

Women and Fairness

Navigating an Unfair World

Edited by
Eva Lambertsson Björk
Jutta Eschenbach
Johanna M. Wagner



WAXMANN

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Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Acknowledgements | 7 |
|------------------------|---|

Johanna M. Wagner

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Introduction | 9 |
|--------------------|---|

Part I. Women in Work: Ways of Doing and Being

Sorcha Gunne

Social Reproduction and “Housewifization”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper”

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| and <i>Women and Economics</i> | 19 |
|--------------------------------------|----|

Guri Ellen Barstad

The Feminist Agenda in Rachilde’s *La Jongleuse*

| | |
|---|----|
| The Artist and Her Creative Power | 35 |
|---|----|

Jane Ekstam

“Looking and feeling good on my own terms”

Amal’s Hybrid Identity in Randa Abdel-Fattah’s

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Does My Head Look Big in This?</i> | 49 |
|---|----|

Part II. Women in Cultural Production: Defining Images

Wladimir Chávez V.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes?

| | |
|--|----|
| The Representation of Women in Two Ecuadorian Comics | 65 |
|--|----|

Johanna M. Wagner

Sublimity of the New Mother in Gothic Film

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>The Babadook</i> and <i>Goodnight Mommy</i> | 81 |
|--|----|

Melanie Duckworth

Women, Animals and Fairness

An Ecofeminist Reading of Charlotte Wood’s

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>The Natural Way of Things</i> (2015) and <i>Animal People</i> (2011)..... | 97 |
|--|----|

Marcus Axelsson

Helen Wells’ *Peril over the Airport* (1953)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Norwegian and Swedish Translations of Gender | 113 |
|--|-----|

Part III. Women in the World: Telling Women’s Stories

Deanna Benjamin

Writing Someone Else’s Story

Entitlement and Empathy in Maxine Hong Kingston’s

“No Name Woman” 131

Rania Maktabi

Female Lawyers in the Middle East after the 2011 Arab Revolts

Addressing Family Law and Domestic Violence in State Laws..... 145

Eva Lambertsson Björk and Jutta Eschenbach

Absolutely happy in myself

Four Women’s Negotiations with Patriarchy 161

Mathabo Khau

Being and Becoming a Woman in Lesotho

An Autoethnography of Belonging..... 177

About the Editors 193

About the Contributors 194

Acknowledgements

This book is a long time coming! When we began this project in the fall of 2019, little did we know what we would face in 2020. As the COVID-19 pandemic upended university life, it brought many challenges, both personal and professional to ourselves and our contributors. Travel restrictions and lockdowns all over the globe meant meetings between contributors and editors, as well as between editors themselves went virtual. Still, great, albeit perhaps slower, progress was made by everyone involved. As the book heads to press in early 2021, over two million (and counting) are dead from the virus and a more contagious variant of the virus has been identified in many countries. Thousands have lost their jobs, and sadly, studies show that, unsurprisingly, unemployment is having an outsize impact on women. Still, vaccinations have begun, spring is around the corner, and women are resilient, as substantiated again and again by the chapters in this anthology. Therefore, hope is in bloom. We complete this book, then, with mixed emotions: of sorrow for a year lost, of pride in our sense of accomplishment, and a new humility and appreciation for life.

With this sense of hope and appreciation, we want to thank the many people whose time and effort made this anthology possible. We would first like to thank the *Litteratur og Narrativitet* research group at Østfold University College, where the idea began and gathered support, and also to Østfold University College for funding and providing our project open access. To Gwen Pitman at NASA headquarters photo archive in Washington D.C., thank you for your swift and kind assistance in finding our book cover image. To our contributors, thank you for your hard work, your tenacity, and your willingness to revise. And finally, as editors we would like to thank each other. Working together on this project has been a demanding, but truly inspiring experience.

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Introduction

Nevertheless...

On 7 February 2017, feminist progressive Democrat Elizabeth Warren stood before her colleagues in the U.S. Senate and argued against the confirmation of a fellow Senator to the position of the Attorney General of the United States.¹ To her colleagues, she read a letter submitted in 1986 to the same body regarding the same Senator nominated for a separate federal position. The letter – read without incident in the Senate in 1986 – focused on the Senator’s past racist inclinations,² but Warren was soon interrupted by a conservative Republican colleague, insisting she broke a rarely-invoked rule forbidding certain speech against a sitting senator.³ She continued. The Republican-majority Senate then voted to silence Warren: “Senator Warren had given a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. *Nevertheless, she persisted*” (“Proceedings,” S855).⁴ Although one (male) colleague was allowed to read the letter in full later without objection, Warren’s (female) voice was effectively silenced.

On 7 June 2020, during a Black Lives Matter⁵ protest in Bristol, a statue of Edward Colston, a prominent British Member of Parliament and merchant involved in the slave trade, was pulled down and tumbled into the harbor. In the

1 The fellow Senator was Republican Jeff Sessions from Alabama. The position of Attorney General of the U.S. is a federal position in which the person acts as the head of the Justice Department for the entire United States.

2 The original letter was written by Corretta Scott King, an African American woman, long-time resident of Alabama, and widow of slain civil rights leader Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. She opposed Session’s confirmation to a federal judgeship, because of “racial bias” in past judicial positions in Alabama (Hawkins, 2017).

3 Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was the colleague who interrupted and invoked Rule XIX, section 2, which states that Senators cannot “directly or indirectly” accuse a colleague of “conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator” (United). Colleague Charles Schumer stated that it was “selective enforcement of a rarely-used procedure to [simply] interrupt” and silence Warren (Schumer qtd in Berman, 2017).

4 This explanation of the proceedings was stated by McConnell. Ironically, the final sentence became a viral rallying cry for feminists in 2017.

5 The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a decentralized, socio-political movement protesting the disproportionate number of African Americans killed in the U.S. compared to other citizens, and the disturbingly high rate of people who kill African Americans to be acquitted of the killings. The movement began in 2013 after the death of 17-year old Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, a local neighbor. The movement has spread to other countries as people of color, especially Black people of color, fight against the violence aimed at their communities. For more on Black Lives Matter, please see the website provided in the list of references. For more on Trayvon Martin, please see *Deadly Injustice*, edited by Devon Johnson et al.

early morning of 15 July 2020, *A Surge of Power* (Jen Reid) 2020,⁶ a sculpture of the titular Bristol resident and BLM protestor was erected on the vacant Colston plinth. In black resin and steel, Jen Reid stands defiant and hopeful, right arm raised in a fist, looking straight ahead. She is resilient, determined. Perhaps even in 2020 the figure of a Black woman replacing a White, male slave trader is threatening. She stood for only one day, for it was removed by the Bristol City Council on 16 July 2020... made invisible. *Nevertheless*, she persists in our memory, in photographs gone viral over the internet, and records by news outlets all over the world.

Warren and Reid, representatives of all kinds of women who simply want to do their jobs or take a stand, are actively (in Warren's case), and passively (in Reid's case) removed from sight or silenced one way or another. But it is the duty of those who can, to remind the world of who they are and their struggles to overcome barriers, to persist in giving them back their voices, and allowing them renewed visibility.

The late twentieth century saw feminist academics do just that. They began the long, hard trek of unearthing all kinds of women's stories, finding and reintroducing women's intellectual work in various academic disciplines, and unearthing more expansive and inclusive visions of what women can be and do in the world. This movement led to major changes in the ways we view women's contributions to life and culture – as subjects and creators – opening up passageways once obstructed with open sexism and misogyny. And yet challenges remained.

The twenty-first century's Me Too movement and its associated Times Up drive of 2017 and 2018, respectively, recognized these old problems of silencing and invisibility, causing a renewed sense of urgency to revisit the unique barriers placed before women as they maneuver their paths in life.⁷ The two movements have especially focused on sexual harassment and assault in order to highlight the diverse journeys women physically tread in societies, but they have also invigorated many in the academic community to revisit how women fare in their own disciplines. One way to do that is to gather academic work that speaks to the experiences of women, for in order to promote women's voices and visibility

6 After the statue was dumped in the harbor, Jen Reid returned to the vacant pedestal, climbed up, and stood in the place recently vacated by Colston, fist held high in a "Black Power salute" (Quinn, 2020). After seeing the image on Instagram, Quinn contacted Reid and they collaborated on the sculpture (Quinn, 2020).

7 The "Me Too" movement was created by Tarana Burke in 2006 to indicate support for sexual abuse survivors by revealing that oneself had also experienced sexual assault or harassment. The hashtag was added after Alyssa Milano, Hollywood actor, tweeted Burke's phrase in 2017. Times Up appeared in 2018 piggybacking on the Me Too movement, which had unearthed the overwhelming number of female Hollywood actors who were sexually brutalized by movie mogul Harvey Weinstein. The movement widened from Hollywood to other media entities implying a day of reckoning for men such as Weinstein who took advantage of their powerful positions to abuse women. For more on #MeToo, please see Karen Boyle's *#MeToo, Weinstein and Feminism* (2019). For more on #TimesUp as well as #MeToo, see Aubri F. McDonald's chapter "Framing #MeToo" (2019).

in the present and the future, women's experiences must be *continuously* central and available. Critiques of narratives that center on fictional women's experiences, studies that chronicle real women's experiences, and first-hand testimonies of real women about their own experiences continue to be imperative tasks of empowerment, akin to correctives in a discernibly unfair world. It is with these various experiences in mind, and the goal of empowering women, of being sources of voice and visibility for women, that the material in this book was collected.

Specifically, this collection brings together scholars from various disciplines to ask fundamental questions concerning how women handle the manifold impediments, tangible and otherwise, placed before them as they simply attempt to live full human lives. The collection explores narratives of women – real and fictional – who fight against these barriers, who succumb to them, who remain unaware of them, or choose to ignore them; it explores the ways we read women in cultural production, and how women are read in society. In this collection, we assume the obstacles constructed into the very fabric of societies against fifty percent of the population are unfair, be they hindrances for women to attain their goals, encumbrances that limit women's participation societally, communally, artistically, or hindrances that prohibit specific behaviors and images of women. However, the voices and visibility of women in this collection resonate and manifest in empowering ways; they persist... nevertheless.

Part I. Women in Work: Ways of Doing and Being

Part I explores women in fictional texts who struggle to make their own choices about work and identity. In this section *Sorcha Gunne* explores economic inequality between the sexes in the writing of American author and sociologist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935). Perkins Gilman is now best known for her short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), about a woman confined to her bedroom, who hallucinates as she stares at the wallpaper. During her own lifetime, however, Perkins Gilman was also renowned for her sociological work, publishing studies such as *Women and Economics* (1898), *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903) and *Does a Man Support His Wife?* (1915), in which she draws attention to the economic disparity between men and women engendered by the 19th century cult of domesticity, which increasingly normalized systemic inequality between women and men. This chapter aims to put Gilman's work in conversation with the more contemporary work in Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), especially taking a closer look at Silvia Federici's work to highlight the limits of conventional critiques of capitalism which neglect to account for reproductive labour. It also investigates Gilman in greater detail, drawing on SRT to perform a reading of Gilman's famous short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper”. This analysis considers how the story's theme of madness and gothic formal qualities not only chimes with the treatise of

Women and Economics, but constitutes a literary registration of Federici's later revelation that the gendering of housework is a violence perpetrated by systemic capitalism.

Remaining in the nineteenth century, Guri Ellen Barstad investigates the feminist threads within the French novel *La Jongleuse* or *The Juggler* (1900) by Marguerite Vallette-Eymery, otherwise known as Rachilde. *La Jongleuse* can be read as a feminist novel in which Rachilde makes a stand for women's rights as artists alongside men, and encourages female artistic power in a century where decent women were supposed to keep silent about their artistic ambitions. The protagonist, Eliante Donalger compels a reflection on Art and the artist, which can be considered a kind of parable of the artist's creative power, ambiguous destiny, and exclusive passion for art. In order to identify and grasp the novel's aesthetic discourse, one needs to go beyond the story's realistic realm and look at its mythical and supernatural elements, which open a portal to a deeper metaphorical and spiritual dimension. In doing this, the novel may be read as the author's disguised and non-theoretical feminist manifesto.

Shifting to contemporary fiction, Jane Ekstam considers how Amal, the young protagonist of Abdel-Fattah's novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (2005), struggles with the prejudice associated with her multiple identities. As an Australian-Muslim-Palestinian, her taking up of the hijab in high school places her squarely into contemporary public discussion of women and Islam in Australia. Her hybrid identity makes her feel powerful on the one hand and trapped on the other, and sometimes these warring emotions feel like they may overcome her high school experience altogether. However, Amal is able to capitalise on her otherness by both embracing and resisting it. Her struggle to forge a unified identity across diverse cultural communities places gender at the center. Amal's task is to attain a female sexuality that is both materially and symbolically acceptable within her own standards, Islamic culture, and the dominant Australian culture in which she lives. While she is conscious of historically ascribed identity, e.g. clash of civilisations such as Australia vs. Islam, Amal embodies a consciousness that is *for* itself, which works into her own self-defined identity. Amal's identity is her own, a product of negotiation between the three cultures of her hyphenated name and her gender. The result is a young teenager who respects all facets of her identity – and expects others to do the same.

Part II. Women in Cultural Production: Defining Images

Part II probes the various ways, positive and negative, in which women are represented in cultural production such as comics, film, and literature. Wladimir Chávez begins the section by evaluating stereotypes of concepts such as gender and identity in a handful of Ecuadorian comics through the reflections of theoretic-

ticians such as Sarah Brabant, Linda Mooney and Fabio Parasecoli, among others. The chapter focuses on these scriptwriters/illustrators who have managed to open the way and publish their comic strips either with help from the private sector or in publishing houses specifically created for that purpose. Beginning with a brief exploration of the situation of the local comic in Ecuador, this study assesses the relationship between women and comics from two perspectives: the female image according to the proposal of female cartoonist Valeria Galarza and her collection *Competir x Ti* from 2013, and the creation and development of female characters by two of her male colleagues: Fabián Patinho's *Axioma* from 2014, and José Daniel Santibáñez' *Guayaquil de mis Temores* from 1985.

Moving from comic to gothic film, Johanna M. Wagner follows two contemporary films which depict women engaged in conflict with the ideal of “the mother” as set out by Western society. Mothers in film – as women in film more generally – have a history of being inequitably depicted as extreme, stock characters who are either angelic, the Good Mother, or evil, the Bad Mother, as theorized by E. Ann Kaplan in her 1992 text *Motherhood and Representation*. In what is termed the New Mother, this chapter reveals mothers in gothic film who not only blur the boundaries of the two extremes, but evoke the terror and pleasure of the sublime. Austrian film, *Goodnight Mommy* (2014) directed by Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala, and Australian film, *The Babadook* (2014) directed by Jennifer Kent, are films in which the protagonist as “mother” is the unfortunate crux of disturbing action that both inspires and unnerves the viewer. Unlike the adored Good Mother and the despised Bad Mother images in film more generally, this much more confrontational representation clashes brilliantly with these earlier versions, which cause a relentless rearrangement and rationalization of values for viewers, as they attempt to balance the shocking image of “the mother” on the screen and the sacred expectation of that image in the mind.

Progressing from film to fiction, Melanie Duckworth's chapter discusses the representations of women and animals in Australian novelist Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things* (2015) and *Animal People* (2011). In *The Natural Way of Things*, a dystopian novel set in outback Australia, a group of young women wake to find themselves imprisoned and humiliated because of their involvement in sexual scandals with powerful men. Most reviews of *The Natural Way of Things* have focused, understandably, on its fierce feminist agenda, but the novel is also deeply engaged with the natural world, particularly animals, with whom the imprisoned young women are relentlessly compared. In this way it builds on Wood's previous novel, *Animal People*, which reflects upon the ways humans both idealize and abuse animals. Drawing on ecofeminist scholarship including that of Val Plumwood, the chapter argues that together, the novels both expose and resist an unfair hierarchy that assumes that women, animals, and the natural world are inferior to men. By interrogating and reimagining metaphorical relationships

between women and animals, the novels attempt to dismantle the restrictive binaries between culture and nature, human and animal, male and female.

Turning toward translation studies, Marcus Axelsson's study centers on the translation of one book, Helen Wells' *Peril over the Airport* (1953), in the young adult (YA) Vicki Barr Flight Stewardess detective series (1947–1960). Because many scholars argue the series as a whole has feminist tendencies in a time hostile to feminism, and because this novel stands as a pivotal moment in Vicki Barr's life as she embarks on crossing gender boundaries by obtaining a private pilot's license, the novel seems a fruitful choice for this study. Using a coupled-pairs analysis, a traditional method in Translation Studies in which source text excerpts – in this case originally written in English – are matched with their translated counterparts – in this case Norwegian and Swedish – the chapter explicates the various visual and textual elements of the translations in order to find in what ways the translations encourage or discourage gendered readings of the protagonist, Vicki Barr. Inspired by Berit Ås' (1981) master suppression techniques *ridicule*, *objectification of women* and *withholding information*, the chapter concentrates on passages containing misogynistic remarks (*ridicule*), descriptions of female appearance (*objectification of women*) and the crossing of gender barriers (*withholding information*) in order to find whether the translated texts move closer to or away from the source text's, i.e. the English text's, gendered excerpts.

Part III. Women in the World: Telling Women's Stories

Part III moves into the non-fictional world in which women navigate contemporary life, while relating their stories, or (re)telling the stories of others. Deanna Benjamin's chapter stands as a bridge between the fictional world of the previous sections, to the world of lived experience. Focusing on our understanding that women's stories have historically been exploited by others or silenced, this chapter asks a very simple question: who has the right to tell another's story? According to Amy Shuman, Professor in Folklore Studies, acceptable storytelling depends on the storyteller, the listener, and what happened, and only when the teller is also a participant in the story (whether as a primary actor or as a bystander) is she permitted to tell the story. Using Amy Shuman's basic conclusions regarding storytelling practices as a foundation, the chapter questions these conclusions by asking: What happens when someone who is not a participant in the original story becomes a participant in the retelling – or rather, in the case of Maxine Hong Kingston – a participant in the act of silencing the story? Looking to Amy Shuman's ideas of storytelling, Robyn Fivush's ideas on power and silence, among other thinkers, the chapter uses Maxine Hong Kingston's non-fictional, and autobiographical text "No Name Woman" (1976), to examine not only the rights of storytelling, and the rights of one to tell the story of another, but also the rea-

sons for and effects of silence, considering in the end not simply the storyteller but also the one about whom the story is told.

In the next chapter, Rania Maktabi studies the movement of women's rights in three states, Morocco, Lebanon, and Kuwait, which did not experience war in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab revolts. In these states, the Arab Spring was a significant historical juncture that rejuvenated demands for strengthened protection of women against violence in general, and domestic violence in particular. In two states – Morocco and Lebanon – female citizenship was strengthened through new criminal laws in 2014 and 2018 respectively. The new laws seek to protect women against violence by involving the police force and judges in courts to take action in ensuring security for women at home. In Kuwait, few tangible changes in the law occurred. However, violence against women was articulated as an issue of public concern in need of the state's involvement in protecting women through new social welfare schemes, female police officers and the first-time entry of female prosecutors in courts after 2014.

