more, but immediately asks for the assistance of her brother in getting out of her state of imprisonment. She believes she needs a man to move despite the fact that she has a will to change her fate. This part of the novella therefore illustrates not only how James's dominance impacts people in the field, but also how futile the resistance against this impact is.

Lenchen attempts again to resist patriarchal rule when "[s]he [keeps] pulling the tongue of her belt until the belt [bites] into her flesh" while pregnant (Watson 21). She carries James's baby, but her pregnancy forces her into double isolation as she is forbidden to leave town and is an outcast in her own family and community on account of her illegitimate child. As the barren Ara sums up her situation, "[s]he's got through loving what loving never gave me, and it's as much or more shame to her" (65). By terminating her pregnancy, she would reset the status quo to some degree which would enable her to move away from the locale of James's power, free of the serious responsibility that mothering a child would mean to her. In place of assuming the traditional role of a mother, she believes she would still have a chance to acquire knowledge that way.

Her feticide, however, would only feed James's patriarchal position as it would serve as "self-censorship" to use Bourdieu's terminology. Lenchen would be willing to reappropriate her body in the hope of reassuming her position from which she could realise her ambitions for knowledge, but this would only allow her to be known, in all senses of the word by the patriarch. Her "self-censorship," that would coincide with James's unwillingness to have a child would therefore be an enforcement of James's patriarchal authority upon herself, proving that James's domination is seemingly impossible to counter. His mobility and power, as well as his ability to keep people occupy positions inferior to that of his own show clearly that he is the authority figure to be dealt with in the struggle for power in the field.

James's authority is legitimised in part by the female characters' internalisation of female stereotypes of muteness and blindness. In a similar fashion to the Widow's treatment of her daughter's articulation of her ambitions, her son, Heinrich, an ordinary boy, sets Ara, his senior, straight by telling her what a "dangerous thing [it is] to ask about business between men" (Watson 71) while William, James's brother concludes a beat-up woman's story by advising women "to be trusting and loving" (65). Other female characters refuse to see, hear and know that is indicative of their situatedness in the masculine symbolic order. The Widow, to her daughter's naïve assumption that she already has knowledge, responds: "You can tell me nothing... I hear nothing. I see nothing" (20). A couple of pages later Greta claims that her mother's ghost is looking for "something hid from every living thing" and concludes that "no person's got a right to keep looking. To keep looking and blackening lamp globes for others to clean" (22). Here, she suggests giving up on acquiring knowledge and therefore internalising the stereotype of a blind woman for the sake of keeping the status quo undisturbed as she identifies the consequences of Ma's search as a burden for those who have to brush off the soot afterwards.

As the acquisition of knowledge especially by female characters would expose James, he steps into the role of Bourdieu's censor, who gratifies or punishes depending on whether a member of his field keeps or breaks the rules of the field against which individual habitus are measured and the quest for dominance is fought. In other words, he, as a representative of the patriarchal order, determines what is knowable and what is not. James intends to keep his matricide and his relationship with Lenchen a secret. He organises clandestine rendezvous with Lenchen by proxy of a messenger – Kip – whom he later strikes blind, when he tells James that the sudden instability of his power position is attributed to him "[having] the weight of his doings on him" (Watson 53). James's setting of boundaries of knowledge is described quite directly, but the underlying motivation, i.e. the upholding of the patriarchal order remains obscure. He refuses to let the world know that he is the father of the baby Lenchen is expecting. He runs from the responsibility of killing his own mother and reacts violently when truth is revealed about his actions. "He lifted his whip. It reached out towards [Greta], tearing through the flowers of her housecoat [...] Then as the thong unloosed its sweep it coiled with a jerk about Lenchen's knees" (56). Resistance against James's authority and, consequently, the quest for knowledge materialise as the tension between

achieving enlightenment and the efforts taken to see beyond the boundaries that James sets for the community.

Light marks the final border of intelligibility for the characters. The ghost of Ma can stand even the strongest rays of light, and therefore she has the potential to know the most. As Greta suggests in her description of her mother, exposure to extreme light is suggestive of one's determination to acquire knowledge:

> "I've seen Ma standing with the lamp by the fence [...] in broad daylight. I've seen her looking for something even the birds couldn't see. Something hid from every living thing. I've seen her defying. I've seen her take her hat off in the sun at noon, baring her head and asking for the sun to strike her. Holding the lamp and looking where there's *nothing to be found*" (Watson 22; emphasis added).

Ma, therefore, symbolises the efforts of the townsfolk to establish a context other than the patriarch's to uncover *something to be found*. As the ghost's mission is to find what is "hid from every living thing" and her exposure to extreme light is direct, she, the dead woman, is the only creature – in the most literal sense of the word – who is suitable for the task. She is presented as an extremely empowered woman whose will defies even the most powerful metanarratives:

> If God had come into the valley, come holding out the long finger of salvation, moaning in the darkness, thundering down the gap at the lake head, skimming across the water, drying up the blue signature like blotting-paper, asking where, asking why, defying an answer, she would have thrown her line against the rebuke; she would have caught a piece of mud and looked it over; she would have drawn a line with the barb when the fire of righteousness baked the bottom. (12)

As the dead woman is free from the rule of any authority, her existence ensures the possibility of truth that exists beyond the rules governing the field and that this truth is still acquirable for those who seek it. A desire for her existence is suggested right at the beginning of the novella in the quote highlighted just above, as this powerful and detailed description of the ghost is followed immediately by a disempowered – arid and half-blind – female character's plea for what the ghost catches and her suggestion that "it's not

for fish she fishes" (12). Ma's fishing is understandably received ambiguously by the townsfolk which implies that the stakes of her endeavors are higher than just stealing fish from other people's property. Her actions clearly irritate Felix and Heinrich as they are both representatives of the establishment of a masculine order in the struggle for power, Felix being a character who represents the Christian metanarrative and Heinrich's habitus being ordered according to traditional masculine narratives. In this sense, Heinrich's mother underscores the anti-masculine nature of the ghost's truth finding mission when she complains: "dear God [...] what does she want? So old, so wicked, fishing the fish of others. Slipping her line under our fence before my boy can get the fish on his hook" (16). As Heinrich is a maturing boy, about to assume his role in patriarchy, the ghost's fishing represents a threat to his position. His struggle with the ghost implies a struggle between female empowerment and overpowering masculine knowledge.

Ma, despite being seen by many different characters doing the same activity over and over again, turns out to be a ghost that becomes clear even for the townsfolk when they give accounts of her whereabouts in two different places at the same time. Her death is confirmed by Greta quite early in the novel, but the apparition is seen again twice after that. This conspicuous insistence on her presence also suggests that she is seen because her presence is needed. Despite drawing a different ultimate conclusion when evaluating the role of Ma in the story, John Watt Lennox underscores my proposition, i.e. that Ma is the creation of the townsfolk, when he claims that "the old lady seems to exist in part as a psychological extension of all the characters" (51). In Lennox's understanding she is the reflection of what makes this community unable to function properly, i.e. isolation that makes the knowledge of themselves and their community impossible; while I propose that her existence is the reflection of what the community is lacking, what their desires are, i.e. knowledge that empowers.

Light's identification as knowledge and the reasons behind constructing the ghost of light pervade many of the most dramatic parts of the novel. The ghost of James's mother is described "fishing upstream to the source" (Watson 13). Later, she is seen "standing with [a] lamp by the fence [...]. Holding it up in broad daylight. ...standing looking for something even the birds couldn't see. Something hid from every living thing." She is clearly searching against the current, taking a path untrodden and forbidden. Greta adds: "No person's got a right to keep looking" (22). Greta, at this stage, is trying to conceal her mother's death and that she was killed by James but in her lie, she hints at the truth: that the presence of the old woman means the

constant threat of the truth being revealed, that her death by the hands of his own son and the abuse of Lenchen are only symptoms of a greater mechanism, that of tacit domination that, if recognised, can be potentially undermined. She is searching in daylight with a lamp because the real truth lies beyond the light that is sanctioned by the dominant discourse that James represents. As Greta acknowledges that she cannot control her brother, she admits to her impotence but generates hope at the same time by recreating her mother's ghost: giving her a lamp to find knowledge that is necessary to put an end to his brother's supremacy.

Others see the ghost as somebody who, by fishing, is trying to unravel a mystery. When James is in the town visiting a prostitute, the room where he is taken is "filled with the odour of bodies and kerosene burning away. Tainted with the damp smell of mud and dead fish" (Watson 91). These are artifacts associated with the demise of women closest to him. Their ill fate is credited to James and the fact that another act of defiance is about to take place brings up memories about the women he has defied in the past. The odor of a clearly sexualised body – as the scene is set in a brothel – refers to Lenchen, who carries his baby, while the smell of kerosene foreshadows Greta's setting her house and herself on fire. The smell of mud is indicative of the tenacious searching done by the ghost investigating even a piece of mud (12), and finally, fish is what the old lady finds while looking for truth. The smell of dead fish represents the mass of James's sins that the mother's ghost is threatening to unveil in its totality.

The connection between light and knowledge and the inferior position female characters assume when exposed to light, as well as the ghost's search for light being the deception of patriarchal order are also apparent from light's description as a source of death if approached beyond a reasonable, sanctioned limit. At one point, Greta asks "what a moth [has] done that a man strikes it away from the lamp" (Watson 72) while Angel is reminded that the wings of moths get burnt when they fly too close to the source of light. William's reaction indicates the reasons behind the fate of moths. He explains that "they interfere with a man's proper business. Some eat cloth that's needed for human flesh" (73). The use of the word "man" in the first and "human" in the second sentence is not by chance. Judging from William's words, the outcome of man's business determines human condition. If man is not given the authority that he is accustomed to, the dominant order is disturbed and potentially leads to the disturbance of the relative peace of women's position, too. Moths therefore uncover men and reveal uncomfortable truths. Greta and Angel identify themselves as moths,

they live in moth existence as male characters clarify what their boundaries are and what the consequence of their quest for knowledge might be. Simultaneously, William confirms that it is men's cover they are not to ruin. Women's moth existence consequently describes their nature as one that is constantly threatening male supremacy but just like in the ghost's quest, a serious danger lies in the overthrowing of the patriarchal order.

It is blindness and impaired vision that suggest a challenge to authority. Kip, a shamanic male character, who is said to possess paranormal abilities, knows James's secrets. He confronts him and is consequently struck and blinded by the frustrated patriarch. Ara also complains of "seeing things only in flashes," (Watson 65) which gains relevance when we acknowledge that she is the person who even blames the ghost for not helping enough (12). In another instance, Greta's frustration culminates in setting her house on fire and herself in it. She undresses before her suicide and while everything around her is catching fire, her mother's ghost appears at the top of the staircase from which James pushed her (73, 74). The refusal of moth existence and the acquisition of knowledge can only materialise in her death. The sacrifice she takes is another step closer to truth as she is the second character who steps beyond male-sanctioned rules. The impact of her action and the hope she generates is apparent from Ara's vision: "now her tired eyes saw water issuing from under the burned threshold. Welling up and flowing down to fill the dry creek. Until dry lips drank. Until the trees stood knee deep in water" (100). Whereas at the beginning James is the provider of water, Greta's sacrifice will potentially terminate the dependence on her brother's authority. In the final scene, Lenchen gives birth to James's son, who is given the name Felix. This represents an ultimate defiance of James for three reasons: he is refused to name his son, his son is named after Felix, the emasculated Christ-figure, and the naming is performed by Lenchen, a woman. The continuity of his mindless domination is clearly over. Felix also adheres to the rules of patriarchy but his approach is not nearly as radical as that of James's.