In an ethnographic study, Eva Lambertsson Björk and Jutta Eschenbach explore the inherent power structures in patriarchy that limit African women's lives, especially the choices allowed to them. Patriarchy relegates women to gendered positions of subordination and inequality, and culture defines what is appropriate for filling gender roles and how to negotiate power relations. Through individual interviews, the authors trace how four African women have contested and navigated patriarchal power structures on their way to tenured academic positions in South Africa. Further, they consider how their narratives bear testimony to a change in their identities within the boundaries of *African woman*, a social positioning that is brought explicitly into the discussion by one of their interviewees. Using Judith Butler's notion of performativity (1988, 1990), the notion of empowerment as presented by Nelly Stromquist (1995) and the conceptualization of different forms of power as discussed by Jo Rowlands (1997), they discuss the ways in which this positioning takes on different aspects for the different women in different contexts. The four interviewees give testimony to how rigid patriarchal structures have influenced their lives; however, their narratives show that it is possible to defy in some ways the allotted gender roles of *African woman*.

Finally, expanding on the work in the previous chapter, Mathabo Khau's project is an autoethnographic study in which she, as the author, tells – and assesses – her own story. This chapter highlights some of the challenges that women and girls meet in trying to find a sense of belonging in different communities. It discusses how a Mosotho woman's experiences of girlhood and womanhood have affected her identity construction and sense of belonging as a sister, wife, mother, and teacher educator. Women and girls' sense of belonging is an important factor in their equal participation in all spheres of life. However, many women and girls worldwide still face challenges to participating fully in creating an inclusive world because of the lack of supportive structures such as access to quality basic and

higher education, and full autonomy. While advances are being made to address issues of gender inequality worldwide, first person accounts of women's experiences of belonging in communities with a patriarchal gender order are still scarce, especially from the global south.

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Part I

Women in Work Ways of Doing and Being

Sorcha Gunne

Social Reproduction and “Housewifization”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” and *Women and Economics*

The Gendered Division of Domestic Labour and Social Reproduction Theory

“[W]hen we speak of housework [...] we speak of the most pervasive manipulation, and the subtlest violence that capitalism has ever perpetrated” (Federici, 2004, p. 16), asserts feminist scholar and activist Silvia Federici in her influential work, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004). She goes on to conclude that in a capitalist system housework has become linked to femaleness and femininity. Domestic labour has, therefore, “been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character” (Federici, 2004, p. 16). This association of femaleness with domesticity explains why contemporary studies show that women *still* perform far more domestic labour than men.¹

The persistence of this inequitable distribution of domestic labour has, in recent years, inspired a resurgence of interest in social reproduction theory, or SRT. Resonating with Federici, in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentring Oppression* (2017), historian and activist Tihi Bhattacharya draws a connection between capitalism and the gendering of domestic labour. She is adamant that, “human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole. Capitalism, however, acknowledges productive labor for the market as the sole form of legitimate ‘work’” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 2). This delegitimizes “the tremendous amount of familial as well as communitarian work that goes on to sustain and reproduce the worker” (p. 2). Put another way, reproductive and domestic labour, traditionally performed by women, is “naturalized into nonexistence” (p. 2). SRT addresses this erasure by seeking “to make visible labor and work that are analytically hidden by classical economists and politically denied by policy makers” (p. 2). Echoing this point, political theorist Susan Ferguson stresses

1 See recent examples, Horne et al.’s “Time, Money, or Gender? Predictors of the Division of Household Labour Across Life Stages” (2017) or McMunn et al.’s “Gender Divisions of Paid and Unpaid Work in Contemporary UK couples” (2020). The topic is also garnering increasing media attention, even prior to the pandemic. See, for example, Donegan, “Want to be a male ally? Start by cleaning the house” (2019); Grose, “A Modest Proposal for Equalizing the Mental Load” (2019); Harper, “The vision of the home as a tranquil respite from labour is a patriarchal fantasy” (2019); Jackson, “Chore Wars: Why do women still do more housework?” (2019); and Miller, “Women Did Everything Right. Then Work Got ‘Greedy’” (2019).

the importance of making reproductive labour visible, contending that, “our understanding of capitalism is incomplete if we treat it as simply an economic system involving workers and owners, and fail to examine the ways in which wider social reproduction of the system – that is the daily and generational reproductive labor that occurs in households, schools, hospitals, prisons, and so on – sustains the drive for accumulation” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 2).

SRT is, however, not new. It constituted a vital strand of feminism in the 1970s and ‘80s – as Sociologist Maria Mies notes, “One of the most fruitful debates which feminism had started was the debate on domestic labour” (Mies, 1986, p. 31). Subsequently, though, SRT fell out of favour – perhaps as a consequence of the linguistic turn and the rise in popularity of deconstructionism or because it represented such a profound threat to the status quo even amongst the left.² Nonetheless, Mies is adamant that, “capitalism cannot function without patriarchy” (p. 38) and, therefore, not only must feminism take account of capitalism, but critiques of capitalism must take account of gender and, specifically, the gendering of reproductive labour. She observes that, “The first challenge to the orthodox Marxist theory on women’s work” was “Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa’s essay, ‘The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community’, which was published together with Selma James’s ‘A Woman’s Place’ in 1972 [...]. In this essay the classical Marxist position that housework is ‘non-productive’ is challenged for the first time” (p. 31). Mies continues by commenting that, “Dalla Costa points out that what the housewife produces in the family are not simply use-values but the commodity ‘labour power’ which the husband then can sell as a ‘free’ wage labourer in the labour market” (p. 31).

This academic work informed the activist movement, Wages for Housework, which highlighted how unpaid and often unacknowledged reproductive labour done largely by women simultaneously subjugated them and propped up the capitalist world-system. At its core was the idea that making this work visible would expose “the root cause of ‘women’s oppression’” and “the main mechanisms by which capitalism has maintained its power” (Federici, 2012, p. 8). Dalla Costa, James, and the entire Wages for Housework movement were among the first to challenge orthodox Marxist critiques from a feminist perspective, inspiring a materialist feminist theory and practice that aimed to refocus the analysis of capitalism’s power structures. For example, Mies is adamant that, “the productivity of the housewife is the precondition for the productivity of the (male) wage labourer” (Mies, 1986, p. 31), a statement that resonates with contemporary social reproduc-

2 See Roswitha Scholz, “Patriarchy and Commodity Society: Gender without the Body” (2014) who argues that “Marxist feminism, which until the end of the 1980s had determined the debates in [feminist theory and gender studies], retreated into the background.” She goes on to note that, more recently “the increasing delegitimization of neoliberalism connected to the current economic crisis has produced a resurgence and increasing popularity of a diverse set of Marxisms. To date, however, these developments have barely had an impact [...] Deconstruction is still the lead vocalist in the choir of universal feminism, especially in gender theory” (p. 123).

tion theory’s insistence that social reproduction is crucial not only to the analysis of why gender inequity is so persistent, but also to the analysis of capitalism more broadly. Looking back, however, it is also strikingly similar to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s thesis in *Women and Economics* (1898) which was first published 70 years before *Wages for Housework*. In *Women and Economics* Gilman maintains that, “The labor of women in the house, certainly, enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could; and in this way women are economic factors in society” (cited in Gilman, 2015, *Seven NonFiction Books*, Kindle edition, location 7, 115). It should be noted that the specific interest of social reproduction theory lies in the analysis and critique of capitalism, particularly incorporating what, since Marx and Engels, conventional Marxist traditions tend to elide, whereas Gilman’s work is undergirded by a different ideological perspective as she leans more towards Darwinism.³ Nonetheless, I find it useful to put Gilman’s work in conversation with later work in SRT in order to highlight how, despite the dominance of a poststructuralist model of feminist theory in recent decades, the question of work and labour has long been a fundamental factor in the struggle for gender equity. The chapter begins by taking a closer look at Federici’s work to highlight the limits of conventional critiques of capitalism which neglect to account for reproductive labour. The second section looks at Gilman in greater detail. The final section draws on SRT to perform a reading of Gilman’s famous short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper”. This analysis considers how the story’s theme of madness and gothic formal qualities not only chimes with the treatise of *Women and Economics*, but suggests a literary registration of Federici’s later revelation that the gendering of housework is a violence perpetrated by systemic capitalism.

Silvia Federici and the Limits of Conventional Critiques of Capitalism

Since the success of *Caliban and the Witch* in 2004, Federici has continued to publish ground-breaking works, including: *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (2012), *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (2018), *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women* (2018) and *Beyond the Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, Reclaiming the Body in Contemporary Capitalism* (2019). Identifying domestic labour as crucial to feminist struggles as early as the 1970s, in 1972, she co-founded the International Feminist Collective and went on to establish *Wages for Housework*. Prompted by “the politics of ‘permanent crisis’” (Federici, 2012, p. 11), Federici has since rethought this strategy’s effectiveness, because, as Mies points out, it “would not end the isolation and atomization of housewives” (Mies, 1986, p. 33). However, in spite of this and other limitations, “the ‘Wages for Housework’ campaign had put the issue of women’s domestic labour on the agenda” (p. 33) and one of the central tenets of

3 For more on Gilman and Darwinism see Love, 1983.

Federici's work remains the analysis of how the "devaluation of reproductive work has been one of the pillars of capitalist accumulation and the capitalist exploitation of women's labour" (Federici, 2012, p. 12). Through the lens of reproductive labour, Federici highlights the systemic causes underlying the plethora of global crises from growing inequality to the body (including rape culture, reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights), to climate change, to war and famine, to migrancy and displacement, to workers' rights and mental health. She reveals how they are all connected and intertwined because they are different manifestations of the same systemic structure of power.

In *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici contends that the witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries were incited by the transition to capitalism and the consequential reorganization of production and reproduction. Capitalism thus began with a war on women which has continued in variously different forms to this day. She is, therefore, critical of Marx's work because his neglect of gender resulted in an incomplete analysis of the systematicity of capitalism.⁴ "[T]he discovery of reproductive work", she contends, "has made it possible to understand that capitalist production relies on the production of a particular type of worker – and therefore a particular type of family, sexuality, procreation – and thus to redefine the private sphere as a sphere of relations of production" (Federici, 2012, p. 97). She shows how Marxian categories prove inadequate when expanding beyond a masculine-centric analysis, particularly as the "sphere of reproduction" is elided which limits the effectiveness of radical critique. "Whereas Marx examines primitive accumulation from the viewpoint of the waged male proletariat and the development of commodity production," she asserts, "I examine it from the viewpoint of the changes it introduced in the social position of women and the production of labor-power. Thus, my description of primitive accumulation includes a set of historical phenomena that are absent in Marx, and yet have been extremely important for capitalist accumulation" (Federici, 2004, p. 12). The omission of, for example, women, indigenous, and colonial populations from Marx's work (p. 63), she posits, undermines the potential of Marxist critique. Simply put, if a basic premise of capitalism is to render reproductive labour invisible, then any critique of capitalism that fails to take reproductive labour fully into account is itself doomed to failure.⁵ In "Patriarchy and Commodity Society: Gender without the Body", jour-

4 It should be noted that Marx died before he could finish his planned works, including several more volumes of *Capital*, so whether he intended to later more thoroughly interrogate capitalism from a gendered perspective remains unknown. However, in 1884, Engels published *The Origin of the Family*, based partly on notes left by Marx, partly on anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877). In this work, Engels links the development of the modern family and gender roles to capitalism (see also Coontz, 2005). However, subsequently, the dominant strand of Marxist analysis has focused more narrowly on value generation in a male-centric sphere of production leaving itself open to a critique of critical blindness not only to questions of gender and social reproduction, but also to questions of race and racism.

5 Federici similarly critiques Foucault for ignoring "the process of reproduction," and yoking together "female and male histories into an undifferentiated whole" arguing that his work is

nalist and author Roswitha Scholz adopts a new value-critical approach to reach a similar conclusion regarding how Marx’s original work has informed Marxist traditions in particular ways. She posits that, “Traditional Marxism only problematizes a part of [the] system [...] namely the legal appropriation of surplus value by the bourgeoisie” (Scholz, 2014, p. 126). She counters this, arguing that, “We have also to account for the fact that under capitalism reproductive activities emerge that are primarily carried out by women” (p. 127) and, like Federici, she stresses that “female reproductive activities under capitalism [...] constitute a facet of capitalist societies that cannot be captured by Marx’s conceptual apparatus” (p. 127).

A legacy of this masculine-centric critical tradition highlighted by Federici and Scholz is that despite decades of feminist politics, activism, and struggle insidious forms of gender inequity endure. This is evidenced by the persistence of heteronormativity, rape culture, gendered pay gaps, and inequitable divisions of domestic and reproductive labour, to name but a few examples. The importance of Federici’s work, and social reproduction theory more broadly is that analysing how gender is a key component in the capitalist world-system provides a more clear-sighted critique of the system, its inequities and injustices. Such conclusions have profound implications as they suggest a rethinking of both masculine-centric approaches to political economy and deconstructionist approaches to feminist theory and gender studies.

After the witch hunts, a key stage of capitalist development was the creation of the full-time housewife in the 19th century. Often referred to as the cult of domesticity or the angel in the house, the advent of the role of housewife, “redefined women’s position in society” (Federici, 2004, p. 75). “The sexual division of labor that emerged [...] not only fixed women to reproductive work,” Federici posits, “but increased their dependence on men, enabling the state and employers to use the male wage as a means to command women’s labor. In this way, the separation of commodity production from the reproduction of labor-power also made possible the development of a specifically capitalist use of the wage and of the markets as a means for the accumulation of unpaid labor” (p. 75). Scholz terms this process “value dissociation” and links it to the development of a specific type of femininity under capitalism. “[C]apitalism”, she maintains, “contains a core of female-determined reproductive activities and the affects, characteristics, and attitudes (emotionality, sensuality, and female or motherly caring) that are dissociated from value and abstract labor” (Scholz, 2014, p. 127). In *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Mies calls this process “housewifization” and, in an argument that recalls aspects of both *Women and Economics* and “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Perkins Gilman, she contends that, “by defining women universally as housewives, it is possible not only to cheapen their labour, but also to gain political and

so “disinterested in the ‘disciplining’ of women that it never mentions one of the most monstrous attacks on the body perpetrated in the modern era: the witch-hunt” (Federici, 2004, p. 8).

ideological control over them. Housewives are atomized and isolated” (Mies, 1986, p. 116).⁶ It is, therefore, worth taking another look at *Women and Economics* and “The Yellow Wallpaper” to see how they registered and responded to “housewifization” at the turn of the last century.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Reproductive Labour

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (born 1860, Hartford, Connecticut – died 1935, Pasadena, California) had what could perhaps be described as a tumultuous personal life which has been well documented, often to the detriment of her professional reputation. Though she was a prolific writer of fiction, during her lifetime, Gilman was best known for her magazine *The Forerunner* (1909–1916) and her feminist sociology. She published a number of critical works on the gendered politics of family and domestic labour, the best known of which is *Women and Economics* (1898).⁷ Writing in the *Radcliffe Magazine*, Pat Harrison sums up the waxing and waning of Gilman’s critical popularity, stating that:

Gilman is one of those writers whose reputations have changed over time [...]. Internationally [she was] known during her lifetime (1860–1935) as a feminist, a socialist, and the author of *Women and Economics* (1898) [...]. After her death, Gilman dropped out of the public consciousness for several decades. Then, when 1970s feminists discovered her, they tended to read her fiction more than her nonfiction. Her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” [...] became especially popular. (Harrison, 2011, p. 26)

Since the 1970s revival of interest in “The Yellow Wallpaper”, a particular type of narrative about Gilman has arisen. To the neglect of Gilman’s sociological writing, this mainly focuses on Gilman’s personal history and the role of post-partum depression in the “The Yellow Wallpaper”. Perhaps this is in part due to Gilman herself – in 1913 she published a piece in *The Forerunner* titled, “Why I wrote ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’”. Nonetheless, reading it as one woman’s descent into madness undercuts the broader sociological commentary that the story performs, a commentary that is in keeping with Gilman’s nonfiction. Put another way, failing to read Gilman’s works of fiction in the context of her sociological writing on gender,

6 Scholz argues that the dynamic nature of value dissociation means that in contemporary “turbo-capitalism”, women are no longer defined as housewives, but rather undergo a “double socialization” (2014, p. 135). While there is no doubt that women are “responsible for both family and profession”, it seems to me that the categories of “housewife” and “mother” remain defining markers of “successful womanhood” under capitalism. We might think, for example, of the numerous performances of being a “good” housewife and mother across social media.

7 Other titles include *Concerning Children* (1901), *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903), *Human Work* (1904), and *The Man Made World: or, Our Androcentric Culture* (1914). Her works of fiction include the novels *What Diantha Did* (1909–1910), *Moving a Mountain* (1911), *Herland* (1915), and *With Her in Ourland* (1916).

marriage, and the family is to limit the radical potential of her fiction. As Harrison notes, it is only in more recent years that scholars and literary critics have taken a renewed interest in Gilman’s work beyond the confines of “The Yellow Wallpaper”. In 2009, for example, Judith A. Allen published *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism*, which looks at Gilman’s nonfiction. Significant in how it marks a change to Gilman’s legacy, Allen even contributed a chapter about her to *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists* (2011). In this chapter, like Harrison, Allen comments on the disproportionate emphasis on Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” rather than on her feminist sociology, contending that,

[t]hough Gilman’s sociological treatises on sexual arrangements and relations accounted for her Progressive Era intellectual prominence, initial efforts to reappraise her work by postwar historians and social scientists were promptly overtaken by literary critics. (Allen, 2011, p. 296)

Allen ascribes Gilman’s contemporary controversial status as in part due to “the magnitude of the problems she attempted to theorize”, suggesting that, “[h]er efforts to use both reform Darwinism and Progressivism towards feminist transformation can be all too easily dismissed as naive foolishness by wise present-day readers” (pp. 298–299). More directly, Laura Fisher, in her article “Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Novel Aesthetics”, considers Gilman’s “virulent racism and anti-Semitism”, though, she notes that Mark W. Van Wienen (2011) posits that this “constitute[s] her greatest kinship with modernist writers” (Fisher, 2017, p. 511).