As Northey suggests, the constant ambiguity luring over the narrative is there at the end (61), too when, despite the idyllic, manger-like scene, the forgiving Widow "la[ys] her hand on the baby's back" and says "dear God, ... what a straight back he has" to which Angel replies "he'll need it ... to carry round what the world will load on his shoulders" (Watson 117). The closing words from Coyote, the demonic semi-god foreshadow the same fate when he utters poetically, "I have set his feet on *soft ground*; / I have set his feet on the *sloping shoulders* / of the world " (118; emphases

added) suggesting that the boy is to sink and slip his whole life. Although James seemingly returns as a changed man, he does not show grief at the sight of her sister's brutal death but coldly makes the promise: "I will build the new house further down the creek [...]. All on one floor" (115). He is ready to reassume his patriarchal role but he needs to start from scratch. Truth is revealed about him, but his era of domination is yet to come and the possibility of his traditional patriarchal position is shattered. The ghost is last seen standing inactive which either refers to the impossibility of her quest or the characters' willing subjugation to a newly forming patriarchal rule manifest in James' plans to build a new home to replace the house that he shared with his mother and sister. The novella ends, not surprisingly, ambiguously as the reader is not informed about the future of the town; however, this ending is what suits *The Double Hook* the most accurately.

The novella presents Bourdieu's field as a space where opposing forces compete for dominance through knowledge. Opportunities for victory are distributed unevenly as the dominant character is supported by both male and female enforcers of stereotypes. As no earthly authority seems to be able to challenge the patriarch, a ghost is resurrected to symbolise the possibility of overthrowing the current figure of dominance. The mute, blinded, powerless, and spatially bound women need to risk death or sacrifice to further their cause. Greta's suicide finally brings a new hope, but full independence from under its yoke still seems impossible. The novel ends on an ambiguous note as the "new" censor is yet to assume his position. Although Ara's vision is promising of a brighter future – brightness referring to enlightenment in every sense of the word – it remains to be seen whether the future will legitimise a power other than James's.

Bibliography

Godard, Barbara. "'Between One Cliché and Another.': Language in The Double
      Hook." *Studies in Canadian Literature* Summer 1978: n. pag. Rpt. in *Sheila
      Watson and The Double Hook*. Ed. George Bowering. Ottawa: Golden Dog,
      1985. 159-76. Print. Critical Views on Canadian Writers.

Grube, John. "Introduction to The Double Hook." *Studies in Canadian Literature*.
      1966:n.pag. Rpt. in *Sheila Watson and The Double Hook*. Ed. George Bowering.
      Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1985. 73-82. Print. Critical Views on Canadian Writers.

Harrison, Brady. "Twice the Glory, Twice the Fear: Critical Approaches to Sheila
      Watson's The Double Hook." *Calls for Papers*. University of Pennsylvania
      Department of English, 15 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Feb. 2016.

Lennox, John Watt. "The Past: Themes and Symbols of Confrontation in The
      Double Hook, and 'Le Torrent.'" *Journal of Canadian Fiction* Winter 1973: n.
      pag. Rpt. in Sheila Watson and The Double Hook. Ed. George Bowering.
      Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1985. 47-54. Print. Critical Views on Canadian Writers.

Northey, Margot. "Symbolic Grotesque: The Double Hook." *The Haunted Wilderness*.
      1976: n. pag. Rpt. in *Sheila Watson and The Double Hook*. Ed. George
      Bowering. Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1985. 55-61. Print. Critical Views on
      Canadian Writers.

Moi, Toril. "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's
      Sociology of Culture." *What is a Woman? – And Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford
      UP, 1999. 264–99.

Watson, Sheila. *The Double Hook*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966. Print.

GEORGINA BOZSÓ

Symptomatic Reflections:
Masculine Sensitivity and the Second Son Problem
in George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil"

"I have never been encouraged to trust much in the sympathy of my fellow men" (Eliot 4).

The sentence above is uttered by Latimer, who is the narrator of George Eliot's novella, "The Lifted Veil". When analysing this sentence, one must realise that it contains several contradictory notions that can be understood better if the reader – to some extent – is familiar with certain paradoxes of the Victorian age. For instance, how is it possible that a male member of a patriarchal culture is not encouraged to trust his fellow men? How is it possible that there is no understanding among them? When considering these questions we must deal with the peculiar case of Latimer, who shares his life story with the readers. Being the second child of a wealthy man, Latimer was never encouraged to behave in such a manly and powerful way as his brother, Alfred. Seeing and experiencing the patriarchal environment on his own skin, Latimer must accept and fit himself into the role of the second son, which, in the context of the story, means that for the rest of his life he will be treated as a somewhat dysfunctional male, who can never be treated on equal terms with his fellow men. As he is socialised into this inequality, Latimer evidently adopts characteristics that are anti-masculine – rather feminine – and builds his own existence opposing the accepted normative masculine value system. His way of not being able to fit is the connecting element between the two aspects: him being a second son and male sensitivity.

In this aspect, the novella contains numerous elements demonstrating Latimer's peculiar connection to the age in which he must live. In order to understand these connecting elements, one must realise and study Latimer's reactions to them. As a quasi-consequence of a long-term illness Latimer begins to show symptoms that could be read as his unintentional reactions to Victorian society's expectations and the space he has to fulfil in it. This paper is concerned to study how these two perspectives (sensitivity and Latimer being a second son) intertwine in the narrative and in what ways other side elements of the story – the mother's

absence and the father's presence, the narrative structure, the ability of seeing the future and Bertha's appearance – complement these issues.

The subject-matters of male sensitivity and second son problem are closely connected in the context of "The Lifted Veil". Sensitivity is seen as a female attribute and a man owning much of this quality is never seen as something good from the Victorian society's perspective. "The Victorians were fascinated by the possibility, the necessity, of making things visible" (Flint 457). Visibility in Flint's usage of the word is not only understandable as literal visibility but also figuratively. Each person of the Victorian society was supposed to participate and stay in the construction of the space attributed to his/her class and social roles. When talking about Victorian culture's traditions in terms of gender constructions we must keep in mind that heteronormative distinction was strongly present. Both man and woman had (have?) their own traditional, segregated gender roles.

> A 'two-sex' model had been gradually supplanting time-honoured notions of homology between the sexes. Both body and mind were now sexed. A formidably comprehensive range of antitheses was inscribed on the distinction between the two sexes, in ways which cast doubt on how much meeting of the minds there could ever be between a man and a woman. (Tosh 64)

The woman is the private figure who always remains behind and provides a stable pillar to the institution of the family, does philanthropic-charity work; she is the Angel in the House. Opposed to that stands the man, who is the owner of the absolute authority in the family – he is the public figure who carries the basic, masculine building element of the Victorian society's dominant side: he is the representative of unlimited power.

This is the same in the case of Latimer's parents. As he narrates it he always adored his mother, describing her as tender and caring, whose memory will always be with him: "even now, after the dreary lapse of long years, a slight trace of sensation accompanies the remembrance of her caress, as she held me on her knee – her arms round my little body, her cheek pressed on mine. I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and she kept me on her knee from morning till night." (Eliot 5) As opposed to this angelic mother stands the ambivalent representation of and attitude to the father. Latimer never says that he hates his father, but right from the beginning he describes him as a man who: "neither know melancholy nor high spirits. I held him in great awe, and appeared more

timid and sensitive in his presence." (5) Both quotes are telling about the early development of the narrator. The mother's calming nature and the father's morose presence stand directly in opposition to each other; as the mother is always there for Latimer, he gets used to her presence; he slowly and unconsciously starts to adopt the feminine feature of sensitivity. Therefore, it can be said that the narrator's affective perceptional world actually originates in his caring and loving mother. Lynn Abrahams in her article highlights the Victorian age's corresponding view of maternity: "the message that motherhood was woman's highest achievement, albeit within marriage, never weakened through the course of this century. Indeed, it was in this period that motherhood was idealised as the zenith of a woman's emotional and spiritual fulfilment." (Abrahams)

It is indicative, however, that after a couple of years spent with Latimer the mother soon dies and the little boy is left alone with his father and his older brother, Alfred, who is the father's "representative and successor" (Eliot 6). Based on Latimer's childhood memories the two men, who suppose to make up his family from this point on are hardly known to him. This strange circle of strong and powerful men, who all of a sudden surround the narrator, makes him not only frightened, but it also ties Latimer to the memory of his dead mother even more. "That unequalled love soon vanished out of my life, and even to my childish consciousness it was as if that life had become more chill. I rode my little white pony with the groom by my side as before, but there were no loving eyes looking at me as I mounted, no glad arms opened to me when I came back." (Eliot 5) In the time of crisis, the only remaining act he could do is long for the memory of the mother, which in this case means longing for the known, the loved, and the sensitive – the past.

Under the new circumstances someone must look after Latimer and soon the figure of the father appears to make proper decisions regarding his future as it is visible for him "that a shy, sensitive boy like me [him] was not fit to encounter the rough experience of a public school" (Eliot 6). The father is not alone to make the decision, accompanying him is Mr. Letherall, who, as a man of science, legitimately estimates Latimer's possibilities regarding the future.

> Mr. Letherall was a large man in spectacles, who one day took my small head between his large hands, and pressed it here and there in an exploratory, auspicious manner – then placed each of his great thumbs on my temples, and pushed me a little way from him, and

> stared at me with glittering spectacles. The contemplation appeared to displease him, for he frowned sternly, and said to my father, drawing his thumbs across my eyebrows – "The deficiency is there, sir – there; and here," he added, touching the upper sides of my head, "here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep. (Eliot 6)

The method he uses is phrenology, a pseudo-scientific method which claims that behaviours, characteristics and mentality patterns could be predicted by the form of the skull (Claggett 849). This way scientists and doctors established a discourse which premised that individual's future can be decided as nature had already ordered positive possibilities and negative restrictions. As Latimer himself also describes his own self as unfitting and sensitive, Mr. Letherall's words encourage and estimate Latimer's future based on his physical condition. The problem here is wide-ranging since the body is anticipated to have an ominous power creating order that is able to foreshadow the given individual's future. As the range of scientific discoveries widened it turned out that phrenology as natural science is invalid. However, Latimer's future is – ironically – decided by a pseudo-scientific prediction. Deciding on the 'proper' fields of natural history, science and modern languages, further on, no-one seems to care about Latimer's real needs, whereas he is "hungry for human deeds and human emotions" (Eliot 6) which he will never be provided with after the death of his mother.

From these aspects we can see here that Latimer's early childhood sensitivity is strongly tied to the memory of his mother, the only certain and stable emotion he has ever felt in his life. His aspiring back into safety gains an even bigger significance when we tie it to the fact that in his later years Latimer starts to have visions about the future, which he allows to enter into his head. His strange behaviour begins after he survives a severe illness during which he becomes even more passive and has to be looked after for weeks. Right after his illness the symptoms appear: he starts to faint regularly, blushes, has migraines and keeps lying on the sofa. These symptoms recall the typical Victorian woman's illness: hysteria. At first not even Latimer knows what is happening to him: "But *was* it a power? Might it not rather be a disease [...]" (Eliot 12). Latimer's doubt in the nature of his problem is not surprising minding the fact that in 1859 – the same year when "The Lifted Veil" was also published – there was a 75-page long catalogue containing possible symptoms of hysteria including the ones above. (Dejong)

However, hysteria in itself will not explain his received "gift" of seeing events happening, reading other people's thoughts and motivations of which he is disgusted. "Nevertheless, it is Latimer's choice either to welcome and pursue or to reject what he is shown" (Gray 419). It is interesting to see that after receiving his visions Latimer not even for a moment questions their relevance to reality. This is also true to the opening scene of the novella.

At the beginning of the story the reader is confronted with a dying Latimer, who tells his story as a confession as he has never had the chance of being understood by the people who surrounded him. His life becomes a retrospective memory cluster in which perceptions, feelings and judgements derive directly from Latimer. This provides him with a unique position in which he is not only the storyteller but also the mediator of the events. His newly received ability of reading other persons' minds also begins to function as a narrative formulating tool. 19th century physic researcher Frederic Myers declared that "the best way to read other people's minds, – which we know very little about,– is not to set to work imagining what they are likely to feel, but to tell them what one feels oneself" (qtd. in Brocklebank 233). This bare act of communication never happens in Latimer's reality; in his own family he becomes a castaway. The problem does not only lie in the father's unquestionable authority, but also in Latimer's inability to communicate with his family members. Therefore reading other people's minds seems a safer solution in terms of knowing the others than talking and communicating. Latimer desires feelings and kindness which are non-reachable in this environment; he constantly has reflections on the others' and his own perceptions; however, he always fails to analyse these issues properly – which again takes us back to the lack of communicational problems which is not surprising if we consider his childhood and the traumatic loss of his mother.

Latimer is not an alpha-male, he accepts the position that his father provides him with, even though in the given circumstances this is the staggering role of the second son, who will never be able to fit the father's expectations. Latimer's illness as such can be analysed as the result of the social position which his father forced him into. He is paralysed both physically and mentally and the only way he could manage to "control" this stiffness is if he turns it against himself. Hence, the passive feminine aspect and the second son problem are interrelated especially when considering the symptoms.

Latimer was born as the father's – name is not given throughout the narrative – second son from his second wife, who later died. I have already

elaborated on his mother's absence and how it had affected his life; still, Latimer being a second son has other aspects as well. In Victorian society the absolute heir of the given family's wealth and the father's successor – unless the father wanted it in another way – was the first born son. Debra Teachman in her book *Understanding Jane Eyre* has detailed researches on the period and deduces that because of the immense amount of laws and customs surrounding the issue of inheritance "at the moment of one's birth, therefore, one's future status and wealth could often be approximated to something very close to actual reality" (157). We can see that it still affirmed the first born son's position as "Primogeniture was essentially the inheritance by the eldest son in a family of all of his father's holdings at the time of his father's death" (Teachman 157).

The inheritor is Alfred, who is the picture-book reverse of Latimer and is able to become a representative of the father. The narrator's position from his birth seemed to be established until the sudden death of Alfred, bringing a set of changes. The very first time the reader sees understanding between Latimer and his father – although a peculiar one – happens at the death of the older brother.

> But now, as I went up to him, and stood beside him in sad silence, I felt the presence of a new element that blended us as we had never been blent before. [...] I felt a movement of deep pity towards him which was the beginning of a new affection, – an affection that grew and strengthened in spite of the strange bitterness with which he regarded me in the first month or two after my brother's death. (Eliot 27-28)

Latimer's description of strange bitterness is reflected in his surprise as well: "my father transferred the inheritance of an eldest son to me; [...] began to please himself with the endeavour to make me fill my brother's place as fully as my feebler personality would admit" (Eliot 28). Latimer's happiness at first seems endless upon the father treating him as an heir but at this point no further consequences in the narrator's development are foreseen. Latimer, while mostly seeing the positive effects, does not mind that these new changes require a different attitude: he has to become the masculine ideal that is accepted by society, the father and Bertha as well (whom he can marry now as he secretly desired). This type of masculine construction, so far unknown to Latimer, requires the adaption of a new set of values. The narrator's newly gained position as an heir is constructed by a set of

pretences while trying to keep his role – and his sense of masculinity – real towards the outside world and even for himself; his masculine self in the eyes of society becomes a performance. Later on, as the reader will see, Latimer fails miserably while trying to maintain this new construction.

By the time Latimer is twenty-one years old he marries Bertha and from the uncomfortable position of the second son he becomes the main focus of attention. However, his views are always affected by the visions he frequently gets after his illness; furthermore, he also gains the telepathic knowledge of reading the thoughts of the ones who surround him. "Latimer associates vision with certainty, and reading with uncertainty and tentativeness" (Albrecht 445). His visions transform his sense of longing back into his own past as well: things that seemed to be stable back then suddenly get forgotten in the midst of these new experiences.

One of these new experiences is the first appearance of a woman, Bertha, who in Latimer's restrospective narration positioned as something ambiguous. Several of Latimer's visions from the point they meet are centred around Bertha, who is the future-to-be wife of his brother. However, through his visions Latimer becomes aware that he shall be the one to marry Bertha; their marriage will not be a happy one.

> Intense and hopeless misery was pressing on my soul; the light became stronger, for Bertha was entering with a candle in her hand – Bertha, my wife – with cruel eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress; every hateful thought within her present to me..." "Madman, idiot! Why don't you kill yourself, then?" It was a moment of hell. (Eliot 20)

This vision is telling of how Latimer relates to his future wife and vice-versa. Latimer's visions about the future will be certain, however, why does he want to marry a woman, and also fall in love with her if he is aware that their marriage will be hell? To answer this question we have to approach their relation by analysing different elements of Latimer's recollection such as Alfred's death and the possible reasons of Bertha's hatred. With the death of the older brother who should have been the heir of the family fortune, Latimer must take over his place. As the father remains without a proper heir, he does not have other choices – he has to train Latimer into the position of his dead brother. Eventually, he is positioned as an heir, however, he will never be able to stand his ground because he cannot control

power, does not know about money and about Bertha, let alone how to act as a husband.

When talking about roles in general from the perspective of the Victorian society we must keep in mind what was expected from a husband and a wife in terms of the union. Speaking from the point of domesticity, Latimer's needs are characterised by the period's expectations.

> Husbands looked to a partner in life to whom they could pour out their anxieties, their doubts and their aspirations. Home was felt to be the only place where the vulnerability that lay behind the public mask of strength and imperturbability could be shared with someone else. The sympathetic ear and soothing tongue of the wife were regarded as much the most important dimension of the healing power of home. (Tosh 54)

From the observations of John Tosh we see that the "public mask of strength and imperturbability" is not applicable to Latimer by any means. In his new role as heir and husband he should have applied these conceptions, a mask towards the public. While being socialised into a secondary position the other core issue of his concept of masculinity perception is his inability to distinguish between the public and the private spheres of his representation; he becomes "a husband who was sickly, abstracted, and, as some suspected, crack-brained" (Eliot 33). Bertha's behaviour is just the contrary, she is "a graceful, brilliant woman" (Eliot 33), at least in the eyes of the public. In the father's eyes their marriage is desirable as he had hopes it would "complete the desirable modification of [Latimer's] character, and make [him] worldly enough to take my place in society among sane men" (Eliot 30). The main reasons for Bertha's dissatisfaction are never highlighted; however, her silence is more indicative. Having to read surrounding people's thoughts worked with almost everyone with one exception, Bertha. The narrative clearly highlights Latimer's angst as he is unable to decide whether what he says pleases or appals her. If we consider his statement about Bertha, who "made me believe that she loved me [...] and intoxicated me with the sense that I was necessary to her" (29) we can see that one of his narrative's constructive elements derives from the constraint of telling; factual memories turning into confessions, but from the very first moment of their meeting the woman remains closed off from Latimer.

The death of the father – occurring a couple of months after their wedding – is indicative as it marks a standpoint from which Latimer will be able to read his wife's thoughts: "on that evening the veil which had shrouded Bertha's soul from me [...] was first withdrawn" (Eliot 31). If so far Latimer was not able to read Bertha's mind, what is the sudden change that makes him able to do so? The veil and Bertha has significant connection especially when we regard the title of the novella: the expression of the 'veil' in the text appears four times, two out of these stretch the context of revelation. Eliot's intention of showing what lies beyond the perceptible qualities of a person is featured in the symbolic act of lifting the veil. In the narrative there is neither clear explanation nor exact reasoning why Latimer's illness keeps on re-appearing in the form of visions and mind-reading. The narrator's returning allusions to the veil and seeing what is behind it is transfigured when using A. N. Whitehead's term of the mid-nineteenth-century "distracted mind" (qtd. in Waddell 273). Margot Waddell in her research highlights that George Eliot – as almost all mid-Victorian thinkers and writers – was also affected by the dichotomy of maintaining a sensitive way of thinking while being positioned into a more rational worldview (Waddell 273). This antagonism was the basis of the century's existential crisis by which Latimer is affected as well on his own terms. Latimer's veil lifting moment is when he sees his own reflection in Bertha's gaze and finally *understands* that in Bertha's eyes he will never be a desired companion – this is the first and the last time when they are on equal terms: "we were front to front with each other and judged each other" (Eliot 32). Their mutual separation as husband and wife is marked by their one and only honest moment they share in their marriage. Further on Latimer remains unaffected by Bertha's remarks, notions and actions.

In Latimer's eyes Bertha becomes a negative, selfish and self-centred woman who is not capable of treating her husband according to his sensitive needs. From Bertha's perspective "sensibilities were anything else than weaknesses" (Eliot 32), Latimer is positioned back into the passive role and he does not want to try to assume responsibility for his wife and her being. Both Latimer and Bertha become the other's reflection: "While Latimer's misanthropy is exonerated in the plot by the oedipal and social pressures to which he is continually subjected, and while it is ultimately (though only partially) transformed into sympathy for the dying father and for humanity in general, Bertha is an image of antipathy as pure, absolute evil" (Albrecht 442). Latimer is the passive half in their marriage while in his narration the opposing happens: Bertha becomes passive only in his storytelling; it is the

character of Bertha who, after years of hatred, tries to take action and moves the storyline when trying to poison her husband.