Though her work is still useful when considering how modern structures of marriage and family are constellated to normalise gender inequity, as Denise Knight argues in “Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Shadow of Racism”, hers is “a mixed legacy,” because, “[r]egrettably, the shadow of racism darkens [her] legacy [...] and diminishes the significance of her social contributions” (2000, p. 168). As Mies points out, however, Gilman is not the only feminist to harbour racist opinions. She notes that it remains a problem as “many feminists reject biological reductionism with regard to sex-relations and insist on the social and historical tools of women’s exploitation and oppression”, while, “with regard to race relations, the past and ongoing history of colonialism and of capitalist plunder and exploitation of the black world by white man is mostly forgotten” (1986, p. 11). Gilman’s racism and classism are a reminder of a failure to think analytically beyond her own particular middle-class white privilege. In that regard, from a contemporary vantage point, we must be critical of Gilman’s limitations and strive to do better ourselves. In short, feminism must always be inclusive because, as Mies notes, patriarchal capitalism “is based on a patriarchal, sexist *and* racist ideology of women which defines women basically as housewives and sex objects” (p. 142, emphasis added).⁸ However, Allen maintains that despite her limitations,

8 See also Wallerstein, 2000.

the passionate engagement that her writings can still inspire is a sharp reminder that feminists, no less and no more than other social theorists, write within and for their own time [...]. The challenge for readers today is to imaginatively investigate the context of a social theorist like Gilman, given her immersion in her own era's categories. (Allen, 2011, pp. 298–299)

Gilman's *Women and Economics* provides one such challenge. It builds upon the premise that inequity between the sexes is a consequence of the sexual division of labour, as Gilman begins by claiming that, "We are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation" (2015, location 7,043). Linking economic inequity to the gendering of social reproduction was novel; however, Gilman's work is constrained and undermined by the limits of its historical time and geographical place. The language that Gilman deploys is unacceptably racist and classist. Any and every engagement with her work needs to acknowledge that fact, particularly if her work is to remain on university and school curricula. A key difference between Gilman and SRT is that underpinned by Darwinism, Gilman has naturalized the horizons of a capitalist world-system which means her analysis fails to critique the very system that has generated the problem of women's subordination through economic dependence in the first place. Thus, though her identification of the problem is astute, her ideas on how to establish gender equity are deeply flawed as they do not think beyond class and racial oppression engendered by capitalism at a systemic level. Nonetheless, there are several points at which her critique resonates with later work by Federici, Mies, and SRT more broadly as she articulates a clear-eyed critique of the economic causes of women's oppression. Gilman recognizes that, "Although not producers of wealth, women serve in the final processes of preparation and distribution. Their labor in the household has a genuine economic value" (location 7,107). Despite her appalling racism and classism, she also acknowledges that racism and classism are material factors in women's oppression when she acknowledges that,

whatever the economic value of the domestic industry of women is, they do not get it. The women who do the most work get the least money, and the women who have the most money do the least work. [...] if they were thus fairly paid,—given what they earned, and no more,—all women working in this way would be reduced to the economic status of the house servant. (location 7,131)

Like Federici, Gilman challenges the notion that domestic work has no economic value. She similarly goes on to critique the linking of domestic work to femininity, when she notes that, "we consider the work of the woman in the house as essentially feminine, and fail to see that, as work, it is exactly like any other kind of human activity, having the same limitations and the same possibilities" (location 11,269). There is also evidence to suggest that Gilman sees the limits of her

own solution of “professionalizing” and outsourcing domestic labour, an idea that does indeed limit women to the “economic status of house servant” and is horribly skewed in favour of white middle- and upper-class women. This kind of reordering of domestic work fails to transcend the structures it critiques and lapses into perpetuating injustices. It is also perhaps why, in the 1970s, Federici deliberately placed emphasis on wages in exchange for domestic work rather than for housewives, but ultimately abandoned the strategy (Federici, 2012, p. 11). Nonetheless, it is clear from *Women and Economics* that Gilman’s commitment to the emancipation of women and feminist discourse privileges an analysis of how economic relations are social relations and the centrality of reproductive labour. Moreover, it becomes increasingly clear that Gilman’s fiction cannot be read in isolation from her sociological work.

Fisher’s article, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Novel Aesthetics” (2017; mentioned above), is, therefore, of significant critical importance because she reads Gilman’s novels – in particular *What Diantha Did* – in tandem with Gilman’s sociological works. This enables her to analyse Gilman’s fictive mode of didacticism as integral to her broader feminist project. She contends that, Gilman’s, “didactic aesthetics makes the mundane, recursive experience of kitchen work lie perfectly flat on the page” (Fisher, 2017, p. 512) and concludes that,

Gilman leverages her fiction to resolve the conflict between women’s domestic labor and their pursuit of public professions. She maps her historical referents and sociopolitical ideas onto concrete programs for change, crafting a novel that speechifies, explains, and validates foundational ideas [...]. But none of this makes the novel a mere socioeconomic treatise in disguise. Rather, Gilman’s unabashedly mundane and occasionally pedantic style embodies a self-consciously modern aesthetics of didacticism that pervaded early twentieth-century American literature in its years of transition between realism, naturalism, and modernism. (pp. 493–494)

Gilman’s “self-consciously prosaic literary style of sociological fiction” (p. 512) evident in her novels makes it clear that her concern with reproductive labour was not contained to her sociological writing, but is a major preoccupation of her fiction too. This is also evinced in her experiments with the gothic short story form in “The Yellow Wallpaper”.

The Gothic Short Story and Resisting “Housewifization”

In *The Lonely Voice* (1963, 2004), writer Frank O’Connor, identifies the short story as America’s unofficial “national art form” (O’Connor, 2004, p. 39). The popularity of the short-story form in 19th century America is bound up with its postcolonial status, with migration, and its marginal position relative to Europe at the time, not to mention industrialization and the shift in modes of production and the inten-

sification of capitalism. Similarly focusing on “submerged populations”, in “Genre and Gender”, Mary Eagleton contends that, “the characteristics of the short story offer a literary space for the ‘non-hegemonic, peripheral, contradictory – a reflection of the position of women in a patriarchal society’” (Eagleton, 2000, p. 256). Reframing slightly O’Connor’s and Eagleton’s emphasis on “submerged populations”, it becomes clear that the short story, as a genre, is an apt literary form to register and respond to the heteronormative patriarchal capitalist world-system. It is no surprise then that Gilman’s fictional oeuvre includes the short story. “The Yellow Wallpaper” charts the slow descent into madness and psychosis experienced by an unnamed narrator who is prescribed “the rest cure” for postpartum depression. The room to which she is confined for her treatment is a former nursery with yellow wallpaper.

A large number of critical readings of “The Yellow Wallpaper” tend to pathologize Gilman’s postpartum depression rather than investigate the social structures that give rise to the rest cure in the first place. However, Gilman’s narrator remains unnamed throughout the story which signals that the story in fact gestures to experiences of women in more general terms. Far more useful then is a critical mode that examines the gothic as a world-literary genre because, as Kerstin Oloff notes in “Zombies, Gender, and World-Ecology”, “much has been written on the Gothic’s inherent relation to racist-patriarchal capitalism” (Oloff, 2016, p. 46).⁹ She links the figure of the zombie to that of the “madwoman in the attic”, arguing that gothic modes expose “the metabolic rifts through which capitalism develops” (p. 60). While Oloff foregrounds the figure of the zombie, “The Yellow Wallpaper” uses the figure of the madwoman in the attic to illustrate the horrific consequences of how capitalism transformed housework, as Federici put it, “into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character” (Federici, 2004, p. 16).

In “The Yellow Wallpaper”, Gilman establishes the generic conventions of the gothic by drawing on the recognizable trope of the haunted house. The narrator states that she and her husband are staying at “A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house” (Gilman, 1892, 1992, p. 154). Consistent with the gothic form, the description of the house resonates with images of a colonial mansion in a state of ruin: the greenhouses are all broken; the house has stood empty for years; the narrator finds it strange; there is a ghostliness (pp. 154–155). The setting is depicted as eerie by using vocabulary that underscores strangeness, decay and degeneration, and former glory that is now faded and broken; in short, language that consolidates the idea of a “haunted house”. The description not only establishes the conventions of the gothic, but can be read as a metaphor for the condition of patriarchy and the imagery is amplified by the sense of imprisonment within the room itself. The room has been chosen for the narrator by her husband, John:

9 See also Shapiro, 2008; Neocleous, 2003; and Shaviro, 2002.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza [...] But John would not hear of it [...] He said we came here solely on my account: that I have to have perfect rest [...] So we took the nursery at the top of the house. It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with [...] air and sunshine galore. It was a nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things on the walls. (pp. 155–156)

This passage conveys a series of juxtapositions that speak to Gilman's thesis in *Women and Economics*. The narrator's desire for a different room is contrasted with her husband's decision to take the room with the eponymous yellow wallpaper, thus, her voicelessness in the marriage is evident and, furthermore, the choice of a nursery alludes to her infantilization. The airiness and light of the room is undermined by the bars on the windows which is suggestive of imprisonment. There is further contrast between the roses in the window and access to the piazza of the narrator's preferred room and the barred windows. Perhaps, though, the most powerful description is that of the yellowness of the wallpaper which negates the "air and sunshine galore" (p. 155). "The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others" states the narrator, continuing, "It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw – not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things" (p. 165). Notably too the bars on the windows and the "rings and things" on the walls are, Carol Davison observes in "Haunted House/Haunted Heroine", "paraphernalia of confinement" (Davison, 2004, p. 59). By evoking confinement, the room itself represents the chains of patriarchy – to escape the house is then to resist "housewifization". In *Women and Economics*, Gilman explicitly comments on the confinement of women in the home as a strategy of oppression, arguing that, "this arbitrary imprisonment of the woman in the home" naturalized a division between "the world" as exclusively man's province, and 'the home' as exclusively woman's" (location 10,484).

Noting that economic progress is "exclusively masculine" (location 7,035), in *Women and Economics*, Gilman draws attention to the politics of patriarchal marriage as an unequal partnership where social capital is linked to market capital. Gilman defends monogamy as "a natural development" (location 7,225); however, she posits that, "with the natural process of social advancement has gone an unnatural process, –an erratic and morbid action, making the sex-relation of humanity a frightful source of evil" (location 7,225). Her use of words like "morbid" and "evil" to describe the economic subordination of women evokes gothic horror and resonates with the depiction of the house and the room in "The Yellow Wallpaper". The narrator's account of marriage reflects the inequality Gilman critiques in *Women and Economics* as the narrative repeatedly details how John's will is inscribed over the narrator's so as to virtually erase her.

In addition to the choice of room, the topic of “work” is contested. As the story opens, the narrator comments how she is “absolutely forbidden to do ‘work’” (Gilman, 1892, 1992, p. 154). She then states her opposition to this, claiming, “Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work [...] would do me good” (p. 154). The repetition of “personally” emphasizes the narrator’s will as separate to her husband’s. However, the very next line evidences her resignation and submission: “But what is one to do?” (p. 154). Her subjection echoes through the story as the narrator’s references to John show how he repeatedly infantilizes her, calling her “blessed little goose” (p. 157), “little girl” (p. 162) and how he makes the decisions for her with phrases such as: “But John would not hear of it” (p. 155), “John would think it absurd” (p. 160), “he hates to have me write a word” (p. 156), “John says I mustn’t” (p. 160), “John says it’s good for me,” (p. 164), “[I] am absolutely forbidden to work” (p. 154) and even “John laughs at me” (p. 154). John’s repeated shutting down of the narrator recalls Gilman’s assertion in *Women and Economics* that, “To the boy we say, ‘Do’; to the girl, ‘Don’t’” (location 7,523). John, described as “practical in the extreme” (p. 154), is the representative of the Enlightenment in the text and he is also, with his sister Jennie, the enforcer of the cult of domesticity – imprisoning the narrator, forbidding her to write, forbidding her to be active. Of course, the narrator seemingly presents this as a caring considerate husband, but the ironic tone contradicts this and suggests that John is in fact suffocating her. The anger that the narrator feels and the attempts of her husband to suppress her anger reveal further this dynamic: “I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I’m sure I never used to be so sensitive. [...] But John says if I feel so I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself – before him” (p. 154). Anger here suggests a passionate, active, and masculine emotion that is rendered unreasonable and unacceptable in a woman, so the narrator conceals it from her husband.

The idea of concealment is a recurring theme in the story and, as Davison notes, is a gothic trope that implies an “encoded message regarding the constraining nature of patriarchy” (Davison, 2004, p. 63). The narrator must also conceal that she is writing a diary: “There comes John’s sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing” (Gilman, 1892, 1992, p. 158). However, in *Women and Economics*, Gilman does not conceal her anger at how the gendering of certain kinds of activities and labour, including writing, mean that women, like the narrator, must conceal their activities. She writes that,

Harriet Martineau must conceal her writing under her sewing when callers came, because “to sew” was a feminine verb, and “to write” a masculine one. Mary Somerville must struggle to hide her work from even relatives, because mathematics was a “masculine” pursuit. Sex has been made to dominate the whole human world, – all the main avenues of life marked “male,” and the female left to be a female, and nothing else. (location 7,509)

Gilman’s reference to specific examples of women hiding their work indicate that the narrator concealing her diary in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is more than a biographical allusion to the rest cure, but reinforces the objectives of her sociological work in its resistance of “housewifization”.

Conclusion: “Housewifization”, Gender and Global Crises

By putting *Women and Economics* in conversation with “The Yellow Wallpaper”, it is clear that Gilman is linking the narrator’s experiences to women other than herself signifying that the story offers a critique on the position of women in patriarchy. This is further evidenced towards the story’s conclusion when the narrator, speaking of the wallpaper, comments, “The woman behind it shakes it! Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one” (p. 165). In *Women and Economics*, Gilman elaborates on these effects on women in general, writing,

Her restricted impression, her confinement to the four walls of the home, have done great execution, of course, in limiting her ideas, her information, her thought-processes, and power of judgment; and in giving a disproportionate prominence and intensity to the few things she knows about; but this is innocent in action compared with her restricted expression, the denial of freedom to act. (location 7,618)

“The Yellow Wallpaper” then suggests that madness is an entirely appropriate response to “housewifization”. Furthermore, a reading of “The Yellow Wallpaper” which draws on SRT endorses the idea that gender equity can only be achieved if we challenge the systematicity of “housewifization” and patriarchal capitalism’s naturalization of reproductive labour. The economic dependence of women as a key element to gendered inequity brings us back to Federici and her fight to expose how the plethora of contemporary global crises are not only a consequence of capitalism’s drive to accumulate at any cost, but are always already gendered, as she argues that, “*the new violence against women is rooted in structural trends that are constitutive of capitalist development*” (Federici, 2004, p. 47, original italics). She goes on to contend that, “There are ways in which new forms of capital accumulation instigates violence against women. Unemployment, precarious work, and the collapse of the family wage are key” (p. 53). Using *Women and Economics* as a link to read “The Yellow Wallpaper” through the lens of SRT reveals how the story offers more than an account of one woman’s descent into madness. Rather, it uses the theme of madness and gothic literary conventions as narrative devices to interrogate the violence that underlies the structural oppression of women in a heteronormative patriarchal capitalist world-system. The narrator’s escape at the story’s conclusion sounds a note of hope and resistance as she rejects “housewifization”. The historical specificities have changed since Gilman was writing at the

turn of the last century and even since the Wages for Housework movement of the 1970s. Nonetheless, narratives of economic and domestic labour relations throw into sharp relief the systematicity of gendered inequity through history right into the contemporary moment.

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Guri Ellen Barstad

The Feminist Agenda in Rachilde's *La Jongleuse* The Artist and Her Creative Power

La Jongleuse or *The Juggler* written by Marguerite Eymery, otherwise known as Rachilde, in 1900, describes a female character's efforts to preserve self-determination and an identity of her own in a male-dominated 19th century France. The enigmatic protagonist Eliante Donalger deliberately ignores social expectations concerning female behavior, and as a hostess she enchants her guests with passionate dancing and artful juggling with sharp knives. She refuses to be seduced by a man, and lives out her erotic and artistic dreams in a private room (in both a figurative and a concrete sense), where she makes all the rules. She crosses gender boundaries, acts in confusing and ambiguous ways, and manifests her power to whomever she chooses – mainly with the intention of marking her personal boundaries. These characteristics are all part of her desire for a fair, independent and free life in a bourgeois and patriarchal society.

La Jongleuse can without any doubt be read as a feminist novel. “With her hair worn in the style of a helmet, she [Eliante] is a *guerillère avant la lettre*, and a champion of women's independence” (Hawthorne, 1990, p. xvii). However, Rachilde (1860–1953) never proclaimed herself a feminist, quite the contrary. In her essay “Why I am not a feminist” (1928) her misogynistic statements mirror the attitudes of the male-dominated Parisian decadent movement of which she succeeded in becoming a part: “Women are men's inferior brothers, simply because they have physical weaknesses that prevent them from putting ideas into a logical sequence, as even the least intelligent of men can do” (quoted in Holmes, 2001, p. 73). However, while her essay *might* seem to settle the question, some see a feminist dimension to her work. Rachilde's strong, determined and self-centered female characters tell a story about self-assertion and willpower. The typical Rachildian woman is smart, calculating, violent, stubborn, vindictive and at times murderous.¹ Equality between the sexes does not seem to be her primary goal; by successfully manipulating her male victims she also proves the superiority of her intellect. Oftentimes her destructive behavior is rooted in abuse and injustice at an early age. She seeks fairness (or vindication) by all means, most of the time with a sense of desperation and contempt for established standards of conduct. A recurrent trait of hers is the reversal of gender roles. Titles like *Monsieur Vénus*, *La Marquise de Sade* and *Madame Adonis* speak for themselves. As Diana Holmes puts it, this ‘gender trouble’ makes Rachilde a “Butlerian avant la lettre” (Holmes,

1 Raoule de Vénérande in *Monsieur Vénus* and Mary Barbe in *La Marquise de Sade* fit all these characteristics.

2001, p. 3).² While the subversive woman seems to have the narrator's sympathy, the traditional feminine woman, especially the mother figure is despicable. By and large, her novels promote a poor opinion of society's traditional pillars like marriage and family.

Instead of applauding women in general, Rachilde may have wanted to defy specific gender roles. She identified strongly with being a writer. However, the 19th century woman was supposed to cultivate writing or painting only for her own or a private circle's pleasure, whereas publishing or exhibiting her works were considered inappropriate and provocative, even immoral. In a letter to Rachilde, the writer and art critic Remy de Gourmont stated that women's literature was their polite form of lovemaking in public.³ Similar remarks might have nourished her official anti-feminism. Holmes claims that "Rachilde distanced herself from other women writers and fought hard to be recognized as a gender-neutral 'writer'" (Holmes, 2001, p. 34). Being a writer seems more important than her identity as a woman.

In this chapter devoted to fairness, I aim to show that *La Jongleuse's* allegedly feminist agenda includes a stand for women's right to be artists at the same level as men. I will argue that beside being part of a troublesome love story, Eliante Donalger exhorts a reflection on Art and the artist. In this perspective, the novel may be considered as a parable of the artist's creative power, ambiguous destiny and exclusive passion for her art.

In order to identify and grasp the novel's aesthetic discourse, we need to go beyond the story's realistic realm. From the very beginning the description of Eliante Donalger deviates from mere realism. Eliante reveals her supernatural side by referring to herself as dead and at the same time as a burning goddess of love. She identifies with a statue, and her magical touch seems to transform a human-sized Greek amphora into a living humanlike being. These elements get their full significance as parts of a bigger picture where traditional myths about the artist play a decisive role, especially the myths about the sculptor Pygmalion⁴ and the musician Orpheus.

Both were extraordinary artists. The former gave life to a statue, Galatea⁵, thanks to Venus's intervention, the latter suffered the definitive loss of Eurydice after he had almost retrieved her from the Underworld. Power and suffering rep-

2 Holmes alludes to philosopher Judith Butler and her theory of performativity, as set out in *Gender Trouble* (1990).

3 "La littérature des femmes, c'est ma chère amie, leur façon polie de faire l'amour en public" (quoted in Hawthorne, 2001, p. 241, note 1).

4 Pygmalion is a recurrent figure in Rachilde's works. Steven Wilson refers to *L'Heure sexuelle* (1898) (the novel was published under the pseudonym Jean de Chilra) and its "crafted effigy which, Pygmalion-like, becomes endowed with life" (Wilson, 2015, p. 4). Hawthorne and Constable state that the Pygmalion myth is one of *Monsieur Vénus's* "key intertexts". "Raoule is a female Pygmalion who fashions from Jacques a corporeal ideal of male beauty after her own desire, 'a being in her own image'" (Hawthorne & Constable, 2004, p. xxiii).

5 The name Galatea did not exist in the original story but was given to the statue in the 18th century (Geisler-Szmulewicz, 1999, p. 43).

resent two sides of a Romantic aesthetics which can be recognized in Rachilde's novels – with a significant modification. The heroes of these myths are originally men; however, Rachilde usurps male power and dominance by systematically giving their roles to women.

Before digging any deeper into the subject, a short summary of the novel, followed by a few more facts about Rachilde are in order.

Summary

Eliante Donalger, a forty-year old widow, is a most virtuosic juggler and dancer surrounded by an aura of mystery. She is characterized as a *femme fatale*, a queen (p. 3), a love goddess (pp. 113, 127), a snake (p. 111), a vampire (p. 90), a nymph (p. 4) and a statue (p. 4). A medical student, Léon Reille, is infatuated with her, but his scientific mind is unable to fathom who she really is. She declares her love for him and at the same time keeps him at a distance. When she demonstrates her independence and skill by juggling with knives in front of her guests, Léon is deeply shocked and “absolutely scandalized” (p. 111), and seems to react as a typical 19th century male in the presence of female performance or “indecent” exhibitionism. Furthermore, he is baffled when he discovers that Eliante leads two different lives. In one part of the house she is an ordinary bourgeois woman living with her late husband's uncle and her niece, Missie who, unlike her aunt, represents a modern lifestyle. In another part of the house, Eliante enjoys a private life filled with sensuality and beauty. In this secret space of hers, she cultivates a strange passion for a Greek alabaster vase, an amphora, which seems to come alive under her caress. Léon is invited into her privacy and becomes the involuntary and horrified witness of an erotic scene between Eliante and the amphora, a shocking proof that women's erotic pleasure does not depend on a man. However, despite his revolt against what he perceives as disturbing and perverse, Léon never stops dreaming. Finally, Eliante makes him believe that he will be rewarded for his efforts, and he is looking forward to spending a night with the woman of his dreams. However, in the morning he discovers that the woman lying beside him and with whom he has spent the night is Missie, not Eliante. Eliante is responsible for this unexpected deception. Knowing that her niece was in love with Léon, she had been trying to persuade the young man into marrying her, but in vain. Eliante has more in store for them. Shortly after the couple wakes, she enters the room and in a melodramatic and bloody scene kills herself with one of her juggling knives. After an ellipsis, we understand that Léon and Missie are now a married couple and parents of a baby girl. The novel ends with Léon expressing an enigmatic desire, namely that his daughter will be favored with Eliante's dreamy eyes.

Rachilde – a Self-Promoting *Auteur à Scandale*

Rachilde was an influential and colorful figure in French cultural life for more than 50 years. She was born near Périgueux in Southwest France where she started her literary activity by writing articles and small stories in the local newspaper. Later she moved to Paris where she – probably as the only woman – joined the French decadent movement and became a prominent figure of Symbolist theatre. She was also one of ‘the Women of the Left Bank.’⁶ For a period of 30 years she was a prolific reviewer of contemporary literature in the journal *Mercur de France*, founded in 1890 by her husband Alfred Vallette. At the beginning of her career, Rachilde deliberately chose scandal as a means of breaking through as a writer.⁷ Her novel *Monsieur Vénus* (1884) became a *succès de scandale* thanks to its description of subversive sexuality and reversal of gender roles. The female protagonist’s play with the male role and her efforts to transform her lover into a woman (psychologically speaking) were considered both intriguing and spicy, especially because the young author promoted herself as simultaneously innocent and perverse. The novel was published in Belgium where it was instantly banned. Rachilde was sentenced *in absentia* to two years in prison and a fine of 2000 francs. A few years later, in 1889, *Monsieur Vénus* was published in France in a censored version. Eager to keep her readers interested, Rachilde took advantage of the scandal as best she could. In real life, she cultivated her androgynous persona by cutting her hair short and by dressing like a man at a time when the permission of local authorities was mandatory for such a deviation in dress-code.⁸ Her visiting card presented her as ‘Rachilde – Homme de Lettres’ (Man of Letters). She referred willingly to her most picturesque ancestors like the abbé de Brantôme (1540–1614), author of salacious anecdotes about the court, or a defrocked priest from the time of the French Revolution who according to a local legend became a werewolf.⁹ Not surprisingly, Rachilde always identified with the werewolf and other wolves. These references were probably meant to signal which kind of author she aspired to be, and to attract sensation-seeking readers.

However, the riotous and sensational side of Rachilde’s authorship hides a serious artist. Between the lines of her texts, we can sense a different tone. Later in life, in her preface to the 1935 novel devoted to her late husband, *Roman d’un homme sérieux* or *Novel about a Serious Man*, Rachilde regrets having preferred “illusion before reality, her œuvres, paper flowers, instead of love, the human flower” (my trans.).¹⁰ This other and tragic side of the coin is also suggested in *La*

6 A group of American, British and French women who contributed strongly to Paris’s literary life as “writers, publishers, book sellers and *salonnières*” (Benstock, 1987, p. IX).

7 Cf. Dauphiné, 1985, pp. 29–42.

8 According to a law passed in Paris on the 26 Brumaire year IX (17 November 1800), women were not allowed to wear men’s clothing without a special permission from the police.

9 Cf. Holmes, 2001, p. 10.

10 Quoted in Holmes, 2001, p. 66.

Jongleuse. From my perspective Eliante Donalger demonstrates the artist's constant dilemma as someone drawn between life and death, between illusion and reality. Art requires a sacrifice on the part of the artist.

By adopting an androgynous appearance and accepting (even wanting) to be mistaken for her scandalous characters, Rachilde defied misogynist prohibitions and manifested her right to have a voice.¹¹ The importance of having a voice is illustrated by a frightening episode narrated in her autobiographical narrative *A Mort* (1886). In early adolescence, she allegedly saw the ghost of a drowned man emerging from a pond near the family home. In her biography on Rachilde, Melanie Hawthorne writes: "She opens her mouth to cry out, but she is frozen and can only watch as the *noyé* walks out of the pond and between the willow trees, crying out in an unearthly voice, *Tu ne parleras jamais, jamais*" (Hawthorne, 2001, p. 49). It might have been a nightmare but Rachilde never forgot this frightening incident. The ghost's prediction that she would never have "a voice", meant that she would never be able to write or to express herself. Like the ghost, her destiny was to be drowned. Her authorship seems a battle for proving the ghost wrong. Water and its ambiguity – both deadly and lifegiving – remain a recurrent element in her novels. Sirens and attractive water nymphs¹² as well as beautiful water lilies (nymphéas) with long entangled stalks attached to underground stems capable of making their victims prisoners of profound and dangerous ponds, remind us of the water element's treacherous enchantment. In a metaphorical sense, for the artist to confront the water's deepest levels (mainly in herself) may be risky and distressing but necessary in order to emerge victorious. We know that Romanticism considered Orpheus the musician's travel into the underworld to bring his beloved back to the living, as a metaphor for the artist's efforts to bring his artwork up into the light. As already mentioned, Rachilde's aesthetic thinking has romantic traits. Deep water seems to be her underworld and she is fully determined to emerge victorious.

Eliante – an Orphean Queen in the Aquatic Underworld?

The novel's first page reveals Eliante's queen-like appearance. "This woman let her dress trail behind her like a queen trailing her life" (p. 4).¹³ Her majestic appearance suggests that she is in control, she knows what she wants and will respect no barriers. She is also "serious": "She always wore black: a serious woman" (p. 5). In this first scene, Eliante is about to leave a reception. However, it seems clear that she is not simply escaping a "monotonous official evening" (p. 6), she is headed

11 Cf. Hawthorne, 2001, pp. 48–62: "The Cultural Injunction to Silence".

12 See the description of Raoule de Vénérandes's tunic in *Monsieur Vénus* where ornamental details like river plants, *Nymphaea* and water lilies are symbols pointing to aspects of the young woman's secret dreams and personality traits (Rachilde, 2004, pp. 12–13).

13 All quotations are taken from Rachilde, 1990.

for something more important: “She left the brightly lit hall, taking with her its darkness, draped by a thick shadow, by an air of impenetrable mystery that came right up to her neck and clasped it as though to strangle her” (p. 4). The reference to suffocation indicates that she is either suffering or impatient to break out of a feeling of restraint. Eliante does so by metamorphosing her dress into supple and undulating water, an element of freedom and lightness: “She took small steps, and the tail of black, full, supple material fanned out, rolled a wave around her, undulated, forming the same moiré circles that are seen in deep water in the evening, after a body has fallen” (p. 3).¹⁴ The sentence describing Eliante’s dress undulates like the fabric associated with the water, until it hits its target, and falls down with its whole weight, like a body falling into water. In other words, her careful entry into the water of her dress seems to mimic the slow but determined rhythm of a sentence moving adventurously but surely towards its satisfactory end or accomplishment. However, the falling body may also suggest the frightening possibility of drowning. Despite being an element of freedom, water can be treacherous. From this point on, it is a question of swimming or drowning. Eliante adapts to the element and therefore, by necessity, becomes an aquatic being, a nymph (p. 4) or a siren, “agile on her sinuous tail, as though more free without feet” (p. 49). She dives into her own underworld – the metaphoric waters of creativity – where she confronts the danger and from which she eventually emerges victoriously. Like her creator Rachilde, she has overcome the danger of drowning and the threat of silence. She playfully juggles with words in admirable love letters which “fall into water” (p. 169). They are not meant to have consequences: “Do not read that seriously” (p. 169). The recipient is confused, but in this case, instrumentality is less important than the sender’s right to express herself, to have a voice.

The Siren’s Spell

The flexible siren contrasted with the venerable posture of the queen, but was necessary in an aquatic element. Back on solid ground, Eliante still manifests her siren agility when “her arms inert” (p. 4) and “her hands of mourning” (p. 4) come alive and her clothes begin to “float [...] on her” (p. 4). Her beauty becomes apparent: “She was so supple, she bent over so quickly that, suddenly, one guessed she was younger, more *animal*, perhaps more lighthearted, capable of running” (p. 5). Fire adds to water and she explodes: “She deployed [...] a violent stole, an adventurer’s stole, like a firework” (p. 6). Such a stunning appearance may imply a desire to impress her “secret” admirer Léon who is watching her and following her. However, what does this ‘following’ actually mean? “The somebody watched by the woman in black was following her” (p. 6); without Léon’s knowing, *she* is watching

14 Elle faisait de menus pas, et la queue de étoffe noire, ample, souple, s’étalant en éventail, roulait une vague autour d’elle, ondulait, formant les mêmes cercles moirés que l’on voit se former dans une eau profonde, le soir, après la chute d’un corps (Rachilde, [1900] 1982, p. 26).

him, like a siren searching to lure an unaware sailor into her trap. All of a sudden the clumsy young man gets too close and treads on her skirt: “The man stopped hypnotized. He had trodden on her skirt because he could see nothing but the woman” (p. 5). He is already bewitched by the siren who continues to descend the stairs as she seems to lift the young man into the waves of her aquatic dress. He is her prey, lured into the waters of creation to be exploited by the siren, a variety of the vampire, in other words: the siren or the vampire is the artist whose passion for art exploits and consumes the living. Later on, Eliante admits that she is “the opportunist who passes, dances and picks up sequins with which to decorate her dress” (p. 126).

After having lifted him into the waves of her dress, she invites him into her carriage “arranging the black cascade of the dress, the multicolored waves of the coat, causing light, very white petticoats to gush out, like champagne bubbles” (p. 7). The description connotes black water and the foam of waves along with colors and celebration (champagne). When Léon gets into the carriage, he is drawn even more into the aquatic realm, and he will soon be introduced into her dining room where “green silk hangings trickled into wavy folds from the ceiling like weeping willow branches, shelves held crystalware, in varied, and fluid, shades” (p. 11). The room resembles a greenhouse or an aquarium with no escape route: “neither door, nor window was visible, and a thick carpet, as soft as grass, imprisoned the ankle” (p. 11). The reader may recognize the enclosed space cherished by decadent writers, but Léon does not seem to realize that he has been made prisoner and that from now on his fate is entirely in the hands of his hostess.

The queen-like Eliante had entered the water cautiously, with small steps. Now she has captured Léon who becomes, simultaneously, a character in one of her stories, her inspiration, and the living creature on which she can prey – a complicated entanglement of necessities to the artist in order to live intensely a life of illusion, and consequently close to death. Despite an appearance of vibrant life Eliante may not necessarily be alive. In addition to her other identities, the novel describes her as a statue and as a form; she is a figure of the living dead between two worlds, one visible, the other one invisible: “at once very much at home and outside of all possible worlds” (p. 12). This strange form of existence authorizes her, at her own discretion, to oscillate between animation and petrification.

The Game of Animation and Petrification

Eliante's exhibition of vibrant life reveals her beauty behind the “thick shadow” (p. 3) of her queen-like and as we shall see, statuesque appearance. However, the exhibition is momentary. According to herself, the truth is that she is “already dead” (p. 70), and the narrator refers to her dress as a “funereal envelope” (p. 3). All of a sudden, the queen who adjusted to the waves of her dress, seems arti-

ficial and motionless. Everything about her is exaggerated: Her visage resembles “a painted doll’s face” (p. 3), her hair is “too twisted, too fine” (p. 3) and “she was whiter with her makeup than any other made-up woman” (p. 3). In decadent literature the made-up woman is frequently confused with a living painting (de Palacio, 1994, p. 152), and in Eliante’s particular case a statue. Her excessive whiteness underscores her statuesque and lifeless appearance, reminding us that 19th century artists frequently equated the statue with the dead woman; both are unchangeable and immobile. Eliante’s identity as a statue is first suggested in a scene where she “stop[s] in front of a mirror. She cast a curious glance, not looking at herself, but watching someone over her left shoulder” (pp. 3–4). This “someone” is her double, her “twin sister” (p. 4), a “marble statue of a nymph holding a candelabrum” (p. 4). We notice that an aquatic being, the nymph, has turned into stone. The statue and the living woman are here assimilated by contiguity; Eliante is now “equally a statue” (p. 4). Later on, even “without much makeup” (p. 66), “Eliante’s complexion seemed even whiter from the reflections of old ivory she wore around her, and her impeccable bust stood out clearly, without a fold, under the velvet of the bodice draped seamlessly” (p. 66). Later again her garment is “stretched over her without a wrinkle, without any apparent seam!” (p. 82) and “her body resembled an ivory statue” (p. 82).

Eliante’s appearance alternates between animation and inanimation or between life and death. This leads us far beyond realism, to ancient myths about the artist. Eliante’s supernatural power seems to refer indirectly to the mysterious relationship between animation and petrification which has its roots in the myths of Pygmalion and Medusa. Her power concerns her own person as well as her activity as an artist.

Anne Geisler-Szmulewicz explains that during the 19th century, the Pygmalion myth formed a special alliance with the Medusa myth (Geisler-Szmulewicz, 1999, p. 167f.). This evolution took place via another alliance, namely between the myths of androgyny and Narcissus which conveyed an impossible dream of fusion with the ideal. In its utmost consequence, this desire is expressed in the association between Pygmalion and Medusa where the original animation myth became a petrification myth. The reason for this strange alliance seemed to have been the conflict between life and perfect but lifeless form, or between a beautiful ideal (stones and statues that resist the ravages of time) and reality (which can never measure up to Art). As the myth developed, it incorporated the element of the living “statue” that could be petrified again if it wanted to return to its statuesque existence or if it became too troublesome to its creator.

Eliante seems to inhabit the three roles of Pygmalion, the artist, Galatea, the living art, and Medusa, living art turned to stone, as she alternates freely between animation and petrification. She is the statue whom she herself animates at will, and at other moments, she is Medusa whose power brings her back to her statuesque identity. She is simultaneously an artist and a work of art. She is thus

entirely self-sufficient and able to preserve her strength by distancing herself from any human help: "I have to remain free" (p. 49). "I'm disgusted by union, which destroys my strength" (p. 22); "I don't need a human caress" (p. 22). This is obviously a proclamation of sexual independence but her defense of freedom – which includes death or petrification by choice – may also have a sacrificial meaning. Her juggling sessions in front of her guests, always end with a symbolic suicide, a spectacular demonstration of the artist's sacrifice on Art's altar. This oscillation between life and death hides a mysterious truth: in order to create life, the creator has to be "lifeless". Eliante thus takes on the Pygmalion role while remaining petrified. This apparent contradiction is rooted in the Aesthetics of the movement of Art for Art's sake.¹⁵ According to its adherents the creator cannot petrify (make a work of art of unchangeable beauty) without being petrified herself. This ambiguity underpins Eliante's oscillation between life and death, between animation and petrification: "I am dying of love and, like the phoenix, I am reborn, after burning up, with love!" (p. 22). The artist consumed while giving birth to her artwork, then returns to life before being burnt again in the process of realizing a new creation. He or she is resurrected in order to die again; the artist may never become equal to other human beings: even when his exterior form is lifelike, she is closer to death than to life. With reference to Théophile Gautier, Geisler-Szmulewicz affirms: "Tout Pygmalion qui tente de faire vivre son œuvre est nécessairement condamné à subir une forme de repétrification, parce qu'il n'existe pas de conciliation possible entre le beau et le réel" (Geisler-Szmulewicz, 1999, p. 191).¹⁶

The novel's strangest episode is the scene where Eliante shows Léon a special treasure of hers, a beautiful human-sized amphora:

there was one admirable objet d'art placed in the middle of the room on a pedestal of old rose velvet, like an altar; an alabaster vase the height of a man, so slim, so slender, so deliciously troubling with its ephebe's hips, with such a human appearance, even though it retained the traditional shape of an amphora, that the viewer remained somewhat speechless. (p. 18)

It soon becomes clear that Eliante is not simply a proud collector eager to share with her guest the sight of a beautiful acquisition. Léon is actually in for a shocking experience; he becomes the involuntary and outraged witness to Eliante making love to her gorgeous *objet d'art*. At first he too had been moved by the beauty of the amphora but his main focus had been Eliante: "Léon looked at her with superstitious admiration. He was gaining, for this woman, the respect of a young *savant* already in love with forms, colors, everything that recalled the power of the

15 According to this movement from the early 19th century, art is autotelic, which means that it has a purpose in itself. Art should have no utilitarian function, be it moral, social, political or didactic. The French philosopher Victor Cousin created the slogan in 1836 while Théophile Gautier and Leconte de Lisle are considered the leaders of the movement's literary branch.