When Latimer is put into authority his relation to Bertha completely changes. Before their marriage he was deeply in love with this woman but by the time they are married he loses interest in her. This detail calls the attention to the problem of the narrative. In his narration the woman's character is established as a one-dimensional, cliché-like portrait. We never get to know how Bertha feels; how she felt, when they wanted her to marry Alfred. The narration is self-centred and one-dimensional, especially when it comes to projecting Latimer's own visions onto people. The narrator claims that he is sensitive and positions himself very carefully in this role. However, the following passage indicates otherwise opening up several new questions:

> I was kind and just to my dependants, but I excited in them a shrinking, half-contemptuous pity; for this class of men and women are but slightly determined in their estimate of others by general considerations, or even experience, of character. They judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate. (Eliot 33)

Judging by this quote Latimer seems to forget that he treats Bertha in the same way; he never asks for her opinion, about her feelings. When he talks about how others judge by the "coins and value" – again, he forgets that the only way of getting Bertha was through the dead body of his own brother. "Tomorrow, the unknown, beyond death, formerly defined by life with God, now has no comparable myth to explain it, to rationalize it, and make it acceptable as a part of life" (Hurley 224). The novella begins as a confession of a person who knows and already sees his own death, and though Latimer is aware of the exact date of his death, he still does not want to give up on the life which he gained through the death of Alfred. As such, through death Bertha became a power indicator, which basically allowed Latimer to enter into the dominant position he has never known and experienced. Bertha filled an exchange function between Latimer and the social position he secretly adored.

As Latimer's confession slowly comes to an end we must realize how much he left out of the story of the others. Although it is his narrative and confession, the reader may feel a certain type of desire for explanation as Latimer's story opens several new questions. He is very happy when his father begins to "train" him into an heir's position; however, it never comes

to the surface what Latimer himself expects from the position change. If he had observed his position in all circumstances carefully he should have realised that being a first born does not automatically guarantee acceptance from the others. Therefore the shift occurring between these two positions deepens Latimer's crisis. His way of narrating is connected to the form he uses: it is a confession which tries to explain and gain sympathy from the reader, even if understanding between reader and teller is passive and does not reach Latimer directly. The reader is not given proper answers regarding Bertha's behaviour either; although Latimer tries to portray a full picture, when it comes to narrate other persons' life, he fails miserably. He can recall from his very early childhood years of feeling different, maybe even being special; but he is seldom able to make the ultimate authority – the father – satisfied. Although he was loved by his mother when he was a child, for the remaining years of his life he is never loved by anyone; he always remains the second son. Changing this position without the death of Alfred would have been impossible. One may feel aspiring towards the other characters' narratives, how would have they told Latimer's struggle first as a second and then as a 'first born'. The societal position he finally achieves extends his abilities to stand his ground as a first born, but as he was never accomplished how to present himself properly in front of society, his desired acceptance never happens. Alfred's memory as a proper heir impregnates the text, especially after his death: the servants, the public, Bertha and even Latimer never seem to forget that the only way he became the first born happened through the other brother's death.

Bibliography

Abrahams, Lynn. "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain." *BBC History*. BBC., 9 Aug. 2001. Web. 14 Nov. 2015.

Albrecht, Thomas. "Sympathy and Telepathy: The Problem of Ethics in George Eliot's 'The Lifted Veil.'" *ELH* 73.2 (2006): 437–463.

Borcklebank, Lisa. "Psychic Reading." *Victorian Studies* 48.2 (2006): 233-240.

Claggett, Shalyn. "George Eliot's Interrogation of Physiological Future Knowledge." *SEL* 51.4 (2011): 849-864

Dejong, H. "Female Hysteria." *19thct*. The Victorian Era, 5 Dec. 2007. Web. 13. Jan. 2016.

Flint, Kate. "Blood, Bodies and 'The *Lifted Veil*'." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51.4 (1997): 455-73.

Eliot, George. "The Lifted Veil." *A Penn State Electronic Classics Series Publication*. Pennsylvania State UP. PDF.

Gray, B. M. "Pseudoscience and George Eliot's 'The Lifted Vei.'." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 36.4 (1982): 407-23.

Hurley, Edward T. "Death and Immortality: George Eliot's Solution" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 24.2 (1969): 222-27.

Mitchell, Sally. *Victorian England*. Westport, Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1996. Print.

Teachman, Debra. *Understanding Jane Eyre: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources and Historical Documents*. Westport, Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 2001. Print.

Tosh, John. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007. Print.

Waddell, Margot. "On Ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal' in George Eliot's Novels and Post-Kleinian Psychoanalytic Thought." *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 59.3 (1999): 271-286.

ORSOLYA ERDEI

Myth in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

The therapeutic effects storytelling exerts on the individual psyche include organising experience coherently and allowing for a distance from past painful memories as well as an opportunity to reflect on them. It also generates discourse, thus, potential understanding on the part of those not involved in the particular experience accounted for by the narrative. Besides having the function of individual self-fulfillment and reconciling trauma, narration can also serve to give voice to communities who have been deprived by racist and sexist historiography of their power to define themselves and articulate their own experiences as an ethnic community in the dominant culture they live in. Therefore, the oral tradition is particularly important for African-Americans, especially for African-American women, who have been exposed to multiple related systems of oppression – racism, sexism, classism, opportunism – throughout American history since slavery times. Literature, having been available only for a limited number of black people in slavery (Phillis Wheatley is an example) and much later for greater numbers, has been formed according to the Western tradition, excluding orality, thus, black perspectives.

Toni Morrison's writing career has been highly politicised as it has been inextricably bound to a quest for the voice of her community in the form of literary narratives, in which black people are storytellers unaffected by the expectations and definitions of the dominant society. This process requires the revision of those ideologically filled stories responsible for the appropriation of black people's, and in particular black women's experience – although Morrison distances herself from a feminist mindset. The way the image of slavery has traditionally been constructed in the American social consciousness constitutes such appropriation from a black female perspective. This paper intends to illuminate how Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) challenges a mythicised cultural memory regarding slavery shaped by the predominance of African-American male and white American perspectives. By connecting slavery to the image of Eden, as the name of Sweet Home plantation indicates it, Morrison not only revises the idea radically that slavery was a benign institution, but also defies the monolithic view of the black experience, pointing out that gender was also a controlling impulse in slaves' experiences of enslavement and exploitation.

First I will define the multifarious meanings of myth for the purposes of this study. As Jacqueline de Weever observes, "[i]t is particularly instructive to discover that Black-American female writers have become our contemporary mythographers" (2). Mythmaking has become a highly prevalent phenomenon among black women writers, which, according to Weever, comprises "further examining, rewriting, and restructuring *canonical* myths" (3; emphasis added). Such canonical myths have been internalized by African-American writers as a result of living in a society in which the mythologies prevalent in Africa, and other non-canonical oral traditions, such as Native American and Mexican ones, had no legitimacy for a long time. They reinterpret canonical myths in their literary works by repeating the original stories and motifs but with a "black difference," as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out:

> Black writers, like critics of black literature, learn to write by reading literature, especially the canonical texts of the Western tradition. Consequently, black texts resemble other, Western texts. […] But black formal repetition always repeats with a difference, a black difference that manifests itself in specific language use. And the repository that contains the language that is the source – and the reflection – of black difference is the black English vernacular tradition." (qtd. in Weever 22)

Weever also mentions certain "cultural myths" reducing black people to racist and sexist stereotypes: "[t]he foundations of cultural myths about the black woman are the stereotypes of the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the conjure woman, by means of which cultural pundits of the majority population have attempted to define and contain the black woman's experience" (2). These myths are also deconstructed in black female authors' novels, mainly through the representation of individual characters instead of types. The revision of these canonical and cultural myths prevalent in American society by black female writers has the potential to uncover counter-hegemonic experiences, which, in the case of *Beloved*, affects the discourse about American history. Also, as Weever points out, "[t]he Attic-Hebraic-Christian traditions that make up European culture became the foundations of that transplanted culture in the Americas, and, until the social movements of the 1960s, these foundations determined the definition of American literature" (21). Morrison's mythmaking, thus, not only revises the way slavery exists as a cultural memory but also affects the realm of American literature.

Religious rhetoric was part of abolitionist literature, as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) demonstrates. Stowe's novel managed to elicit a fair amount of sympathy for enslaved people and outrage in connection with slavery. Nevertheless, it also perpetuated stereotypes about black people, like that of the humble servant, "Uncle Tom," with a lack of any productive effort to understand the complex psychological implications of the faithfulness she valorized in his character. *Beloved* fills the gap by illuminating that sympathy can never be fully realised unless the foundations are revisited. Such foundations include the myth of Christian education in the context of slavery.

Weever explains the popularity of myth among black women writers by proposing that "[t]he experiences of black people in the New World, into which they have been forcibly thrust against their will, cannot be told or treated in realistic or naturalistic traditions" (4). Canonical myths such as those of the Judeo-Christian tradition function as an appropriate medium for addressing the contradictions and fallacies of the way notions of race have been historically constructed. By telling seemingly universal stories from a black perspective, black writers show how dichotomist thinking systematically maintains cultural hegemony, thus, undermines any possibility of understanding the silenced cultural other. As she combines different kinds of canonical myths, Morrison both acknowledges them as legitimate interpretations of experience and deconstructs their universal legitimacy, pointing out their cultural specificities.

In *Beloved* the seemingly universal narratives which are shown from a black perspective include the *Bible*. As Linden Peach observes, "[o]n the plantations religious instruction was intended as a form of social control" (115). However, the instruction slaves received was based on a singular, seemingly exclusive interpretation of the *Bible*, which, in reality, entailed the neglect of slaves' African roots, and led to their internalisation of the white society's derogatory view of blackness. The basic approach chosen by the non-dramatised, omniscient narrator of *Beloved* to dismantle such an elitist tradition is the application of multiple focalisers to show that different readings of the *Bible* are possible. These alternative interpretations are inextricably bound to notions of gender and are played out through the appearance of Biblical images in different contexts.

Gender relations are emphatically addressed in the novel. Weever argues that the most common cultural myths about black women are the Mammy and the Jezebel (2). Black women have been rendered inferior by several overlapping systems of domination throughout history. Not only

have they been exposed to the racism of white society but also to racism in their own community, the sexism of both black and white men, and the racism, classism, and opportunism of white women. Representing an individual character such as Sethe, free of any desire to act according to social expectations, Morrison humanises black womanhood in the face of all the aforementioned forced identifications. She also does so with black manhood, presenting the enslaved men of Sweet Home as victims of Garner's, the slaveholder's, masculine ideal internalised by the male slaves.