16 Every Pygmalion who tries to give life to his work is necessarily doomed to suffer a kind of re-petrification, because no conciliation is possible between beauty and reality. (My trans.)

grace and principal beauty of his life: art, its transposition into the eternal” (p. 21). While Léon admires “the adorable chastity of line” (p. 18), Eliante accentuates the duplicity of her idol: “Isn’t it beautiful! Isn’t *he* beautiful” (p. 20). Like a perfect statue it is unchanging and immortal. Even more, to Eliante it *is* a statue, which makes it even more humanlike: “Nothing here reminds him that he was ever anything but a statue...” (p. 21). It is a pure form, deprived of its past and of its memories, a “charming body in which life has been replaced by perfume, by wine... or by blood!” (p. 21), symbols of spirituality and sacrifice. Its resemblance with Eliante is manifest, she too is pure form, a perfect statue whose hand “flashed with whiteness, and exuded a penetrating perfume” (p. 10).

In this scene Eliante demonstrates her supernatural power. She reveals herself as Pygmalion, the artist *par excellence*. In the 19th century this myth played a central role in artists’ self-perception. According to Geisler-Szmulewicz, Rousseau was the one who in his melodrama *Pygmalion* (1762) had launched the myth as a myth of creation. While Ovid’s Pygmalion story was a myth of love, Rousseau transformed it into a myth about the artist and his complex relationship with his artwork.¹⁷ Gradually an alliance united the Pygmalion myth and the myth about the rebellious Prometheus who, in addition to creating man from clay, stole the fire from the gods and gave it to humankind (pp. 69–107).¹⁸ As he incorporated these legendary heroes, the artist became powerful, even demonic, in his desire to usurp God’s ability to give life to his creation. The religious aspect which was central in the original myth narrated in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* has undergone a significant transformation. Pygmalion had been able to give life to his statue thanks to Venus’ intervention; the goddess had decided to reward his piety by answering his prayers. In the 19th century the artist simply replaced God.

In *La Jongleuse* the miracle happens as it did in both the original myth and in its subsequent versions. Under Eliante’s caresses the humanlike amphora (the statue) comes alive and the contours of a gender-neutral person appears. An invisible presence fills the room, and the text refers to “the one insentient person on the scene” (p. 23). It is like a visitation from an intangible reality, from the spiritual world of Art.

Furthermore, this female Pygmalion is also a passionate love goddess – a Venus – as well as an inspired priestess: “there is a furnace inside me, I’m inhabited by a god” (p. 113). She claims to be an incarnation of love. Over time, some versions of the Pygmalion myth had merged the statue and the goddess into one person; the living statue became in reality the incarnated Venus. In the 19th century, the love goddess even incarnated herself in “la femme fatale”, the dangerous woman who – like the siren – constituted a danger to men. In the role of the fatal woman, she was the chthonic Venus – dark and cruel – in opposition to the celestial and

17 Cf. Geisler-Szmulewicz (1999, pp. 34–56): “Naissance du mythe de l’artiste: le *Pygmalion* de Jean-Jacques Rousseau”.

18 It is noteworthy that Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* (1818) was given the subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*.

indulgent Venus associated with the Virgin Mary. Eliante is ambiguous and may represent both, in different situations. Furthermore, we have seen that both fire and water are her elements, which makes sense when we remember the birth of Venus – the love goddess born from the foam of the water.

Eliante – the divine artist – giving life to an amphora is totally supernatural. At the same time, it is all about the artist's exclusive passion for art. The artist makes love with Art, a rival whom no human being can equal. Moreover, this episode is a demonstration of the artist's power in front of a young man in danger of being petrified.

Eliante has chosen Léon for several reasons. He has potential: "I see you' she said finally, 'as you will be, if not as you are, dear sir. You're trying in vain to resist the *god* who leads you'" (p. 13). He is also able to recognize beauty, as in the case with the amphora, and he is handsome (p. 58). There is a more troubling possibility, though. Eliante-Medusa is able to transform herself into a statue (stone). Likewise, when she is finished with the human-like vase, she turns it into stone again. She might want to use her power with other beings and it seems that Léon's qualities may put him in jeopardy. He has the potential to become another piece in Eliante's collection. Renaissance artists believed that the blocks of stone already contained the statue, and that the role of the artist consisted in liberating it. Eliante may want to release the young man's full potential by transforming him into a piece of art. At the moment he is just "*natural* [...]. And that's why you're here" (p. 13). However, Eliante notices his resemblance with the amphora: "you are handsome [...]. You are not taller than my dear objet d'art, standing next to each other, you could be two very white brothers. Only my alabaster vase seems more harmonious to me, less savage in its attitude, immobilized in the loveliest human position, the sexless position" (p. 58). Art is more perfect than the living person. For some reason, she resists the temptation to make him an immobilized and harmonious statue. She leaves him in his natural state and chooses instead to lure him into another trap by forcing him to marry her niece Missie. The trap seems cruel but at the same time it might have a life-saving function. Léon is rushed into a real life in the real world. He loses the woman of his dreams, in return he avoids being irreversibly petrified and transformed into a lifeless statue.

Once again, the Orpheus myth comes to mind. While Orpheus's art enables him to bring Eurydice back from the Underworld, her re-animation proves to be momentary. By defying the prohibition to look back before the couple had reached the surface, Orpheus ultimately brings eternal death for Eurydice, a death which might be akin to a work of art. The myth shows a connection between petrification and the act of "looking back". *La Jongleuse* on the other hand ends with the birth of a child, a reassuring sign pointing to the future.¹⁹

19 Some see a parallel between the story of Orpheus and that of the biblical Lot. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, another form of petrification in that it freezes or stills what should be moving or animated: "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." (Genesis 19:26)

Despite its supernatural aspect, the episode of the amphora also makes us reconnect with the novel's realistic dimension. Its sexual meaning is obvious. "She was not offering herself to the man; she was giving herself to the alabaster vase [...] arms chastely crossed on this slender form, neither girl nor boy. [...] a slight shudder traversed her body [...] and she gave a small groan of imperceptible joy, the very breath of orgasm" (p. 23). Realism makes its entry when Léon, cries out: "It's scandalous! Right there ... in front of me... without me? No, it's horrible!" (p. 23). However, Eliante had wanted to make a point about her independence and she answers dryly: "You really needed a lesson" (p. 23). Léon is thus doomed to admire this woman from a distance. As a performer and a divine Pygmalion she indulges male spectatorship but refuses to become an object.²⁰

Pygmalionesque "Girl Power"

Eliante may keep Léon at a distance for an additional reason: she is not the only Pygmalion in this story. Gradually, in the course of the 19th century, the original Pygmalion acquired avatars such as the scientist and the pedagogue.²¹ Léon who is a medical student represents the former. In Rachilde's novels scientists rarely get "good press". Léon never understands fully who Eliante really is, and dreams of seducing her and transforming her into an "ordinary" woman. His occasional disrespect reveals his lack of understanding. At some point "he pinched her full on the skin, pinched her without restraint, wanting bitterly to see her struggle, give herself away, to hear her cry out, to make her spurt, a woman and all warm, exasperated, from her siren's wrapping" (p. 50). The two of them represent different, incompatible and even competing worldviews. While Eliante represents mystery, and is rooted in a mythical, spiritual world, Léon is a product of the 19th century's confidence in reason and science.²²

Eliante's late husband represents the pygmalionesque 'pedagogue' who initiates his much younger wife to adulthood and marriage. He also proved to be an artist, creating small wax statuettes in erotic or obscene postures for which Eliante was the model. "He modeled the wax himself like a real artist, and, during my absence, his fingers kneaded all these little women in my image" (p. 86). This per-

20 Concerning the male spectator, cf. Mayer, 2002, pp. 96–102 and Dauphiné, 1982, p. 15.

21 According to Geisler-Szmulewicz the pedagogical interpretation of Pygmalion constituted a parallel with the myth of the artist. She refers to Michelet and Balzac and the 19th century's preoccupation with girls' education and their role in marriage. The woman needs to be "trained", and her husband is her "trainer" (Geisler-Szmulewicz, 1999, pp. 231–232). With regard to Pygmalion as a scientist, *L'Ève future* or *The Future Eve* (1886) by Villiers de L'Isle-Adam represents a crucial moment in the development of the myth. The novel describes a fictionalized Thomas Edison who creates an artificial woman, an animated and physically perfect android but with no inner life. Anyway, the scientist with the help of art seems able to compete with God and His creative power (Geisler-Szmulewicz, 1999, pp. 357–366).

22 The subtitle of *Monsieur Vénus* is actually *Roman matérialiste* (A Materialistic Novel).

verse Pygmalion merged with Medusa (another of Rachilde's gender reversals) and transforms the living woman into "stone". He succeeds in turning the perishable human being into unchanging objects but on another textual level his act is a display of male power and dominance. Eliante admits that living with her husband had been challenging, and she even states that she is responsible for his death: "My husband is dead because of me" (p. 112). In other words, the petrified woman got her revenge by petrifying her Pygmalion. She won her independence and became Pygmalion in his place, while at the same time remaining petrified and existing in an exterior and artificial way.

Eliante has conquered her pygmalionesque rivals. Patriarchy and rationalism have been disarmed. Even though the husband's spirit continues to linger in the house he is now submitted to the victorious female Pygmalion. The obedient amphora might even be considered a metaphor for the subdued man whose destiny is entirely in the hands of a powerful woman. The vase's androgynous form symbolizes beauty but it may also suggest a belittling of masculinity.

In this chapter, the search for fairness means a claim for female self-preservation, power and personal autonomy. Moreover, it includes the woman artist's right to recognition and self-expression. I have argued that the novel's supernatural or mythological elements open a window to the narrator's aesthetic reflection. Art belongs to another dimension than mere rationalism and from a romantic viewpoint the artwork's completion may come from suffering and sacrifice. Eliante's suicide at the end may very well give us the impression that she has lost her battle as a woman and as an artist. However, in a mysterious way, her death seems to have been sacrificial and fruitful: her letting go of Léon followed by her "transposition into the eternal" (p. 21) – like a work of art – are followed by the birth of a child. Léon's words when he contemplates his and Missie's newborn daughter – "I hope she'll have *her eyes*, the eyes of dream" (p. 206) – mean what they say, but at the same time they express a desire for imagination and fantasy, for a dimension beyond what is tangible. He wants her to see what Eliante saw. In this sense, Eliante's sacrificial death has not been in vain.

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Jane Ekstam

“Looking and feeling good on my own terms”

Amal’s Hybrid Identity in Randa Abdel-Fattah’s *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

The present chapter investigates the origins and importance of hybrid identity in sixteen-year-old Amal, Abdel-Fattah’s protagonist in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Amal’s hybrid identity becomes increasingly unified and stable. The symbol of this development is the hijab. With the aid of both Homi Bhabba’s notion of cultural identity, i.e. a duality that manifests itself as a split in the identity of the colonized other, whereby humans become a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer’s cultural identity, and Nassar Meer’s theory of double consciousness, in which identity exists both in and for itself, I demonstrate that Amal not only successfully negotiates the challenges presented by a hybrid identity but also embraces them. As a result, she is able to look and feel good on *her own* terms. Her country, her family and her faith become integrated by the end of the novel, forming a solid foundation on which to build a successful and happy future in Australia. Fairness and tolerance guide Amal in both her relationships and her actions. Her empathy with those who are different to her and her determination to be accepted by other, non-Muslims, inspire her peers and gain her the respect not only of her peers but also the adults in her community.

The Hijab, Empowerment and Hybrid Identity

Amal establishes early in the novel that the hijab, or head scarf, often regarded by non-Muslims as an obstacle to female liberty, can also be a source of both empowerment and freedom (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 29). At the end of her first day at school wearing the hijab, she reflects, “I was looking and feeling good *on my own terms*, and boy did that feel awesome” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 29, *my italics*). The decision to wear the hijab is Amal’s, and hers alone. The following morning, when she kneels beside her parents to pray, her hijab gives her “a strange sense of calm” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 29), allowing her to express who she is “on the inside” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 28). In this chapter, I explore Amal’s journey towards a unified, coherent identity as a young adult Muslim in a non-Muslim society. The hijab is the symbol of this journey. It is also the physical manifestation of the freedom and ability to choose. Underlying the following discussion is the conviction that cultural hybridity, i.e., maintaining a sense of balance among practices, values, and traditions of two or more different cultures, has the potential to cultivate

a climate of fairness and tolerance that not only permits but also celebrates difference based on mutual respect.¹ At the same time, Amal's journey towards a unified self-identity also excites and demands empathy not only among her friends but also from the reader, who follows Amal's progress closely and the various obstacles placed in her path.

Amal's hybrid identity is clearly established early on in *Does My Head Look Big in This?*: "I'm an Australian-Muslim-Palestinian" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 6), she claims. She draws the conclusion that she is "whacked with some seriously confusing identity hyphens" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 6). As the story progresses, Amal gradually learns that her two very different national identities not only support but also encapsulate her religious one. Her Muslim identity is central to both her Australian and Palestinian identities, as illustrated by the placement of "Muslim" between the two national identities. As I hope to show, the hyphens in Amal's identity do not denote divisions: they are integral parts of an increasingly strong and unified hybrid whole.

Amal as an Adolescent

As a young, sixteen-year-old protagonist, the fictional Amal is in the middle age band for young adults, i.e. 16–20 years old. Identity is acknowledged to be a key concept in this critical period of development. It is a time when, as Jane Kroger demonstrates, "one is confronted with the task of self-definition" (1996, p. 18). Amal presents herself as a character to whom young adults who are exploring the nature of the "self" can easily relate and with whom they can empathise. The plotlines in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* depict the experiences of teenagers in general. The language of the novel is easily accessible to young adults. As Jeff Spanke (2010) argues, all three qualities, i.e. plotlines, experiences and language are essential characteristics of young adult literature.

In addition, and as in most young adult novels, the point of view is the first person. The story is told in the voice of teenage Amal "and not the voice of an adult looking back as a young person" (Herz & Gallo, 2005, p. 10). As Herz and Gallo also emphasise, "the outcome of the story is usually dependent upon the decisions and actions of the main character" (p. 11). It is Amal who decides her destiny. Her willpower and determination are based on personal convictions of right and wrong. Amal is determined to be herself and not who others wish her to be, even if/when this entails being "different". Part of being "different" is being a Muslim and wearing a hijab.

1 A recent study of the everyday experiences of young Muslims in Melbourne suggests that there is no contradiction between "Islamic rituals and faith-based practices and tradition" and enacting Australian citizenship in a harmonious and meaningful way (Johns et al., 2015, p. 171).

Wearing the Hijab

The hijab can be worn by an Australian or a Palestinian. It is a choice (only in Iran and Saudi Arabia is it obligatory for women to wear the hijab). Wearing the hijab denotes not only a set of beliefs but also an identity. This identity must develop in order to remain unified. It does not necessarily conflict with other identities. The hijab is a symbol of Amal’s journey towards understanding her hybrid identity. Towards the end of the novel she observes, “I’ve been kidding myself. Putting on the hijab isn’t the end of the journey. It’s just the beginning of it” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 324). The hijab is the symbol of her Muslim faith, which brings together the two most important parts of Amal’s hybrid self, namely Australian and Palestinian.

While a hybrid identity can be “a trap, a predicament” (Ang, 1996, p. 40), it can also be a source of, and indeed an expression of strength. Amal’s hijab is not only a religious symbol, it is also the outward expression of a decision to be true to herself, an important part of which, for Amal, is being a Muslim. It is, however, *only* a part. In wearing the hijab, Amal demonstrates that she is on her way to discovering who she is and, equally importantly, who she wishes to be as an adult.

Amal knows that she is different because of her hybrid identity. This can, in fact, as Homi Bhabha argues, be an advantage in identity formation because hybridity constitutes a

liminal space in-between the designation of identity [...] an interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed hierarchy. (1994, p. 4)

Amal sees herself as neither superior nor inferior to others. She is herself. Like many young adolescents, she becomes increasingly self-reflective (Eisenberg et al., 2006). But unlike many adolescents, the fictional Amal is not susceptible to peer pressure.² This is because, as Santor, Messervey and Kusumakar demonstrate, young people “who generally conform to rules will be less influenced by peer pressure” (2000, p. 172). Amal both obeys school rules *and* belongs to a small group of peers.

Conforming while at the same time developing a sense of self are parallel developments. However, during adolescence, conforming to peer group norms becomes less important (Erikson 1968; Newman & Newman 1976). This is seen particularly clearly in the area of morals. The fictional Amal is no exception in this regard.

Adolescents in general develop an ability to think morally. As noted by Smetana and Turiel:

² Peer pressure is defined here as “when people your own age encourage you to do something or to keep from doing something else, no matter if you personally want to or not” (Brown et al., 1986, p. 522).

The development of adolescents' moral thinking entails their ability to apply more abstract and complex moral concepts in complex or multi-faceted situations involving conflicts between moral and other social or non-social concerns. (2006, p. 264)

The fictional Amal's decision to wear the hijab is both a moral and a religious one. Indeed, the hijab is for her an expression of "what's on the inside, where it really counts" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 324). Here, Amal is not just describing her religious principles but also her moral ones: she believes that she must do what is right in terms of her own values, but she also takes into consideration the principles and reactions of those around her. When, for example, her headmistress tells her that she can only wear a maroon-coloured hijab, which matches her school uniform and is thus less conspicuous, Amal accepts this even though she would prefer to have a prettier colour and even change the colour of her hijab now and then, as Muslim women do. This is a moral decision, a compromise that is fair to others, and a demonstration that Amal wishes not only to be true to herself but also part of her community, socially as well as educationally. This decision also wins her the respect of her parents.

While in western cultures like Australia it is common to see the hijab as a symbol of female oppression, this is not an uncontested view in either Muslim or non-Muslim communities. Indeed, as Werbner (2007) argues, far from being a symbol of oppression, the veil is often used to demonstrate modesty and piety; it is not a purely religious statement. She argues that younger women have come to see that traditional Islam allows women greater freedom than is often supposed. Muslims use the hijab, for example, as a way of entering public spaces with fewer restrictions than would otherwise apply because the veil provides a measure of anonymity (Werbner, 2007, pp. 175–176).

In *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, Amal proves herself worthy of wearing the hijab. She wears it for herself alone: it is not intended as a provocation to others. Her overall goal is to look and feel good on her own terms, be at peace with her personal values while at the same time part of a larger community. She learns to strike a balance between being fair to herself and being fair to the community. In this respect, Amal's story is also that of her creator, Randa Abdel-Fattah, who lives in Sydney and has worked for a number of years as a Muslim lawyer, human rights advocate and community volunteer.

The fictional Amal lives in real-life Camberwell, "one of Melbourne's trendy suburbs" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 5). This middle-class suburb boasts "beautiful tree-lined streets, Federation homes, manicured front lawns and winding drive-ways" (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 5). Her father is a doctor and her mother, a dentist. Most of the fictional inhabitants are Australian, as in the real-life community.

Muslims, the Quran and the Hijab

Although the Muslim presence in Australia is relatively small, Muslims have been in Australia since before white settlement (Saaed, 2003). Comprising 2.2 percent of the Australian population (Abdel-Fattah, 2017, p. 398), they are the third largest religious group after Christians and Buddhists (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). They have never, however, been accepted as part of the Australian cultural milieu (Brastad, 2001; Perera, 2009).

Conservative politicians have associated Muslims with social discord and stressed the importance of stricter assimilation measures (Jakubowicz, 2007; Perera, 2009). Surveys conducted during the early part of the twenty-first century indicate that many Australians believe that Muslims make Australia a less attractive place in which to live. The Issues Deliberation Australia survey (2020, see Rane et al., 2020), for example, states that some Australians believe that Muslims are a threat to the peace and security of the Australian way of life. Abdel-Fattah points out in her article on Islamophobia that Australian Muslims “are undoubtedly the most visible and problematized minority in Australia in the context of the global circulation of fears and moral panics about the Muslim Other” (2017, p. 398). Abdel-Fattah has herself experienced problems when wearing the hijab in Australia: as a teenager, for example, she was taunted by teenage boys, and her hijab was ripped off her head. She has also encountered racism in her work as a lawyer, author and activist, and has even been denied jobs on the grounds of her wearing a hijab.

Ironically, in view of what has been stated above regarding the position of Muslims in Australia, and wearing the hijab, The Quran makes few references to appropriate clothing for Muslim women. And where these occur, they present more general principles governing how to dress modestly. Chapter 24 verse 31 of the Quran states, for example:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, [a list of relatives], [household servants], or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. (Quran)

As Zeinab Zein demonstrates, veiling practices can be used to create a dichotomy between Islamic and Australian values. The veil has even been seen as a signifier

to represent the perceived threat posed by Islam and Muslims to Australian cultural values. The veiled Muslim woman in the political arena is marked not only as a culturally incompatible “other”, [...] but the perceived oppression of Muslim women is also highlighted to demonstrate the country’s vulnerability to Islamic terrorism. (2014, n.p.)

An article by Rachel Woodlock in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (6 June 2010) quotes Asiya Davidson-Allouche, a self-professed feminist Muslim living in northern Melbourne: “There are layers and layers of veils between us and Allah, which is the true reality [...]. To be hidden, to be concealed, is something truly beautiful. It enables us always to be reminded of that link.”

For the fictional Amal, the hijab is not only a link to and expression of Allah, but more importantly, a bridge to her true self. This bridge must give equal importance to the Australian and Palestinian sides of her identity. It provides *equal* access to both sides. For Amal, being a Muslim is a journey that begins with the hijab but does not end with it: while she is still wearing the hijab at the end of the story, she no longer needs it in order to face the future. The hijab is an external sign which, by the end of the novel, has also become an internalised feature of Amal’s identity. What the hijab is and what it symbolises are not the same thing, as Amal’s story so clearly illustrates.

In the above-mentioned article on Islamophobia and Australian Muslim political consciousness (2017), Abdel-Fattah’s presentation of Islamic identity is very close to the notion of “double consciousness” propounded by Nasar Meer. Double consciousness, Meer argues, exists *in* and *for* itself, a distinction that Abdel-Fattah regards as extremely important. Meer contends that a consciousness that exists *in* itself bears “a historically ascribed identity”, e.g. radicalisation, which makes it reactive (Meer, 2010, p. 199).³ A consciousness that exists *for* itself, on the other hand, is “capable of mobilising on its own terms for its own interests” (Meer, 2010, p. 4). This form of consciousness adopts a politically self-defined identity that goes beyond the narrative of Islamophobia. It is this identity that the fictional Amal both seeks and defends. She does so not only, and in fact, not even primarily, for political or religious reasons, but as a means of proclaiming her independence as a Muslim teenage girl in an Islamophobic Australia.

Above all, the hijab becomes for Amal a marker of identity and not a symbol of difference. It symbolises her acceptance and embracement of her hybrid identity, which becomes an increasingly significant part of her femininity. Amal claims that:

It’s mainly the migrants in my life who have inspired me to understand what it means to be an Aussie. To be a hyphenated Australian [...] It’s their stories and confrontations and pains and joys which have empowered me to

3 An interesting study of second-generation Muslim women immigrants in Australia demonstrates that, far from being “lost”, as many have supposed, such young women “are constructing blended identities which they reflect on consciously” (Poynting, 2009, p. 373) and which enable them to respond strategically to everyday racism. A study conducted in 2013, “Minority Youth and Social Transformation in Australia: Identities, Belonging and Cultural Capital”, suggests that “fluid identities” and “positive aspirations” are furthered by the local community, “that provides the bridge between [the] home cultures and the broader world” (Jakubowicz, 2007, p. 5). The fictional Amal is clearly situated in her local community in Melbourne.

know myself, challenged me to embrace my identity as a young Australian-Palestinian-Muslim girl. (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 350)

It should be noted that the operative word in Amal’s claim is the final one, namely “girl”. Amal is a girl who has the choice of wearing or not wearing the hijab. When read from this perspective, Abdel-Fattah’s novel demonstrates that wearing the hijab is a sign of independence rather than repression. In an interview with Hazel Rochman (2007), Abdel-Fattah claimed that *Does My Head Look Big in This?* is an attempt to “shock readers into realizing that teenagers, no matter their faith or culture, have common experiences; that there is more in common, than there is different; and that the differences should be respected, not feared” (Rochman, 2007, p. 54). The fictional Amal learns to celebrate rather than fear or hide her difference. She does so as a teenager who values and respects her Muslim and non-Muslim friends equally.

At the same time, Amal does not accept all the practices of her non-Muslim friends, as her boyfriend Adam soon discovers when he expresses his wish to have a physical relationship with her. She explains, “I want to be with one person in my life. I want to know that the guy I spend the rest of my life with is the first person I share something so intimate and exciting with” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 242). The repetition of “I want” makes it clear that Amal knows what is right for her. By extension, it is also right for Adam if his intentions towards Amal are serious, because if he does not accept her principles there can be no future for them together.

The fictional Amal does not attempt to achieve piety or perfection, as has already been noted by Amrah Abdul Majid (2016).⁴ Instead, she strives to be the best young adult she can be. As she reflects on her values and decisions, including the decision to wear the hijab, she notes that she adheres to values that are sometimes different to those of her friends. She neither believes nor claims that she is superior. This is particularly poignant given that at the time of writing *Does My Head Look Big in This?* its author was herself only fifteen years old. At this point in her life, Abdel-Fattah had just decided to wear a hijab to school – a private school in Melbourne where there were no other Muslims. Amal’s story is thus in no small part her creator’s story.⁵

4 Majid argues that “[t]he decision to wear the hijab opens a path for the protagonist to become more adherent to her religion, as well as improving her attributes and individuality as a whole. This creates a wholesome young woman who is not only committed to her religion, but is also mindful of her character” (p. 115). It is the notions of individuality and character that I wish to emphasise in the present article as they weigh more heavily than religious aspirations in understanding the development of the fictional Amal into a unified and balanced young member of her community.

5 Abdel-Fattah’s literary works are not “slices of reality as the artist does not plagiarise the real but shapes it”, argues Jean Francois Vernay in “Fictional reality strikes back: Koch’s novels from fiction to friction” (Vernay, 2008, p. 27). C. J. Koch argues that if an author loses touch with reality and fails to reflect a consistent personality in his/her works, readers cease to care

When asked in an interview “what do you see as some of the challenges of being an Australian Muslim”, Abdel-Fattah replied:

I think the major challenges for Muslims – especially young people – living in the west, and in Australia in particular, is overcoming the tendency to define your identity in terms of resistance: you need to be able to find who you are in Australia and make a contribution, to ignore the media and the so called war on terror and the way it feeds into how people perceive Muslims, to overcome the Islamophobia, and still make something of our contribution to Australia that’s positive. (Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, 2018, n.p.)

These are noble views, which are also clearly reflected in the character of Amal. They are a strong reason for feeling empathy for young Muslims in general, and Amal/Abdel-Fattah in particular.

Identity and Empathy

Through the story of Amal, the reader learns to understand how she consciously and consistently builds on her hybrid identity. This is a process of negotiation that necessitates a “vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect,” what Suzanne Keen calls “empathy” (2006, p. 208). “In empathy we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others” (Keen, 2006, p. 208). Empathy is not only seeing but also feeling someone else’s pain; sympathy, on the other hand, is only *feeling pity* for someone else’s pain. Amy Coplan explains that “(w)hen I empathize with another, I take up his or her psychological perspective and imaginatively experience [...] what he or she experiences” (2004, p. 143). Coplan stresses, nonetheless, that in so doing she keeps her own identity separate. In this way, it is possible to both identify with the fictional character and respect the singularity of the latter’s experience. Rogers (1959) puts this a little differently:

The state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person but without ever losing the “as if” condition. (pp. 210–211)

At the same time, the experience of the reader and the character is not, of course, the same. As Suzanne Keen argues: “Real readers believe they have *legitimate* empathetic experiences as a result of their encounters with fictional characters and the imagined world they move in” (Keen, 2007, p. 99, my italics). From the very beginning of *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, the narrator hopes that we will understand her decision to be a “full-timer”, i.e. one who wears the hijab all

and believe: “we lose interest, we can’t identify; it’s a private game, a minor entertainment” (2000, p. 163).

the time and especially “in the presence of males who aren’t immediate family” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 2).

This is why, at the beginning of the novel, Amal decides to list the reasons for wearing the hijab. She identifies three *main* justifications: it is better to follow “God’s fashion dictates than some ugly solarium-tanned old fart in Milan” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, pp. 8–9), who advocates skimpy clothing; wearing a hijab shows modesty; and the hijab makes it possible to avoid obsessing about one’s figure and weight. The list looks like an essay, Amal fears. Compiling it is not an academic assignment but a matter of life and death at this point in its creator’s development. The language Amal uses to express her reasons is strong and immature, and includes such slang/offensive words as “bitch”, “zit”, and “bloody stirrers”. The tone is facetious but at the same time deadly serious. It serves to demonstrate that Amal has no need to associate with members of her school class in general, most of whom she regards as shallow. Instead, she selects special friends, which include two Muslims, Leila and Yasmeen (Leila already wears the hijab full-time at the beginning of the story). She knows that her close friends, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, will not tease her if she wears the hijab to school.

Coming of age is “always riddled with anxieties, [but] holds particular dilemmas for young Muslims”, suggest Pajalik and Divaroren, editors of *Coming of Age: Growing up Muslim in Australia* (2014, p. 7). The path that Amal follows in establishing and reinforcing her identity as a Muslim in Australia is described more or less chronologically in the novel, each stage building on the previous one, and demonstrating Amal’s determination to follow the rules but at the same time enjoy the freedom to express her innermost convictions. The earlier mentioned list that she draws up indicates that she has a clear idea of who will and who will not approve of her wearing the hijab. Among those who will give her “attitude”, she lists several girls at school, check-out girls at supermarkets and “hard-core feminists” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 17). Few men are listed. Significantly, however, she mentions “people who will interview me if and when I apply for a job one day” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 18). Here fiction and reality meet as this echoes Abdel-Fattah’s own experience.

Amal’s first day at school wearing the hijab is all about looking good and *feeling* good. The forty-five minutes that she spends every morning fixing her hijab finally result in her achieving “a perfect shape, a perfect arch to frame my face” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 32). It is the shape that she has been aiming for. Amal also knows that she should have prepared the headmistress for her decision, as people tend to assume that the hijab “has bizarre powers sewn into its micro-fibres. Powers which transform Muslim girls into UCO’s (Unidentified Covered Objects), which turn Muslim girls from an ‘us’ into ‘them’” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 38). While Amal understands the headmistress’s initial reaction of horror, she knows that she “must stand up for herself” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 38). As already established, Amal does not wish to break rules. But she demands respect for her decision, just as she

shows respect to her headmistress. It is all about being fair to the community and to the individual. This, however, does not make it any easier for Amal to enter her first lesson after the holidays wearing a hijab. The reader empathises with her. We visualise her body language as she walks through the rows of desks feeling “like somebody has got a stapler and started punching holes all over my guts” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 42). As readers, we wish to fill those holes and lessen the pain in order, perhaps somewhat selfishly, to reduce our own pain. In talking to her mother about her first day at school wearing the hijab, Amal explains:

Maa! I’m not a kid! I’ve spent every last minute in these past four days thinking through every single potential obstacle [...] Yeah, I’m scared. OK, there, happy? I’m petrified. I walked into my classroom and I wanted to throw up from how nervous I was. But this decision, it’s coming from my heart. I can’t explain or rationalize it. OK, I’m doing it because I believe it’s my duty and defines me as a Muslim female but it’s not as ... I don’t know how to put it ... it’s more than just that. (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, pp. 51–52)

The above passage demonstrates that Amal is not a child any longer (she is sixteen). At the same time, her conviction cannot be questioned: wearing the hijab is a duty for her. It is also an expression of who she is.

Challenges inevitably arise at school as Amal attempts to negotiate an untrodden path between friendship, religion and tradition. When her friend Leila is banned by her mother from going out with Amal and their friends, for example, Amal’s mother urges her daughter to understand the problem from different perspectives. She tells Amal, “If you want to understand a problem you look at its cause. You don’t look at its manifestation” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 87). This helps Amal not only in her relationship with Adam but also to decide to take part in the school debate. Once she is convinced that her decision is correct, Amal typically prepares and performs well. She is strong enough to reject her uncle’s advice to stop wearing the hijab because she will have no hope of a future. She knows that it would be so easy to remove her hijab and become an “unhyphenated Aussie” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 104), but that is clearly not what she wants. Also, it is neither fair to her, nor, equally importantly, to her faith.

Adam seems to understand this and gradually learns to respect Amal for who she is. He knows that her “smart-arse lines” and “feminist moods” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 154) do not represent the real Amal. What he does not quite understand yet, however, is the actual strength and depth of her convictions. As already mentioned, Amal refuses to have a physical relationship with Adam. This is not just a mark of her Muslim faith but also a demonstration of her desire to establish her own standards, however different these may be to those of her peers.

Increasingly, the narrator associates wearing the hijab and adhering to Muslim principles with Amal’s future. As she drifts off to sleep, Amal ponders the words of one of her teachers, who has told her that she can achieve her goals and be anything she wants to be. Amal is bright and dedicated and must make the best of

her natural gifts; this, she realises, is her duty if she is to be fair to her gifts as well as to her loved ones and their expectations. The final sentence of the novel reads, “Ever since I wore the hijab I’ve been feeling pretty scared” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 218). Amal’s greatest fear, it seems, is that her future “won’t live up to all [she’s] dreamed it to be” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 218).

She gradually recognises, however, that her future lies in her own hands. Wearing the hijab and being faithful to Muslim principles are, Amal gradually learns, not enough for her. At the end of the novel, she understands that

All this time I’ve been walking around thinking I’ve become pious because I’ve made the difficult decision to wear the hijab. I’ve been assuming that now I’m wearing it full-time, I’ve earned all my brownie points.

But what’s the good of being true to your religion on the outside, if you don’t change what’s on the inside, where it really counts? (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 324)

With her “A” grade and her “best speaker” award, Amal finally acknowledges to herself that she *does* have a future,⁶ with or without the hijab. She has empowered herself to know herself, she claims. She no longer needs to think about her identity, because it is clear to her. She no longer needs to write lists about what she should or should not wear: she knows what she should do because she has decided to embrace head-on her “identity as a young Australian-Palestinian-Muslim girl” (Abdel-Fattah, 2005, p. 350). At the beginning of the novel, she describes herself as “Australian-Muslim-Palestinian”. The order changes by page 304 to “Australian-Palestinian-Muslim”. “Australian” is still Amal’s first identity. Nationality has become more important than religious affiliation: “Muslim” is no longer central. Amal knows exactly where she is going. The answers are inside herself, and are represented by her desires, dreams and visions for the future. There is no more fear because it has been replaced by self-knowledge and self-respect. The hijab is neither the cause nor the outcome but the physical manifestation of Amal’s *internal* journey. She can now look and feel good on her own terms because she has found a way to be fair to herself, her country, her family and her faith. These together form an integral part of Amal and are the foundations for her future in Australia.

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Part II

Women in Cultural Production Defining Images

Wladimir Chávez V.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes?

The Representation of Women in Two Ecuadorian Comics

The comic, the cartoon and the graphic novel are little-known genres in Ecuador despite the loyalty of their readers. In recent times, a handful of scriptwriters/illustrators have managed to open the way and publish their comic strips, either with help from the private sector or in publishing houses specifically created for this purpose. This study evaluates the representations of women in two Ecuadorian comic genres influenced by American comic tradition, and reflects on the predominant view of women in the Ecuadorian society. Female characters will be analyzed in the works of scriptwriters and cartoonists José Daniel Santibáñez, the author of *Guayaquil de mis temores* (*Guayaquil of my Fears*), and Fabián Patinho, the author of *Axioma* (*Axiom*). Firstly, this study will offer a brief historical view of the state of Ecuadorian comics. Subsequently, there will be a preliminary presentation of the works of Santibáñez and Patinho. The female representation will be studied based on previous reflections of theorists such as Karen McGrath, who has focused on the Latin American heroine of the comic book *Araña*; Meenakshi Gigi Durham, who reflects over women in popular culture; and Sarah Brabant and Linda Mooney, who have studied the female roles from the perspective of stereotypes. Finally, there will be a section for conclusions.

Ecuadorian Comics: A Brief Account

The Ecuadorian comic is a genre that still struggles to improve its distribution and promote a sustained increase in its number of readers. In the last years, some high-quality cartoons and graphic novels have been printed,¹ most of them thanks to some local publishers and artists² who have taken the lead without waiting for financial support from the state. However, for many potential buyers, the Ecuadorian comic is still invisible or inaccessible, and publishers find it risky to invest in cartoonists or writers as they see little chance for their financial gamble to transform into a self-financing business. The shortage of shops which sell comic books is another link in this vicious circle. Mauricio Gil, director and one of the

1 Among these works it is worth mentioning *The Art of Smoking Mirror*, a graphic narrative published in a Spanish-English edition by artist Eduardo Villacís. For more information, see Chávez (2014).