One of the central Biblical images present in the story is the image of the tree, reminding readers of the trees in the Garden of Eden. The characters' attitudes to this image illuminate how gender and the dominant interpretation of the *Bible* are related. Seeing Paul D after eighteen years, Sethe tells him about her own perspective of the scar on her back: "I got a tree on my back" (Morrison 15). The concept of the tree originates from Amy Denver, who saved Sethe's life during her route towards her new home, Baby Suggs's house. Amy Denver named Sethe's scar a "tree" in order to comfort her by suggesting that despite the attempts of white men at Sweet Home to reduce Sethe to the function of a cow, her life made sense, and her inner beauty could not be broken. As Deborah Ayer Sitter argues: "[t]ogether, Amy and Sethe create a feminine context against which Paul D's image of the tree must be understood" (22).

After Sethe and Paul D's lovemaking, the man's interpretation of the same scar is revealed, which is the negation of it being a tree: "[m]aybe shaped like one, but nothing like any tree he knew because trees were inviting; things you could trust and be near" (Morrison 21). Unlike for Sethe, in whose mind the word "tree" is connected to pain and humiliation, for him, the concept of the "tree" is associated with pleasant memories. As Sitter suggests, "[as] the tree is 'dialogised,' we become aware of competing definitions of manhood, womanhood, and love" (20). The difference between the two characters' mental concept evoked by the word "tree" is indicative of different experiences in connection with Sweet Home, for which mainly gender is responsible. Paul D could easily identify with Garner's concept of manhood because black slave men at Garner's plantation were treated relatively well, and Garner successfully injected his ideas of manhood into Paul D's mind, whereas, Sethe's experience as a slave woman at Sweet Home plantation was that of pain and humiliation, when the white men beat her up and took her milk away, making her incapable of providing sufficient nourishment for her children.

Garner's possessive masculinity is played out through a dialogue with another farmer:

> '[y]'all got boys,' he [Garner] told them. 'Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stroppin boys. Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought em thataway, raised em thataway. Men every one.' 'Beg to differ, Garner. Ain't no nigger men.' 'Not if you scared, they ain't.'Garner's smile was wide. 'But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too.' (Morrison 10)

He takes pride in "playing lord to someone else's vassal" (Sitter 24). His treatment of the black men at Sweet Home seems benevolent, however, this aforementioned example demonstrates that Garner's concept of masculinity is tainted by possessiveness, and slaves still occupy an inferior position in his rhetoric suggested by the derogatory word he uses. His words prove that he is more concerned with his benevolent image as a slaveholder than with the fair treatment of his slaves. It takes time for Paul D to recognise that the two perspectives are all the same in that neither Mr. Garner, nor schoolteacher or any other farmer cares about the slaves' fate, and slaves' inferiority is a fundamental conviction for all of them (24).

Paul D internalises Garner's concept of masculinity, which results in his inability to recognise the scar on Sethe's back as a tree, consequently, her self-authored story of her experience. As Sitter observes, his reluctance to see the scar as a tree goes hand in hand with his sexual frustration, stemming from his earlier idealization of Sethe, and his disappointment in her (22). Eventually, "it becomes clear that the chief barrier to Paul D's committing himself to Sethe is an ideal of manhood which is threatened by the woman she is" (Sitter 23). He objectifies her, wants to care for her, but when it turns out that Sethe is an individual, who is able to make her own decisions, he feels emasculated and refrains from facing it. His realisation about Sethe's past makes him confused, but he manages to re-evaluate his own assumptions about masculinity as he starts to see the fallacies of the system, and finally, he returns to Sethe. By illuminating how white patriarchy's ideals spill into the minds of black men, the narration suggests that the internalisation of these ideals disrupts the community and makes real communication between individuals impossible. Through one single metaphor, accompanied by the use of the narratological device of dialogism, dominant concepts of masculinity and femininity are revised and shown as something imposed upon the black community.

Another critic, Carolyn M. Jones, interprets the scar as Cain's mark, suggesting that "Sethe […] is 'remarked' as an animal when Shoolteacher's (sic) odious nephews drink her breast milk while Schoolteacher (sic) 'remarks,' writes down her reactions, using the ink that Sethe herself made. Then they mark the experience on her body, whipping her and creating a chokeberry tree on her back" (616). As opposed to Cain, however, who "refuses to acknowledge his effect on the 'other;'" (615) Sethe feels relieved when she is forced into the situation in which she must account for her deed and tries to make Beloved, the ghost of her dead girl child, understand her. Also, Sethe received her tree-shaped scar during a beating. Her tree is neither a tree of life, nor a tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for her, these notions do not make any sense. Her tree is a tree of humiliation and trauma. Jones points out an important scene when Paul D stands behind Sethe and holds her breasts in his hands. She suggests that "Paul D, who has made his own odyssey in the course of the novel, acknowledges the link between Sethe's breasts and her back, and helps Sethe to see that they are not in opposition to one another but can be balanced if integrated into Sethe's identity" (620). The scar on Sethe's back is a mark of murder, similar to Cain's mark, but it is one which foreshadows the act instead of being the result of it. Through injecting these Biblical motifs into the context of slavery and black life, the myth of "benevolent plantations" (Peach 106) is entirely turned upside down. The Eden-like quality implied by the name Sweet Home itself is exposed as an ultimate illusion.

The myth of benevolent plantations has been an integral part of the postbellum Southern nostalgia for slavery and antebellum race relations. The image of slavery evoked by this nostalgia is that of a big family, where slaves are similar to children, who should be brought up by Christian education and scolding in the case of any misbehavior. Not only does the perpetuation of such a view humiliate black people but it also covers and justifies practices motivated only by egotistic economic interest and arrogance, making it impossible for present and future generations to get a fair version of history. Morrison, thus, not only gives subjectivity to black people through the novel to tell their own stories, in an attempt to heal the collective trauma of slavery, but she also contributes to the narration of American history from a black perspective.

Another myth which is inverted in *Beloved* is the cultural myth of bestiality in connection with black people. Stamp Paid, one of the black male characters in the novel, meditates on slavery, claiming that

[w]hite people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood, […] But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who have made it. Touched them every one. (qtd. in Peach 117)

This unrecognized responsibility on the part of white society is problematised in *Beloved* since the narrative was inspired by a true life event, or rather by a report by Reverend Bassett about the slave woman, Margaret Garner's story of killing her child (Peach 106). Bassett met Garner and was shocked when he discovered that "Margaret Garner's killing of her child was a rational act, that she was as cool then as she was in talking to him" (107). He expected madness as an explanation for Garner's deed because he viewed the case taken out of context, as if it were the result of some inexplicable sickness, and not slavery (107). White society's reluctance to see the woman's act in the context of slavery, and the cruelties she had to endure, resulted in her bestialisation.

Beloved illuminates that the "jungle" which led to Sethe killing her child had been planted into her by slavery, by the brutality of the white people who had taken away her milk, beaten her up, and measured her with the pseudo-scientific gaze, making a list of her supposed good and bad characteristics. Barbara Christian argues that "schoolteacher's equivalents, plantation managers with interest in contemporary anthropological theories, did write treatises on slaves based on scientific observation of them and measurement of various parts of their bodies" (qtd. in Peach 116), and one of the main reasons Sethe wanted to prevent her children from being taken away as slaves was that she did not want them to be measured in this humiliating way. This extreme experience of objectification is exposed by the novel as a highly unrecognised but essential factor in the collective trauma, which resulted in Margaret Garner's act.

The lack of understanding of the black female slave experience by white society is influenced by stereotypical cultural myths about the black woman like the stereotypes of the Mammy or the Jezebel. Weever argues that "[m]ore than any other, motherhood is the female function most associated with black women" (134). History can account for such a stereotypical view. Deborah Gray White contends that "mid-eighteenth-century slaveholders

171

made female childbearing their desired goal and acted on that goal" (qtd. in Weever 134). At the same time, black slave women were left alone with the task of nurturing children (Weever 134), if they were not taken away from them right away. These historical facts have assisted in the emergence of the stereotypical image of the "matriarch" to describe black women, but as Weever argues, "[a] matriarch is […] a female patriarch, one who has total power in her society, who regulates the sex lives of the males, who sets boundaries for the men, who makes all decisions concerning national life and foreign policy […]" (134). In *Beloved*, however, "[w]omen-headed households are […] powerless households" (Weever 134).

The image of the matriarch is another myth *Beloved* deconstructs. As Weever claims, "[m]yths of all cultures have produced the archetypes of the nurturing mother and the destroying mother" (133). Sethe can be identified with both qualities, because, on the one hand, a central motif of her life is the desire to nurture her own children, and her major tragedy is that her milk was taken away by white men, making her incapable of providing for her children. She laments this fact more than the loss of her personality in her role of motherhood. On the other hand, she is devouring and destroying because she kills her own child. She is represented as a "mother of death" (Weever 138). The portrayal of black motherhood in this mythical way becomes more effective and something closer to everyday life, Weever argues: "[t]heir [the novelists'] portrayals adhere to the archetypes of myth because the writers bring the figures of the mother closer, paradoxically, to the truth of everyday life than would be the case if the portrayals were modeled on the cultural myths popular from modern television shows and advertisements" (133).

Beloved creates a "woman-headed household," traditionally perceived as strong, headed by the "matriarch" (Weever 134). However, Morrison warns us not to think of this arrangement in a utopistic manner. Weever gives an account of a Morrison-interview, in which she expresses her thoughts on black feminist criticism:

> 'I don't have much to say about the necessity to develop a specific black feminist model of critical inquiry, except that I think there is more danger in it than fruit, because any model of criticism or evaluation that excludes males from it is as hampered as any model of criticism of black literature that excludes women from it.' Morrison sees danger, not utopia, in her all woman household, and indeed the novels dramatically illustrate this danger. (142)

Taking into consideration the cruelties Sethe had to endure as a pregnant woman, her fatal decision receives different connotations from what Bassett assumed was the explanation for Margaret Garner's deed. During slavery, black women were used for rearing more and more slaves for the slaveholders. They were left alone with the task, and also had to bear sexist behavior from white males, while their families were disrupted. As Sethe's case demonstrates, sometimes children did not even know their mother. After she escapes, she gains freedom to be the mother to her children, and it is when this freedom is in danger that she kills Beloved, her daughter. She might be strong for being able to function as a human being while living with the terrible memory of killing her own daughter, but her strength is based on repression and an irreconcilable unhappiness, not some essential quality black women possess. These factors are rendered non-significant by the clinicalising attitude according to which a case like this could be viewed as simple madness. Sethe's case demonstrates the complex nature of human experience, making easy judgments impossible, thus, her character serves as the deconstruction of the popular myth of black motherhood.

In the second part of the novel, there are three long monologues: one by Sethe, the other two by Beloved and Denver. Sethe claims Beloved as her daughter, Beloved claims Sethe as her mother and Denver claims Beloved as her sister. As Weever observes, "[t]he identification between Sethe and Beloved serves as a metaphor for identification with the slave past of black people" (160). Beloved haunts because she is denied, so it is necessary for Sethe to claim her so that she can heal. This fact can be explained by the concept of "rememory," meaning that "memories have a physical existence beyond the minds of the individuals in whom they originate; it is possible to bump into and inhabit another person's memory" (Peach 117). It is Paul D, also a representative of a part of Sethe's past, who is able to send Beloved away. Together with Paul D they recall memories and talk a lot about Sweet Home. It had not been possible for Sethe to talk about this subject before his arrival since Denver used to be her only companion for a long time. As Paul D appears, Sethe immediately has to face her past, thus, on a symbolic level, Beloved can stop reminding her of it. By facing her past, her healing process starts, while the next step is Beloved's manifestation in a physical form. Confrontation with the past trauma symbolically stands for the need for black people to face the wounds of the slave past and cure them, as Weever also argues: "[t]he metaphor of motherhood makes this identification concrete and suggests that this relationship between Black-

Americans and the slave past, bears within it the possibilities of healing"
(161).

To sum up, on the one hand, *Beloved* deconstructs the myth that
certain plantations were "more benign than others" (Peach 106), illuminating
that there might have been differences on the surface, but the basic
foundation of the institution itself was inhumane, and was one essential
cause of that "madness" which could result in killing someone's own child.
The novel also revises cultural myths about black mothers, representing an
individual character rather than a type. The cultural myth of black bestiality
is turned upside down by showing that Sethe's infanticide should be viewed
in the context of slavery, and the psychological implications of the case
should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the novel emphasises the
need for both black and white society to stop denying the past, to face the
consequences of slavery and take active part in the reconciliation with it.

I have illustrated the implications of mythmaking by black female
writers in general, which comprises the intertextual revision of canonical,
and the deconstruction of cultural myths. Mythmaking is a contemporary
quest among black authors who aim at exposing oppression, thereby giving
voice to the black community, and additionally they expand the thematic
scope of American literature in the 20th century. I have argued that by the
production of these mythic narratives, uncontested assumptions about black
American history are revised, which, in the case of *Beloved*, is slavery as a
cultural memory. Traditional stories about slavery, such as the totalising voice
of some slave narratives by black males and the utopistic image of slavery
promoted by some Southerners, are often times distorted and biased by
racism and sexism. Therefore, the black female perspective is neglected, as
the aforementioned reception of the news about Margaret Garner's story
testifies to it. Morrison gives voice to the "bestialised" black mother in the
character of Sethe, deliberately arguing for the revision of the implications
of Garner's case, and to show the absurdity of the label of the matriarch in
the context of oppression. I have also illuminated how images and concepts
from the Biblical text can be interpreted in different ways in the novel
through the metaphor of the tree, exposing the singular interpretation forced
on slaves at the plantations as only one version, which was incapable of
describing the slaves' experiences. I also pointed out that dominant notions
of masculinity and femininity are intertwined with the slave owners'
interpretation of the *Bible* in the novel, and that these notions become
internalised by the black men, resulting in the gap between Paul D and Sethe.
I also demonstrated how white society's traditional assumptions about black

people and black women are approached by the novel, resulting in an open discourse about the slave past, in which the black perspective dominates. Finally, I argued for that Beloved symbolically stands for the slave past, which needs to be faced by black people in order to heal the wounds the system inflicted on the collective psyche.

Bibliography

Jones, Carolyn M. "Sula and Beloved: Images of Cain in the Novels of Toni Morrison." *African American Review* 27.4 (1993): 615-26. Print.

Keen, Suzanne. "Narrative Situation: Who's Who and What's its Function." *Narrative Form*. London: Macmillan, 2003. 30-54. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

Peach, Linden. "The Middle Passage: *Beloved* (1987)." *Toni Morrison*. New York: St. Martins, 2000. 102-25. Print.

Sitter, Deborah Ayer. "The Making of a Man: Dialogic Meaning in *Beloved*." *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 17-29. Print.

Weaver, Jacqueline de. *Mythmaking and Metaphor in Black Women's Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991. Print.

ALEXANDRA LILLA MOLNÁR

Reinvented Gender Roles in Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride"

Angela Carter's two excellent rewritings of "Beauty and the Beast" comprise a thoughtful and subversive revision of all the important motifs of the tale, not least concerning its gender politics. In her collection of rewritten fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, "Beauty and the Beast" is explicitly rewritten in the tales entitled "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" (and the eponymous story, Carter's revision of the Bluebeard tale, is also revealed as a version of "Beauty and the Beast"). In an interview, Carter admitted that "[her] fiction is very often a kind of literary criticism" (Haffenden 79), which sheds light on the hidden intention behind these adult fairy tales. This fictionalised literary criticism first and foremost is directed against those "false universalisations" (Gamble 138), which characterize our relationship to myths, and her aim was "not to do 'versions' […] but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories" (Haffenden 84). These new stories experiment with the socially constructed sexual and gender boundaries and try to show the readers new kinds of consciousness, so far unimaginable or latent in the history of fairy tales. As Atwood suggests, "Carter believed, too, with Blake, in the power of 'mind-forg'd manacles'" (Flesh 12), which need to be deconstructed in order to bring long-forgotten repressions to the surface, and which we have probably accepted so far as a kind of second nature. In this mission of hers, Carter found folklore to be the "ideal tool for an author 'in the demythologising business', because it is 'a much more straightforward set of devices for making real life more exciting and is much easier to infiltrate with other kinds of consciousness'" (Gamble 130). In so doing, "[s]he could experiment with her own writer's role, ally herself in imagination with the countless anonymous narrators who stood behind [male] literary redactors" (Sage 40). Besides, "as a performer of her own work in readings, […] she could reconnect herself with the oral tradition of story-telling" (1). In this essay, I shall argue that by rethinking the conventional "Beauty and the Beast" narratives, Carter, as a 20th-century storyteller, not only offers the readers new points of view on a well-known tale, but also invites them to critically rethink what seems to be safely known, since in her narratives she continually plays with the boundaries of sexuality

and gender expectations, taking them beyond the limits of patriarchal tradition.

In "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", Carter clearly follows the plotline of Madame Leprince de Beaumont's tale[1]; however, through a rich texture of motifs she emphasises things so far inconspicuous and reveals unsuspected aspects of the story. In Carter's narrative Beauty is an only child, half orphaned, which intensifies the close, too close bond between father and daughter. As Aidan Day suggests, the father "is, quite simply, a patriarch" (136), who considers Beauty as "his girl-child, his pet" (Carter 41), automatically denying Beauty an autonomous place in the world. The father's ambiguous role is further emphasised by his clothing, for he literally puts on a sheepskin coat, which naturally evokes in us the metaphorical image of the "wolf in sheep's clothing."[2] His deceptive appearance easily misleads the Beast's spaniel – for as soon as he arrives in the Beast's Palladian house, the dog "*shepherd*[s] him [...] to a snug little leather panelled study on the first floor" (Carter 43; emphasis added) –, as well as triggering off the chain of animal references which complicate the beast-beauty relationship in both of Carter's tales and include, among others, the fur coat bought by the father in London.

Hence, apart from the symbolism of the father-wolf, an animal helper – a frequent element of fairy tales – makes its appearance, too, in the form of a female spaniel. While Aidan Day sees this friendly spaniel as the actualization, "in its relation to the Beast, of the manner in which Beauty's father imagines Beauty as less than human, as his 'pet'" (136), I argue that the spaniel may have several other interpretations, too. For instance, the little dog can be an allegorical representation of the monstrous Beast's gentle, feminine side[3], for, as long as Beauty's father does not violate his host's rules by plucking the rose, this little pet behaves almost as if she was the mistress of the house, or at least the hostess. Moreover, when Beauty's father transgressively plucks the "one last, single, perfect rose that might have been the last rose left living in the white winter" (Carter 44)[4], the offended Beast's anger is comically paralleled by the spaniel's reaction, who, "darting from the open door, danced around them, yapping distractedly, like a lady at whose party blows had been exchanged" (44). This comparison also parodies two stereotypically gendered reactions to crisis: while the man reacts with proper masculine aggressiveness, the "woman" is running back and forth, whining. The mood swings of the Beast are mirrored by his loyal companion throughout the tale – in her comically domesticated way. I believe, however, that the spaniel not only works as a comic relief, parodying "proper"

feminine behaviour, but it also shows that men, by being imprisoned in the cage of masculinity, can never express their feminine side freely in public, for it is a generally accepted truth that it is much more important for a boy to behave as a real boy, than for a girl to behave as a real girl (Kolbenschlag 28). [5]

The Beast's caring side – the one he had better hide from the world – is also hinted at when he is given the photograph[6] in which he beholds Beauty for the first time. As a proof of his tenderness, this Beast takes "good care not to scratch the surface [of the photo] with his claws" (Carter 44) – an early indicator of the ending, when he is going to be "changed by love from carnivore to herbivore" (Flesh 124). The photograph indicates an important part of Carter's subversive revision, which is the introduction of contemporary details, with the help of which she explicitly updates the context of the tale. By introducing electronic devices and other 20th century inventions into the storyline, Carter removes the narrative out of the realm of universality, which we used to associate with fairy tales and myths. For instance, it is the breakdown of the father's car – "a clichéd symbol of masculine potency that is used so blatantly here that it slips cliché" (Day 136) – that results in the father finding the Beast's Palladian house, and it is the telephone which is out of order because of the snowstorm that makes it impossible for father and daughter to communicate. Paradoxically, it seems that within the framework of the modern fairy tale, modern devices simply stop working. Had they operated well, the story simply would not have been triggered. In other words, it is a breakdown in the modern transportation and communication systems (perhaps a breakdown of modernity itself) that casts the characters into a world of change.

Metamorphosis – another essential staple of the fairy tale genre – constitutes an essential part of Carter's storyline. Before the final and most important transformation indicated above, Beauty's feelings have to change towards the Beast. Carter's account consciously refers to Madame Leprince de Beaumont's tale:

> Beauty would pass the day in her suite reading or, perhaps, doing a little embroidery […]. An idle, restful time; a holiday. The enchantment of that bright, sad, pretty place enveloped her and she found that, against all her expectations, she was happy there. She no longer felt the slightest apprehension at her nightly interviews with the Beast. All the natural laws of the world were held in suspension, here, where an army of invisibles tenderly waited on her, and she would talk with the lion, under the patient chaperonage of the

brown-eyed dog, on the nature of the moon and its borrowed light, about the stars and the substances of which they were made, about the variable transformations of the weather. Yet still his strangeness made her shiver; and when he helplessly fell before her to kiss her hands, as he did every night when they parted, she would retreat nervously into her skin, flinching at her touch. (Carter 47-48)

It seems that in this dreamlike existence Beauty and the Beast, during their nightly conversations, explicitly try to find the greater meaning of life together, which is why they talk about the stars, the moon, the weather and wonder about their origins. Thus, like in Apuleius' "Cupid and Psyche"[7], but in secularised conditions (without the interruption of gods, for instance), such questions arise as the place of humanity in the world, the meaning of life and the borders of transcendence. In Carter's text, fairies and gods appear only on the level of objectified reality and on the level of metafiction – for example, there is a "little cupid in the gilt clock"[8], or Beauty reads "a collection of courtly and elegant French fairy tales about white cats who were transformed princesses and fairies who were birds" (Carter 46) while having supper. Hence the dinner-time conversation with the Beast is replaced by reading French fairy tales; the conversation itself starts at a later hour, in the study, which is much more suited for a serious exchange of views, and allows the partners greater equality than the supper-scenario did.