2 In “The invisible steps. Comics and Graphic Novels in Ecuador”, a section in my previous study “The *Film Noir*’s Esthetics in Graphic Novel: the Case of *Angelus Hostis* (2012)”, I refer to the current state of the Ecuadorian comic (Chávez, 2017).

founders of the Mono Comics Publishing House, based in Guayaquil, explains the habits of the consumers of cultural products:

Ecuadorian people are still accustomed to looking for “the imported products”. However, some do not have the money to buy imported magazines that could cost more than USD 4 because of taxes. That is the reason why people prefer to buy the pirate DVD with episodes of an anime at 1 USD. Few are the places that sell national or foreign comics. The national comic is more difficult to sell, since people are not yet accustomed to seeing this kind of artistic production; and because the comics are not easy to get, people do not even know that they exist (Gil, 2014; translations mine).

In an effort to give us a panoramic view of this artistic genre, the cartoonist, José Daniel Santibáñez, wrote an article: “El cómic en Ecuador, una historia en génesis permanente” (“The comic in Ecuador, a story in permanent genesis”), where he traces a timeline that begins at the end of the 19th century. Santibáñez especially highlights the publications over the past 20 years. He also focuses on some of these graphic narratives that were printed in university magazines (such as *Lesparragusanada*, from the year 2000), or they were comic strips like *Fito Garafito* (2001) by Fernando Barahona, or fanzines such as *Caricato* (2005). He also refers to works on the web, and points out examples such as *El Cuervito Fumanchú*, by Iván Bernal, or *Kenyu*, by Entretenimiento Lobo’s team. Because it does not appear in Santibáñez’ study, it is also important to mention the work by Carlos Villarreal Kwasek and his interactive and bilingual comic, *Cielo Andino (Andean Sky)*, created in 2016 together with the composer Oliver Getz Rodahl, and Brian Skeel, an expert in mixing and mastering. Santibáñez does not mention this work as his own article predates the release of *Andean Sky*.

In general, Ecuadorian comics face some serious challenges. Santibáñez complains that “efforts are truncated at the time of publication, since printing is expensive, and there is no distribution, which establishes its failure before the product has even been born” (2012, p. 42).³ Regarding the general situation of contemporary comics in Ecuador, there have been attempts to form groups in order to consolidate certain objectives. Diego Arias, an expert in the field of comics, points out that,

After 2010, it is important to consider the efforts made by cultural managers and actors of the Ecuadorian comic who were looking for a cohesion of cartoonists, sector workers and Ecuadorian illustrators (many of whom being cartoonists). The consolidation of organized groups, such as Ilustradores Ecuatorianos (Ecuadorian Illustrators), Red de Ilustradores Ecuatorianos (Network of Ecuadorian Illustrators) and Ilustres Ilustradores (Illustrious Illustrators) and Fanzinoteca projects promoted by artists and managers

3 Fortunately, there are also projects where the comics are distributed freely to the public. In this last category, we should highlight the sponsorship of the Municipality of Guayaquil, which has supported financially the creation and distribution of cartoons with historical themes.

such as Adn Montalvo, Francisco Galárraga, Wilo Ayllón, Tania Navarrete, José Luis Jácome – the latter, author of the project “Arqueología del Cómic Ecuatoriano” (“Ecuadorian Comic Archeology”) –, among others, will surely contribute, in Ecuador, to open renewed spaces for the ninth art. (Arias, 2014, p. 24)

At the same time, it should be noted that the few comic books of Ecuadorian origin – many of which are self-financed – that do reach certain libraries, or, in one way or another, circulate among the faithful consumers of the genre,⁴ are usually drawn and written by men. Interestingly, Mono Comics Publishing House has, among its staff, a relevant exception: Valeria Galarza, the author of the Ecuadorian manga, *Competir por ti* (*Competing for you*).

In an email interview, Alfredo García, a comic scriptwriter who does graphic works sponsored by the Municipality of Guayaquil,⁵ a member of the Comic Club of the same city,⁶ and author of about twenty publications, provides additional names related to the work of Ecuadorian women in comic books: “For example Jossie Lara, a cartoonist who has worked for companies in the United States, initially coloring *Highlander*, *The Immortal*. There are also artists like Emilia Sigcho and Claudia Uquillas, among others” (García, 2017).

This last group could also include Paola Gaviria Silguero, better known by her pen name, PowerPaola. Although most of the biographies consider her a Colombian artist, due to her family origin and because she moved to Cali as a teenager, the truth is that PowerPaola was born in Quito and lived in Ecuador until she was 13 years old. Her graphic novel, *Virus Tropical* (*Tropical Virus*), written and drawn in the way of a testimony, collects precisely her experiences in the country where she was born. Her duality as a Colombian-Ecuadorian artist seems important for her work.⁷

4 El Fakir publishing house, which is relatively new, publishes both printed and digital books. It promotes its own collection of graphic novels called “Ex-libris: Cómic con cabeza” [Literal translation: “Ex-libris: Comics with a head”]. PowerPaola (Paola Gaviria Silguero) published *Virus Tropical* in “Ex-libris”.

5 The Municipality of Guayaquil currently sponsors two collections of historical comics: *Memorias Guayaquileñas* [Memories of Guayaquil] and *Cápsulas de Historia* [History’s Capsules]. Alfredo García considers the municipality as one of the biggest promoters of comic books in Ecuador: it prints between 5,000 and 10,000 copies per title, when sometimes private initiatives barely reach 500 copies (García, 2017).

6 With objectives such as spreading graphic literature, motivating reading and supporting artists, the Comic Club of Guayaquil was born 14 years ago, which makes it one of the oldest in the country (García, 2017).

7 Scholar Felipe Gómez Gutiérrez analyzes the main female character in *Virus Tropical* and explains the importance of the narrator’s Ecuadorian origin to understand the nuances of the story: “Paola forges a unique identity that does not fit into pre-established essentialist classifications and is a product both of her upbringing in a family of women and of the unstable nature of a notion of ‘homeland’ that in her case oscillates between Ecuador and Colombia” (2015, p. 90).

Comics and Women in Ecuador – Two Stories

From the perspective of stereotypes, and concepts such as gender and identity, two works are evaluated in this study; namely, *Guayaquil de mis temores* (1985) and *Axioma* (2014). Their analysis is based on the reflections of theoreticians such as Sarah Brabant and Linda Mooney. However, it is first necessary to have some basic information about the cartoonists and the comics themselves.

The comic strip *Guayaquil de mis temores*⁸ was created by José Daniel Santibáñez. He was born in Guayaquil in 1959. Santibáñez studied illustration at Parsons School of Design in New York, and he was also a member of one of the workshops run by the well-known Ecuadorian writer, Miguel Donoso Pareja (“JD Santibáñez”). A graphic designer and teacher in different universities in his home country, Santibáñez has published comic books such as *Ecuador Ninja* (1984), *El Gato* (The Cat, 1978) and *Comic Book* (2006). In addition to the comics, he has cultivated the narrative of both police and science fiction. *Guayaquil de mis temores* is a pioneering local work in its genre; it was the first action comic – no humor comic strip, because the latter used to be more popular – published in a newspaper of national scope and, in addition, it was drawn and written by an Ecuadorian artist.

Guayaquil de mis temores was published in weekly instalments in the newspaper *Expreso* during 1985. It tells the story of an American police inspector, Antonio “Tony” Puiggrán, who travels from Miami to Guayaquil following the trail of Santiago, the ruthless boss of a powerful drug cartel with connections within the intelligence services. The action begins with a shooting in the United States in March 1989, and Tony arrives a month later in Guayaquil to meet with Colonel Saldaña, his contact with the local police. Once in Guayaquil, Tony will meet the most important female character: Gabriela Frazetta.⁹ In one of the first scenes, and thanks to her knowledge of martial arts, Gabriela defends herself from a group of street stalkers; and only when one of them brings out a knife, does Tony intervene to threaten him with his gun. Once they have come to know each other well, Gabriela becomes an unconditional ally of Tony’s. Showing leadership and courage, Gabriela directs an assault on a drug laboratory (see illustration 1). After discovering that Santiago has diplomatic protection and that a renegade faction of the CIA collaborates with him, Tony ends up seriously injured. An unknown woman, first, and then Gabriela, save his life. After several adventures, the comic strip shows the final battle between the police – with Colonel Saldaña, Gabriela and Tony, on the one hand, and the drug trafficking cartel with Santiago

8 *Guayaquil de mis temores* is a title that plays with the name of a popular song: *Guayaquil de mis amores* [“Guayaquil of my Romances”]. The lyrics were written by Lauro Dávila and the music was composed by Nicasio Safadi. The song was recorded in New York in 1930 (Guayaquil, 2014).

9 Most probably Gabriela’s last name is a tribute to Frank Frazetta (1928–2010), a well-known cartoonist and illustrator.

and his henchmen, on the other. Step by step Gabriela and Tony feed a friendship that will be confirmed as a love bond.

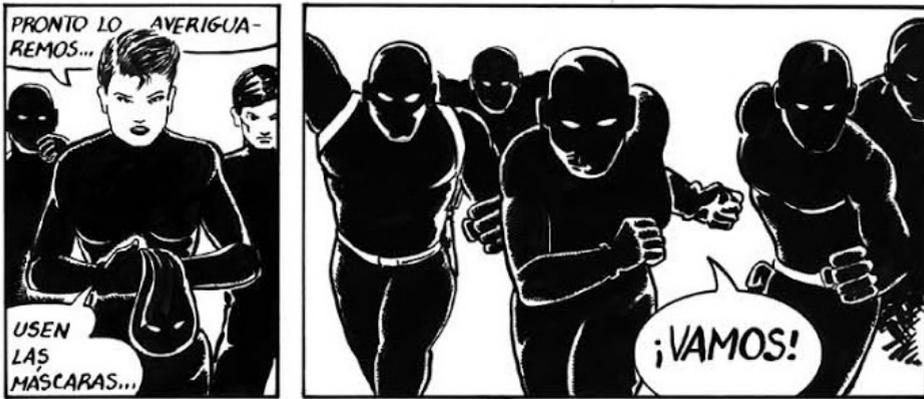


Illustration 1.

Axioma was created by Fabián Patinho. He considers himself a “historiador de la imagen” (“historian of images”). Patinho has worked in museums in Quito and studied popular art and iconography. He has also worked in video, painting and illustration, focusing mainly on comics. Regarding his comic strips, Diego Arias points out that they are “sarcastic, intimate, politically annoying” (2014, p. 98). *Axioma* is part of a short comic anthology called *La Deformidad Perfecta* (*The Perfect Deformity*), published in 2014. Two years prior, an exhibition curated by researcher and teacher Diego Arias and co-curated by researcher Eduardo Carrera, had been held at the Center for Contemporary Art in Quito. *La Deformidad Perfecta*, which has the sub-heading “Sample of the Ecuadorian Contemporary Comic”, is the catalog-magazine of this exhibition. Nine artists or teams of artists were invited to participate,¹⁰ presenting an equal number of final works.¹¹

In *Axioma*, Patinho subtly narrates the link between two women living in Quito, Ecuador. One of them – whose name we do not know – speaks with a person called “Alex” on the phone. The reader assumes that “Alex” is a man (“Alexander”). It is also clear that there has been a romantic relationship between the young protagonist and Alex. They agree to meet although the main character clarifies to her interlocutor that between them there is no longer affection from the past. In addition, she makes a special request to Alex: “Honey, don’t make this a kind of axiom” (Patinho, 2014, p. 46). The phrase is ambiguous, but based on

10 In the beginning, four more artists were invited to work in *La Deformidad Perfecta* project, including a woman (Arias, 2014, p. 97). At the end all participants were men.

11 Two of the participants (brothers Fernando and Francisco Barahona) worked together in the graphic narrative called *Hiper Chat*. There was also collaboration in the works of the illustrator, Eduardo Villacís, and the writer, Adolfo Macías, on the one hand, and the artists, Diego Lara and Roger Icaza, on the other.

the context, she seems to ask her former partner not to become obsessed with her, which means Alex should not take for granted an assumption that something romantic is going to occur. Later the protagonist is heading to Alex's house, wearing a shirt that says "Sor Juana," a reference to a feminist nun of the 17th century.¹² She listens to music on what appears to be an MP3 player and walks the streets of a city that is never named, although Patinho has clearly drawn the architectural details of La Mariscal neighborhood in Quito. Suddenly she is attacked and robbed (see illustration 2). She is hit in her stomach and her attacker steals her music player. She manages to sit on a bench before lying down in pain.

In parallel vignettes, another story is told; a second woman – also young – is in an apartment. She seems to be waiting for something. She looks out of her window, toward the street. After that, she sits on the couch. She is silent. Finally, an out-of-frame voice says "Alexandra! Please come. Dinner is ready". At that point the reader discovers that she is "Alex". The second last vignette shows the young woman who has suffered the assault, still shrinking from pain on the bench. The final drawing shows Alexandra sitting at the table next to a man who seems to be her boyfriend. She does not touch the food. Her boyfriend, with cutlery in his hand, listens to music through his headphones. He is not the same man who assaulted the first woman, although the presence of an MP3 is a clear reference to the previous story. Alexandra and her boyfriend do not say anything. As in the second last vignette, it runs without dialogue.



Illustration 2.

12 Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was a Mexican nun who was “a self-taught scholar and acclaimed writer of the Latin American colonial period and the Hispanic Baroque. She was also a staunch advocate for women’s rights [...] Sor Juana is heralded for her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, which defends women’s rights to educational access, and is credited as the first published feminist of the New World” (Biography, 2014).

Female Representation – Two Visions

Guayaquil de mis temores was published in 1985 and *Axioma* in 2014. The spaces in which female characters live could help us confirm or deny stereotypical representations in these cartoons. On the one hand, Gabriela, from *Guayaquil de mis temores*, lives in a dangerous city. The vignettes that introduce her as a character (see illustration 3) demonstrate her physical strength after she has been harassed in a public place. In the course of the story, it will be clear that she moves freely without any fear or limitations. She is a character who exercises her own power. From a physical point of view, she is strong. From a social dimension, she has money and contacts at the highest level. She does not receive instructions from anyone. Her personality does not conform to a “marianist” gender view. “Marianism” (from the Spanish “marianismo”) is a concept meaning that women do not actively intervene in areas outside home; they accept a role of dependence and submission (Eide, 2006, p. 142). Quite contrary to this notion, the graphic representation of Gabriela (with short hair and muscular physique) and especially the description of her behavior (namely, extreme independence and/or the ability to fight) makes it easy to associate her with a “machona”: a term in Ecuador that identifies a woman who ‘acts like a man’ or, to be precise, a woman who adopts the characteristics of the male stereotype as her own.



Illustration 3.

In a study about Marvel comics, Karen McGrath highlights that no one had published a single article analyzing the Latin American heroines of any comic book (2007, p. 269) until the publication of her own paper. This also demonstrates the novelty of these characters. Gabriela Frazetta, in *Guayaquil de mis temores*, despite not being the main character, can be considered a type of heroine for McGrath because of her actions and her importance to the plot. She saves, twice, the life of Tony Puiggrán, the American police inspector; the first time after an attack by Franklin Wood, a member of the CIA, and second time, a minion of Santiago, the drug lord. On the second occasion, Franklin Wood knocks out Tony, but Gabriela intervenes and fights with him until she kills him. Previously, an unnamed woman helped Tony by lending him her phone. If it were not for these two women (the

unknown lady and Gabriela), Tony would have been unable to complete his mission.

After reviewing the female presence in comics, McGrath's study (2007, p. 271) concurs with research studies by Bradley Greenberg and Larry Collette (1997); and Nancy Signorielli, Douglas McLeod and Elaine Healy (1994), among others, that women are usually represented in a smaller number than male characters. The study also points out a common practice; i.e. to objectify women or show them under a set of attributes typical of female gender stereotypes. Regarding the first point, certainly *Guayaquil de mis temores* has more male characters than female ones. However, this does not look like an intentional decision of the author, given the fact that he is portraying organizations – the police and the drug cartel – which are mostly run by men.¹³ As for *Axioma*, the number of men and women is equal; in addition, women carry more weight in the story.

Regarding the possibility of an objectified image of women, Karen McGrath states:

Comic book artists rely on certain techniques to enhance the superhero fantasy world for the audience. However, in doing so, characters' bodies are objectified to reveal their superhero strengths. This objectification is especially problematic for women characters' depictions, because in using these techniques, their objectification is also a prominent sexualization of their characters (McGrath, 2007, p. 272).

For instance, Gabriela of *Guayaquil de mis temores* wears sexy blouses or tight-fitting clothing, which highlights the contours of her body. We should not forget that there is a tradition in the comic book of superheroes and the action comic – a tradition shared with other genres related to images such as advertising or television series – that portrays women as if they were “willing to have sex” (McGrath, 2007, p. 272). This tradition has been severely criticized for perpetuating discrimination. Gabriela's image, however, is more complex, since there is something intangible portrayed in her actions, such as an independent spirit or bravery, which point to a degree of empowerment. In her case we can find the duality of a woman with a beautiful body – according to the Western canon – and a warrior; a duality that can be found in other comic characters such as the legendary Wonder Woman. In fact, Wonder Woman has been read from a feminist point of view. Precisely, when evaluating the characteristics of comic book heroines, McGrath (2007, p. 275) mentions two concepts, previously collected by Meenakshi Gigi Durham (2003), about the qualities of the feminine and the feminist. The original quotation states:

13 Not all authors of comic books show an ideological position in their works. However, a comic book could reflect certain prejudices in describing a world and a type of society. McGrath's reflection on the society portrayed in the comic *Araña*, which means “spider” in Spanish, is a good example. *Araña* has a Hispanic woman as a main character: she is the female counterpart of Spider-man. McGrath states: “So in this comic book, as in most organizations and workplaces, men, especially white men, not only are in positions of power but also outnumber women” (2007, p. 271).

These girl-oriented genres have generated a positive buzz among audiences, critics, and scholars. “It used to be the heroine’s job to get in trouble and the hero’s job to get her out of it,” wrote Richard Corliss and Jeanne McDowell (2001) in a recent issue of *Time* magazine – but now, they say, things are different; the subhead on their article raves, “Pop culture is embracing a new image of the action heroine who is both feminist and feminine.” (Durham, 2003, p. 24)

Although they may appear as contradictory, the feminine and the feminist are notions that usually complement each other in the representation of women both in comics and in other media. The feminine implies adapting to the codes of Western beauty; the feminist, a break with certain conventions in certain social segments (McGrath, 2007, p. 276; Durham, 2003, p. 26). For example, in the comic *Araña*, McGrath points out that the body of Marvel’s Hispanic heroine is drawn with accentuated curves (well-developed thighs, large breasts, thin waist), all of which would represent the feminine; but, at the same time, the protagonist is physically strong, with athletic arms, which gives her a feminist variable. There is a vignette in *Guayaquil de mis temores* (see illustration 4) in which the protagonists are exercising together, and the body of Gabriela represents the feminine and the feminist.¹⁴



Illustration 4.