However, the telephone rings, and the idyll is broken by a contemporary device: Beauty can go back to her father, for he is wealthy again. The Beast sinks "his great head on his pawns. You will come back to me?" (Carter 48) – he asks. But, as opposed to other versions of the tale, he does not humiliate himself by saying that he will die without her if she does not return.[9] He simply tells Beauty that "[i]t will be lonely […] without [her]" (Carter 48), which is more moving, and is perfectly in accordance with the gentlemanly behaviour that he has manifested so far. Beauty's return to the father makes her regress into her father's "pet" again – into an "exquisite, expensive cat", a spoiled edition of her former humble self, who "smile[s] at herself in mirrors a little too often, […] and the face that smile[s] back [is] not quite the one she ha[s] seen contained in the Beast's agate eyes" (Carter 49). As a result, the transformation that had been triggered stops for a while, and Beauty is pulled back into her comfort zone, in a world where "you are never at the mercy of elements, [for] the warmth of humanity melts the snow before it has time to settle" (48) and even "the flowers in the shop [are] the

same all year round" (48). How could we expect any kind of change in such a world?

The final touch, however, to buy her furs, remains incomplete, for the spaniel arrives to pull her back on the way that leads to adulthood, that is, to the Beast, who represents the possibility of an exogamous relationship. Had she chosen the fur over the Beast, she would have accepted a fake substitute for pleasure over the real discovery of her own sexuality, stuck in the "father's pet" phase of development. Though Beauty always seems to be identified in relation to either the "beastly father" or the "fatherly beast" (Flesh 133), there is more to the tale than this, and the transformation involves not only the Beast's physical and emotional transformation and Beauty's sexual awakening, but the Beast also changes his innate ways ("from carnivore to herbivore [Flesh 124]") for his Beauty. The conclusion, as Day suggests, might be considered as a "parody of the ideological representation of conventional bourgeois marriage" (139): "Mr and Mrs Lyon walking the garden; the old spaniel drowses on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals" (Carter 51). Yet, the very last words ("fallen petals"), by referring back to the white rose, reinforce the maturation and sexual awakening of Beauty, even if she has become Mrs Lyon in the meantime.

For all its subversive details, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" is "a relatively tame rewrite" (Gamble 133), especially as opposed to "The Tiger's Bride", which draws on the potentials of so far unexplored possibilities for the feminine inherent in the tale and reveals new horizons in case of the other protagonists (father and Beast) as well. First of all, it is Beauty herself telling the story in first person narration, sharing with us her personal experience in a direct fashion. This means that, finally, we hear the well-known story from the heroine herself, which makes it possible to grasp a kind of truth that could never be seen through the bespectacled authoritarian eyes of a masculine member of society. The very first sentence "My father lost me to The Beast at cards" (51) radically raises the economic aspect of the tale: "[t]he role of women as items of exchange in a patriarchal system is accented even more sharply in the 'Tiger's Bride' than in 'The Courtship of Mr Lyon'" (Day 139). As opposed to other "Beauty and the Beast" narratives where it is the girl's self-sacrifice that leads to her stay at the predator's castle, in "The Tiger's Bride" the way Beauty changes "owners" is a much more straightforward and honest issue: the uncaring father stakes and loses the girl at cards to The Beast ("La Bestia"), who symbolises the Italian mafia (Figure 1).

Thus, the motif of sacrifice remains, but the fact that it is the father who sacrifices his daughter – in the hope of financial reward – and not the

daughter that sacrifices herself makes us think about the hidden workings of patriarchal society. Is it really an inherent characteristic of women to sacrifice themselves for the sake of a man? Or is it the patriarchal ideologies instilled in women's heads that make "the weaker sex" think about themselves in such Biblical ways? The latter expectation seems to be much closer to the truth, for, as Madonna Kolbenschlag observes – with special attention to the Cold War Era –, women were supposed to move along vertical lines (between Heaven and Hell), but were never expected to make a horizontal step into society for fear of squeezing men out of their habitual frameworks (238).

The unexpected honesty of the tale is further underlined by the fact that Beauty and her father take a voyage together to Italy – where as opposed to earlier expectations, snow and cold are reigning. This voyage changes not only the habitual plotline of the tale, but also gives a new meaning to it, by literally moving the narrative to an unknown, uninhabited realm, which is waiting to be discovered. The Beast, for that matter, becomes a much more interesting and intriguing character than he normally is. In addition, he is the most uncanny of all:

> [H]e has an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop down on all fours. He throws human aspirations to be godlike sadly awry, poor fellow; only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man's face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face, but one with too much symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny. He wears a wig, too […]. And gloves […]. He is a carnival figure made of papier mâché and crêpe hair, and yet he has the Devil's knack at cards. (Carter 53)

Hence, Angela Carter not only reflects upon Beauty's patriarchal chains: from the Beast's description it becomes clear that he is as much a victim of appearances and ideologies as Beauty is an amusing toy for powerful men. The serious inner battle that seems to disintegrate the Beast from the inside can easily be linked to patriarchal society's impossible expectations, which, on the one hand, can be seen as an inability to fulfil the requirements of proper masculine behaviour like in the case of Mr Lyon. On the other hand, however, "[f]airy tales are often seen as dealing with the 'uncanny', the

distorted fictions of the unconscious revisited through homely images – and beasts can easily stand for the projected desires, the drive for pleasure of women" (Makinen 28). Hence, it does not come as a surprise that both Beauty and the Beast are outcasts of patriarchal society: otherness is the category that they inhabit, at a safe distance from the eyes of "the ruling class" – and the deal which combines Beauty with her projected desires has "catastrophic" consequences for patriarchal expectations.

The father – "a feckless sprig of the Russian nobility" with his "gaming, whoring and agonizing" (Carter 52) tendencies – is no longer the loving parent, clinging on his "pet," though this attitude seems to be more humane than that of the fathers of the earlier versions.[10] For which (sane) father would let his daughter commit self-sacrifice instead of saving her by sacrificing himself? Now, at least he shows his true colours, which makes the process of selling Beauty much more straightforward than crying over her and letting her die.

One could even claim that Beauty's later deliberateness results precisely from this uncaring kind of paternal authority: Beauty is tied to him neither by love, nor by bad self-conscience or material interest. This is why she "does not seem to have been *suddenly* disillusioned by having been […] 'Lost to the Beast'. It is as if, under her father's tutelage, she already knew that her status as an object, as a commodity, was her only status in the world" (Day 139-40). This awareness of her status as an object, combined with "a childhood knowledge of sex together with superstitions about sex and an imposed fear of the animal" (140) – which Beauty recalls from the old threatening tales of her English nurse about the "tiger-man [who] will come and take you away" if she behaves badly (56) – make it possible for her first to reflect on, then to understand and finally to reverse the role society has imposed on her. The nursery menaces also show that she was born with a potential for subversion[11]– "I was a wild wee thing" (Carter 56) – which endows her with the strength to swim against the current. According to Kolbenschlag, many young girls before puberty go through their last wild years before subjecting themselves to the inevitable "dream" of the female soul (26). For the sake of variety, the Beauty of this narrative shows that other, more exciting opportunities can open up for women, too. This is why the white rose – which has been a generally accepted symbol of the girl's spotless condition – gains new interpretation in "The Tiger's Bride". It is not the father who gives the rose to Beauty, but the Beast. In addition, she tears off the petals one by one. Thus – even though it is not yet apparent – in her acts there seems to hide the possible mistress of her own sexuality, of her

own body and of her own soul, which she is about to prove with other acts of subversion.

In keeping with her personality, Beauty responds to the Beast's desire – to see her once naked – with brave boldness: "You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull up my skirt, ready for you. Bur there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it […]. So I shall be covered from the waist upwards and no lights. There you can visit me once sir, and only once" (Carter 59). She goes on to declare that she is also ready to accept money in exchange, but she warns the Beast that he "should give her only the same amount of money that [he] would give to any other woman in such circumstances" (59). This might remind us of the ancient Roman custom of giving a present to the woman in exchange for her virginity, however, it also refers to the "prostitutionalisation" of this important stage of feminine development. Having been sold as a piece of meat, Beauty behaves accordingly, which signifies "economic objectification" (Makinen 29). Ironically, by showing full understanding of patriarchal expectations, Beauty manages to shake off her chains, which brings us back to the rose, the petals of which had been ripped off by Beauty herself.

Moreover, while in earlier "Beauty and the Beast" narratives – including the "Courtship of Mr Lyon", where "an army of invisibles tenderly waited on her" (47) – Beauty is entirely spoiled in the Beast's castle, in the present case Beauty, having boldly responded to the Beast's wish, is given a "veritable cell, windowless, airless, lightless, in the viscera of the palace" (Carter 59), which totally fits the milieu of the castle itself: a dead world, "a burned-out planet" (57). Thus paralleling the honesty of the father, there seems to be no pretentions left in Carter's story. Beauty gets what she deserves for her boldness, which condition offers her a much more fertile ground for development than any kind of façade could.

The Beast's unexpected reaction turns gender stereotypes on their head, too: as a result of Beauty's refusal to show herself naked, he obliges her to see *him* without his clothes. But when "the tiger reveals his animality beneath the human mask" (Day 143), Beauty also undresses, of her own will. However, "her stripping […] does not place her as the object of the masculine gaze. It incorporates into her subject position an animality which cultural construction of what she is has sought to mask" (Day 143), but cannot hide anymore. Both "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride"

are careful to show a reciprocal awe and fear in the beasts, as well as the beauty, and the reversal theme reinforces the equality of transactions: lion kisses Beauty's hand, Beauty kisses lion's; tiger strips naked and so Beauty chooses to show him the 'fleshly nature of women'. In both cases the beasts signify a sensuality that the women have been taught might devour them, but which, when embraced, gives them power, strength and a new awareness of both self and other. (Makinen 29-30)

We may add that in the "Tiger's Bride," this transactional deal happens in nature, far from the shabby façade of the castle, where Beauty and the Beast can finally free themselves from their burdens and where Beauty is faced with a kind of truth she has never been allowed to see before.

Had Beauty rejoined her father after this act of stripping, she would have immediately lost her newly gained subject position, which contains a hint of animality. But Beauty, having decided to invest in further discovery of her inner self, seeks the help of the mechanical simulacrum (Figure 2), which "initially [is] described as her 'twin' since it so exactly mimics the mechanical obedience she has been required to display", but which "takes on a different, rebellious connotation when it is sent to [Beauty's] father to act as his daughter in her place" (Sellers 118). No more loveable animal helpers, but hard reality: a robot redefines the socially constructed dimensions of where women's place should be in the world and the hollowness of that role for a human being. Beauty, having started her journey as an item of exchange, manages to "transform 'meat' into 'flesh'", which – combined with "skin" – symbolises pleasure (Makinen 30).

This is how Beauty embraces transformation in a "system of Chinese boxes" (Carter 57) – that is, in the Beast's palace –, which reminds us of the Gothic castle with its "series of three-dimensional worlds within worlds: rooms containing closets, closets containing locked chests, locked chests containing secret drawers, secret drawers containing trinket boxes" (Armitt 90). Beauty not only manages to reach far among these layers of the castle, but she takes a journey to the depths of her inner self, too, as the Beast's tongue "rip[s] off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world" (Carter 67). And what remains in the end – "a nascent patina of shining hairs" (Carter 60) – can in no way be likened to the fake pleasure of the furs, which eventually disintegrate into "a pack of black, squeaking rats" (Carter 59) as Beauty takes them off. In other words, as opposed to the "Courtship of Mr Lyon", the "transformation is the other way round" (Flesh

124), which means that Beauty "discovers herself as an animal" (126) by fully embracing the Beast – her projected sexual desires – until she finally finds her integrity in the Other.

Appendix

Figure 1. Illustration by Amy Carter created for the *Contemporary Illustrators* exhibition at *The James Taylor Gallery*

Figure 2. Illustration by Amy Carter created for the *Contemporary Illustrators* exhibition at *The James Taylor Gallery*

Notes

1 Madame Leprince de Beaumont was an 18th century writer who "continually stressed industriousness, self-sacrifice, modesty and diligence in all her tales as the qualities young ladies and men must possess to attain happiness" (Oxford 294).

2 The image of the wolf also creates an intertextual link with the story of Red Riding Hood, of which Carter offers three revised versions in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* – all of them providing different angles of emphasis in the storyline.

3 Jungians would see in her the "anima" part of the Beast's soul.

4 An obviously exaggerated reference to the over-mystification of female virginity.

5 All of the quotations and paraphrases from Madonna Kolbenschlag's book (*Búcsúcsók Csipkerózsikának*) are my translations.

6 The photograph can be seen as the modern version of the portrait Ricky of the Tuft falls in love with, "Ricky of the Tuft" is Charles Perrault's narrative about a beautiful, but stupid princess and an intelligent, but ugly prince, based on the author's strictly limited patriarchal worldview.

7 *The Golden Ass* is Apuleius' 2nd-century myth-like tale, which appears as an embedded narrative in his novel.

8 When it strikes twelve, Beauty retires to sleep, just like Cinderella, thus creating another intertextual link.

9 What the Beast does by propagating his own death is – according to Carter – "an advertisement for moral blackmail" (Haffenden 83).

10 Masculine self-sacrifice tends to appear only in the context of the great causes of the world, while feminine self-sacrifice appears accordingly in the limited universe of women – they usually sacrifice themselves for the sake of masculine members of society – which means that it must be the "great cause" of their lives.

11 Margaret Atwood said the same about Angela Carter –"She was born subversive" (Sage 1).

Bibliography

Apuleius, Lucius. *Amor and Psyche. The Psychic Development of the Feminine. A Commentary of the Tale by Apuleius*. Neumann, Erich. New York: Bollingen, 1956. Print.

Armitt, Lucie. "The fragile frames of *The Bloody Chamber*." in *The infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*. Eds. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton. London: Longman, 1997. 88-99. Print.

Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de. "Beauty and the Beast." in: *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola & Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. Ed. Zipes, Jack. New York: Norton, 2001. 805-815. Print.

Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. London: Vintage, 1995. Print.

Day, Aidan. *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998. Print.

Gamble, Sarah. *Angela Carter: Writing from the Frontline.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997. Print.

Haffenden, John. *Novelists in Interview.* London: Methuen, 1985. Print.

Kolbenschlag, Madonna. *Búcsúcsók Csipkerózsikának.* Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1999. Print.

Makinen, Merja. "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality." in: Easton, Alison ed. *Angela Carter.* Hong Kong: New Casebooks, 2000. Print.

Perrault, Charles. "Riquet à la houppe." in: *Contes en prose.* Perrault, Charles. Paris: Libretti,2004. 67-74.

Sage, Lorna. *Angela Carter.* Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1994. Print.

---. ed. *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter.* London: Virago, 1994. Print.

Sellers, Susan. *Myth and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction.* Hampshire:Palgrave, 2011. Print.

Zipes, Jack. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales.* New York: Oxford, 2000. Print.

CONTRIBUTORS

ESZTER EDIT BALOGH

Eszter Edit Balogh was born in Szentes, 22 June 1990. She is a second-year Ph. D. Student of the British Studies programme at the Doctoral School of Literature, University of Debrecen. She won the second prize on the XXXI National Scientific Students' Associations Conference in 2013. Her main field of research is First World War art, the individual and collective memory of the Great War and the changing representations of masculinity. The topic of her dissertation is the war's role in the dissolution of the rigid, previously unquestioned heteronormative discourse of gender, mainly in the narratives of war prisoners. Her mentor is Prof. Tamás Bényei.

GYULA BARNABÁS BARANYI

Gyula Barnabás Baranyi is a second-year MA student in the American Studies Master's program at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, and is a member of the Hatvani István College for Advanced Studies. His research interests include cultural studies and theory, film studies, and game studies. He won second prize in the visual culture section of the 2013 National Scientific Students' Associations Conference in Hungary. He has been a contributor to *Szkholion,* the journal of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Debrecen. His mentor is Dr. Péter Csató, while his essay published in the current volume was supervised by Dr. Imola Bülgözdi.

GEORGINA BOZSÓ

Georgina Bozsó is a Ph. D. student of the British Studies stream at the Doctoral School of Literature, University of Debrecen. Her research interests include gender studies and their roles in contemporary English and Scottish fiction; additionally the examination of the concept of masculinity in the 1980s British fiction. In 2013, she was awarded second prize and also a Special Award for British Literature and Culture at the 31st National Scientific Students' Associations Conference. She has also gained the Hungarian National Excellence Program's Eötvös Lóránd scholarship. Her mentor is Prof. Nóra Séllei.

ORSOLYA ERDEI

Erdei Orsolya is a second-year MA student of the North American Department at the University of Debrecen. Her research interests include contemporary African-American women writers such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison and the intersection of literature and the African-American social protest tradition. Her mentor is Dr. Lenke Németh.

JÓZSEF SZABOLCS FAGYAL

József Szabolcs Fagyal is currently a Ph. D. student of the British Studies programme, at the Doctoral School of Literature, University of Debrecen. His research interests include nautical fiction and the development of the genre from the first modern examples to contemporary texts. In 2013, he was awarded first prize at the 31st National Scientific Students' Associations Conference in the section of English and American Literature and Culture. He is editor of *Szkholion*. His mentor is Prof. Tamás Bényei.

FANNI FELDMANN

Fanni Feldmann, final-year MA student of British Studies at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, does research on the representation of sexual and gender identities in literature and film, primarily in Eastern European cinema. Her latest publications is a survey on Hungarian queer cinema in the latest volume of the ZOOM series (Tér, hatalom és identitás viszonyai a magyar filmben [2015]). She presented papers at several conferences, including the Gender, Translocality and the City conference at the University of Debrecen (2016). She is a member of the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies (NECS). Her mentor is Prof. Nóra Séllei.

MARCELL KÓNYA

Marcell Kónya is a graduate student of British Literature and Culture at the University of Debrecen. He holds a bachelor's degree in English and History from the University of Debrecen and his primary research area is the photographic image making of the First World War, especially focusing on the representation of bodies and photography as practiced by women. He is a member of the Hatvani István Extramural College and DETEP. His mentor is Dr. Gabriella Moise.

ALEXANDRA LILLA MOLNÁR

Alexandra Lilla Molnár is a second-year MA student in the Teacher Training Programme of the University of Debrecen. After graduation she is going to become an English and French language teacher. Her main field of interest is the world of fairy tales, with special attention to the "Beauty and the Beast" and Angela Carter's collection of rewritten fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. As a future teacher, she is also interested in how fairy tales affect children's psychological development and how such tales could be put to use in the language classroom. Her mentor is Prof. Tamás Bényei.

ATTILA LÉNÁRT-MUSZKA

Attila Lénárt-Muszka received his Master's Degree in American Studies in 2012 and is currently a doctoral student and part-time instructor at the University of Debrecen. His field of research is contemporary Jewish American literature with a special focus on identity formation and the representation of physical abuse in literature. Currently he is working on exploring the image of the "muscle Jew" in contrast with stereotypes based on the physicality of the Jewish man. He is a member of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English and the Hungarian Association for American Studies. Besides being a part-time instructor at the Institute of English and American Studies, he has been a language instructor at Debrecen Summer University. His mentor is Dr. Péter Csató, while his essay published here was supervised by Dr. Judit Molnár, Prof. Nóra Séllei and Dr. Péter Csató.

BABETT RUBÓCZKI

Babett Rubóczki graduated at the American Studies Master's program at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen in 2015. She was the member of the Hatvani István College for Advanced Studies and the talent management program of the University of Debrecen (DETEP). She has been investigating American modernist literature with special attention to the representation of sexuality and gender in Ernest Hemingway's works. Her current research focuses on the relationship between space, ethnicity and gender in contemporary Chicana literature. Her mentor is Dr Lenke Németh.

ÉVA SZABÓ

Éva Szabó is a final-year MA student majoring in British Studies at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. She is member of the group of talented students, DETEP and Hatvani István Extramural College. Her field of research is contemporary British women writers' fiction. She is interested in analysing the representation of traditional notions of femininity, sexuality and motherhood. She also studies domesticity and nourishment, which are the focus of her MA thesis. She published papers and presented at several conferences, the latest of which was "Gender, Translocality and the City Interdisciplinary Conference" in 2016, at the University of Debrecen. Her mentor at Hatvani István Extramural College is Eszter Ureczky, while her essay published in the current volume was supervised by Prof. Tamás Bényei.

KATA TÓFALVI

Kata Tófalvi is an MA student of the Literary and Cultural Studies stream of the Department of British Studies, University of Debrecen. Her research interests include visual arts, especially identity formation in photography, and recently she examines the state and possibilities of textile art in art history and in contemporary conceptual art. She is a member of Hatvani István College and DETEP. In 2013 she won a special award at the National Scientific Students' Associations Conference. Her mentor is Prof. Nóra Séllei.

EDIT WEIDISCH

Edit Weidisch is a final-year MA student at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen. She is a member of Hatvani István Szakkollégium and DETEP. Her main field of research is the gender construction of the Victorian era from women's point of view in the novels of the Brontë sisters. She is interested in how heroines, who did not conform to the expected behaviour, were treated. For instance, how female artists lived and worked or what kind of possibilities and limitations they had in that period. Her mentor is Prof. Nóra Séllei.