However, the woman’s body cannot be excessively muscular, too large, nor should they have too wide bones, because “such bodies could not be situated as desired

¹⁴ When McGrath reflects over *Araña* and remembers the preceding cartoons, her statement could be applied to *Guayaquil de mis temores*: “Clearly the creators of this comic book [*Araña*] are following comic book traditions without considering the implications of such representations of women, and especially young women” (McGrath, 2007, p. 273).

objects of the audience's gaze" (Durham, 2003, p. 26). Like the voluptuous body, the thinness of the female figure is another stereotype by Western beauty standards. For example, *Axioma* shows thin female figures, and the bodies of the main characters end up being represented with certain peculiarities. The physical image of women is highlighted. In the first vignettes of *Axioma*, the protagonist is portrayed in underwear, and an atmosphere of sensuality and intimacy is transmitted (see illustration 5). A few vignettes later, Alex appears wearing a sleeveless shirt and a short skirt. Both are thin. Both are dressed in a youthful way, far from conservative. About women drawn or represented in this way, Durham points out: "The uses of girls' bodies in these shows represent the transcoding of late 20th-century's popular discourses of empowerment and agency – designed to appeal to female audiences – into conventionally fetishized presentations of ideal femininity and heterosexual desirability" (2003, p. 26). Partially, it is possible to apply Durham's reflection in *Axioma*: it seems clearer that the author had the aim of capturing feminine beauty in accordance with Western conventions. However, *Axioma*'s plot does not have the intention to strengthen a heterosexual desire. And this detail, precisely, is what makes Patinho's proposal different from other Ecuadorian cartoons.



Illustration 5.

Axioma develops the theme of love between two women. In Ecuadorian society, a large part of the population is conservative and Catholic.¹⁵ Not so long ago there were "clinics" which promised the treatment and cure of homosexuality, and even now the members of the LGBTQI community are considered "second class citizens" ("Matrimonio Civil", 2019). Four characters interact in *Axioma*: two men and two women. However, only the women experience some type of suffering. The

15 Eight out of ten Ecuadorians are Catholics (Baudino, 2017).

first one suffers pain of a physical nature: she is robbed and beaten by a man; the second woman (Alex) has a psychological burden caused by waiting and loneliness (her boyfriend, who does not speak to her, eats dinner with headphones on). This double violence, physical and psychological, can also be understood as a metaphor for what the LGBTQI community itself experiences.

The title of the comic, *Axioma*, has a paradoxical meaning. According to the dictionary, “axioma” is a “Proposition so clear and evident that it is admitted without demonstration” (RAE). In the telephone dialogue, the protagonist seems to use that word giving it a different meaning. Apparently, she uses the term to ask Alex not to be confused, not to take his/her own wishes as irrefutable truths. In fact, *Axioma* includes plans and wishes that do not end up being fulfilled; the protagonist does not arrive at Alex’s house, and Alex herself waits for her friend and former lover in vain. In addition, only in the end is it revealed that Alex is a woman, and this shows that the assumptions that the reader may have formed, when reading the beginning of the plot, were neither clear nor obvious as an axiom.

It seems that several details in this story are not accidental. For instance, while walking down the street, the protagonist listens to a song on her MP3 player; “Embodiment the pain [...] As the chastity exhumes”, a line that refers both to violence and sexuality. Additionally, she wears a T-shirt that says “Sor Juana”, in clear allusion to one of the most important Latin American poets, Catholic sister Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695),¹⁶ a poet, a feminist (Nash, 2012) and a lesbian (Bono, 2017).

McGrath’s study focuses not only on gender, but also on race and community identity. When it comes to Ecuadorian comic books, any reference to the representation of gender should also be complemented by identity features such as the ethnic group to which the characters belong. With the only exception of the unknown woman¹⁷ who helps Tony after he is shot – she seems to be black – none of the female characters in *Guayaquil de mis temores* or *Axioma* is Afro-Ecuadorian, nor *montubia*¹⁸, nor indigenous.¹⁹ Among the female protagonists, Gabriela is white and even has an Italian last name (Frazetta). The case of Alex and her partner in *Axioma* is different. Both women are *mestizas*. A *mestiza* or *mestizo* is “Any person of mixed blood. In Central and South America it denotes a person of combined Indian and European extraction” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). We also know that they are city girls and that they do not live in any poor suburbs.

Since Gabriela is a white woman, and Alex and her friend are *mestizas*, one might wonder if there are stereotypical descriptions from a racial point of view

16 See note 12 above.

17 She has such a short-lived role that we do not even know her name.

18 “Montubio” (also spelled “montuvio”) is “an officially recognized ethnic identity of coastal people of mixed-race and indigenous descent” (Ortiz, 2010).

19 According to the last census in Ecuador, “71.99% self-identified as mestizo, 7.4% as montubio, 7.2% as Afro-Ecuadorian, 7% as indigenous, and 6.1% as white” (“Censo”, 2011).

in *Guayaquil de mis temores* or in *Axioma*. Regarding the representations of heroines in popular culture, Durham points out that “the girls are more than thin: They meet every standard of conventionally defined beauty in American society. These standards, as we are well aware, are racialized and class-based” (2003, p. 26). The protagonists of the two comics belong to the middle or upper class. In *Guayaquil de mis temores*, before the final battle, Franklin Wood addresses Gabriela: “You have been a pain in the ass for me, rich girl. You ought to stroll through Policentro²⁰ instead of playing cops and robbers” (Santibáñez, 2013, p. 24). In *Axioma*, Alexandra and her friend live in the city, and they do not seem to have material needs. They wear nice clothes, fashionable accessories, and fancy gadgets. Such details give us an idea of the social class to which these characters belong.

The fact that *Guayaquil de mis temores* and *Axioma* portray white women with money or middle-class *mestizas* who live in the capital and do not suffer from financial problems could be, in the end, a stereotypical representation. However, other aspects such as the male roles should be taken into account.

The gender literature indicates that in addition to the objectification and sexualization of women, both men and women are depicted, in the media, in sex-stereotyped ways. Men are often depicted as emotionally strong, independent, rational, aggressive, and in superior roles (e.g., bosses) in the workplace, whereas women are often depicted as nurturing, caring, emotional, dependent, irrational, submissive, and in subordinate roles in the workplace (e.g. secretaries or assistants). (McGrath, 2007, p. 275)

In both cases (*Guayaquil de mis temores* and *Axioma*) there is a certain superiority of female characters as compared to the male characters. In *Guayaquil de mis temores*, Gabriela is emotionally stable and independent, just like the male hero, Tony Puiggrán. She is also as – or even more – strong and brave than Tony. For instance, Gabriela organizes the assault on a drug processing laboratory and puts herself at the head of the attack, while Tony convalesces from a wound. In the case of *Axioma*, no woman is portrayed as subordinate to any man from a financial or sentimental perspective. However, masculine superiority is represented in *Axioma* from a physical point of view; the assailant knocks out the female protagonist with one punch. In this case, the man is represented as an irrational, selfish being, whose only relevant feature is brute force. The other man in *Axioma* (Alexandra’s boyfriend) is not violent with his fists. He is rude in his attitude. He sits at the table and eats with his headphones on, without talking or paying attention to his girlfriend. This symbolic act dehumanizes him.

In a paper about stereotypes and gender roles published in 1976, the American scholar, Sarah Brabant, analyzed the stereotypes and gender roles of four comic strips of Sunday newspapers: *Blondie*, *The Born Loser*, *Dennis the Menace* and

²⁰ Policentro is a shopping center that became very popular among wealthy Guayaquil residents in the 1980s.

Priscilla's Pop. A decade later, Brabant and her colleague, Linda Mooney, revisited that study in a second article. As a way of monitoring the results, they used certain general parameters that are useful for assessing gender roles in cartoons. For example, Brabant and Mooney quantify the number of times the characters appear helping in housework, or the times they are portrayed in vignettes related to paid work. The study had surprising results; one of them related to financial dependence: "In 1984, all of the males were shown in outside employment at least once. There was no indication in either 1974 or 1984 that any of the females were employed outside the home" (Brabant & Mooney, 1986, p. 144). Along these lines, none of the female protagonists in the two Ecuadorian cartoons are housewives, nor are they described doing household chores. On the contrary, it is Alex's boyfriend who prepares dinner in *Axioma*. According to the study of Brabant and Mooney, male characters never wear aprons: "The apron appeared less often on all three females (characters Gladys, Blondie and Alice), but despite the increase in home and child care for males, the apron continued to be exclusively female apparel" (Brabant & Mooney, 1986, pp. 147–148). Certainly, the apron is an important detail, since it symbolizes the "domestication" (Brabant & Mooney, 1986, p. 142) of those who use it, that is, their belonging to a life of household chores. Likewise, the study by Brabant and Mooney (1986, p. 146) recalls that the research of the 1970s did not show that female characters had a habit of reading, or that they even knew how to read. However, in both Ecuadorian cartoons we find educated women. The aura surrounding Gabriela is that of a cultivated character. In the same direction, the young girls in *Axioma* are students. The protagonist tells Alexandra on the phone: "That's right, Alex. I will go to your house strictly to prepare the homework of algebra" (Patinho, 2014, p. 45).

Durham (2003, p. 26) believes that female characters (so-called girl power) can sometimes include some ambiguity in sexual preferences, but it is normal for heroines not to accept such transgressions, ultimately consolidating heterosexual love and patriarchy. This is not the case in *Axioma*: neither of the two women, at any time, shows signs of regretting their sexual orientation.

Conclusion

The concepts of the feminine and feminism, as they are understood by theorists such as McGrath and Durham, are applicable to the present study. Although there is a typical vision of women in the main characters of *Guayaquil de mis temores* and in *Axioma*, related especially to the concept of the feminine, their demonstrations of the feminist in both comic strips show them to be ahead of their time. Regarding the feminine, the characters of Gabriela, Alexandra and her friend are invariably represented as beautiful according to social Western canons; they are slim or slightly voluptuous (*Axioma*), or they have an athletic

and desirable body (*Guayaquil de mis temores*). Concerning the notion of feminism, *Axioma* develops the theme of lesbianism, which makes it different from other local comic strips. In *Guayaquil de mis temores*, the figure of Gabriela stands out as a character that is equivalent, in strength and bravery, to that of Tony, the protagonist. Both *Guayaquil de mis temores* and *Axioma* show characters that move away from prejudice and consolidate images of strong and independent women.

The theme of lesbianism in comic strips is related to some social changes in Ecuador. The depiction of lesbian love in *Axioma*, a comic from 2014, has to do with a more open society than the one from 1985 (*Guayaquil de mis Temores*). Important political and cultural fights took place in those 30 years. In 1997, for instance, transsexual activists raised their voices against the Ecuadorian state and demanded the government to stop the criminalization of same sex couples. Some of the leaders of the movement were even murdered after that (“Papa Francisco”, 2020). However, this social activism managed to decriminalize homosexuality in the country.

Ecuador is a multicultural, multiethnic nation-state; therefore, it is interesting to mention that the main female characters in *Guayaquil de mis temores* and *Axioma* are not indigenous women, nor *montubias*, nor afro-descendants. Gabriela is related to a minority (whites) usually linked to social and economic power, and Alexandra and her friend, who are from the middle class and live in the city, belong to *mestizos*, the typical majority group. And although *Guayaquil de mis temores* includes, among its secondary characters, an Afro-Ecuadorian woman, her role in the comic is too limited to explore further. Any protagonist coming from a minority ethnic group would have been worthy of analysis, but such absence is not surprising. It would have been an almost revolutionary feature if any Afro-Ecuadorian or indigenous women had been portrayed as the main character in a comic, granting visibility to these groups that are usually ignored in local mainstream art.

The female characters in *Guayaquil de mis temores* and *Axioma* make decisions without waiting for advice or authorizations. These comic strips portray three educated women who are far from the traditional housewife roles. They do not aspire to have children, neither do they miss a home life. Gabriela is a “machona”, a woman who adopts the characteristics of the male stereotype; she is brave, ready to fight and to use weapons, and free to make her own decisions. Alexandra and her friend are lesbians, and in such a predominantly conservative and Catholic society like the Ecuadorian one, to show a non-heterosexual orientation is, in itself, a rebellious act.

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Johanna M. Wagner

Sublimity of the New Mother in Gothic Film

The Babadook and *Goodnight Mommy*

The admixture of fear and exaltation that constitutes sublime feeling is insoluble, irreducible to moral feeling

Jean-François Lyotard

Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime, 1994, p. 127

Societal depictions of women are historically deficient; in all art forms women have been systemically portrayed inadequately as human beings. But, when representations of women breach the boundaries of these portrayals in any given genre, audience members can experience something extraordinary, for they are witnessing the *sublime*. The sublime, according to Edmund Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, is an overwhelming, painfully pleasurable experience, that is both astonishing and terrifying. Beyond this – as expounded by Jean-François Lyotard in his 1994 *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* noted at the outset of this chapter – the sublime is an amalgamation of irreducible emotions on opposing sides of our moral spectrum; it is therefore beyond our moral comprehension and ability to resolve the inner tensions evoked by its presence. In the case of Gothic film the sublime is acutely confrontational, especially, this chapter contends, when there are profound renderings of the mother. The representations of women who are also mothers in Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook* (2014), and Veronika Franz' and Severin Fiala's *Goodnight Mommy* or *Ich Seh Ich Seh (I See I See)*,¹ are frighteningly electrifying, and dreadfully empowering. They are not good, they are not bad, they are *new*; they are human; they evoke feelings impossible to comprehend, and audiences cannot seem to get enough of them.

Beyond the Good and the Bad, *New Mothers* in Film

Cultural representations of women have been unfailingly fraught terrain. Second wave feminists in the 1960s and 1970s actively questioned these representations both in the culture and in related academic disciplines. One problem with representations of women has been their consistent marginalization. Women historically were unimportant bystanders: women scientists and mathematicians were

1 Had I enough time and space, the 2018 film *Hereditary* directed by Ari Aster would also have been a part of this study, as Annie Leigh Graham demonstrates characteristics of the New Mother as well.

supposedly non-existent, women literary authors were inferior to their male counterparts, and representations of women in cultural production – i.e. literature, drama, film, etc. – were generally peripheral characters with little or no breadth of development, crafted as secondary to and/or romantic partners for the prominent male characters.²

Since the early years of film criticism the representations of women have become more robust. Women have become the center of numerous films, and these characters have become more vigorous and complex as a result. One kind of woman, however, has struggled to break out of stereotypes: Mothers. Mothers in film are most often seen within one of two extremes: the Good Mother and the Bad Mother. Following E. Ann Kaplan's definitions of Good and Bad Mothers in *Motherhood and Representation: the Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (1992), Sarah Arnold, in *Maternal Horror Film: Melodrama and Motherhood* (2013), defines the first as the descendent of the sacrificial mother "valorised in the maternal melodrama" (p. 47) – to be discussed later – whose motivation rests primarily upon her children's needs; the second as a mother whose motivation does not. As a rule, mothers in contemporary Gothic and Horror films, hold to these categories as well: "Maternal sacrifice" of the Good Mother in Horror, "enables the survival of the child," states Arnold (p. 44), while the Bad Mother is much more complex. According to Kaplan, the Bad Mother is "tyrannical, possessive, controlling and not above deceit" (p. 81), but Arnold broadens her characterization even more. The Bad Mother is:

the source of friction within the horror text. At times she is the monster or the villain [...], where the mother's behavior is malevolent and violent. In other instances her prohibitive and overpowering nature produces violent tendencies in her children [...]. At times she is neglectful or selfish [...] or emotionally abusive. (p. 68)

In other words, although Arnold suggests that mothers continue to be defined in extreme ways, angelic or demonic, the space for those on the negative end of the scale has ballooned exponentially. "Malevolent and violent" mothers are named alongside mothers who may be only "prohibitive," "overpowering," "neglectful," or "selfish," – or in other words: human. Arnold extended this category in order to more carefully parse the debt Horror film owes to Melodrama when it comes to the depiction of mothers. But, the new characteristics on the darker side embrace a number of behaviors inequivalent to each other. For example, *passive* bad mothering does not seem comparable to *active* bad mothering. A merely-existing mother does not correspond to an enthusiastically evil one. However, disentan-

2 With few exceptions, this general trend was particular to men's representation of women in cultural production. Although women's literature may have held similar traits regarding *some* women characters, they did not relegate their women characters to the sidelines. For, as Ellen Moers notes in *Literary Women: The Great Writers*, if we are willing, the "great [women] writers" reveal "deep creative strategies of the literary mind at work upon the fact of female" (1976/1985, p. xi).

gling these types is not the goal of this chapter. Like Arnold, I wish to expand a category, but it is the general category of the cinematic “Mother” I would like to develop. This chapter will broaden the category of the cinematic “Mother” by focusing on filmic mothers who overwhelm these preexisting categories. These New Mothers hopelessly entangle the bad with the good, creating alluring ambiguity in characters who are both fearsome and sympathetic, who exist somewhere in the vibrant in-between. They blur boundaries of safety and threat; they are terrifying, but also invigorating; they overwhelm our senses: they are *sublime*.

Unlike the aforementioned maternal melodrama that preceded gothic film, in which “dilemmas of the mother are rarely tragic,” (Doane, 1987, p. 71), the New Mother is ensconced in tragedy. But more importantly, it is no coincidence that the New Mother in this study is also the main character. She is a mother, yes, but she is also a protagonist. While melodrama eschews interiority, according to Mary Ann Doane (p. 72), seeking rather to focus the “narrative conflict [...] *between* characters rather than *within* a single mind” (p. 72), the New Mother’s subjectivity is central to the film not only as a mother, but as a person. And, as a person, she exists in abstruse complexity, often beyond, even in spite of, her child and/or family. These representations are much harder to position in distinct classifications, as these protagonists who also happen to be mothers do not allow for easy answers as to why they may be gentle or harsh, kind or cruel, and indeed they may act worryingly. These women are driven by their own motivations, not simply as the protector of or threat to their children, and therefore their mothering can be of secondary concern to other issues in the films. In other words, this mother is human.

New Mothers as Human

The mothers in these films are in the middle of things: they are not new mothers or old mothers, they are in or around middle age. This middle-aged mother is in the heart of the childrearing years, and has complicated feelings surrounding her child. But, as noted above, the reasons for this are not entirely bound up *in* the child. These more nuanced feelings of mother for child are challenging for audiences, which is more than likely why the Good and the Bad Mothers have flourished for so long. It is easier to adore or despise than to identify with a complex character who displays an uncomfortable array of emotions in close proximity to a child. What is more, negative feelings toward children, from mothers who cannot easily be recognized as Bad, are especially difficult to grasp for audiences in western cultures. Enduring societal taboos are held against recognizing such feelings in the first place.

Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD), which includes postpartum psychosis (PPD), for example – that temporary state in which *childbearing* destabilizes the mother’s psyche so much so that it may result in self-injury or harm to

the child – has only been open for public discussion in western societies in the last two decades. With this fairly new openness about mothers and their negative feelings toward children, PPD has been a favorite go-to disorder for mothers in Gothic and Horror films in recent years. The films have represented mothers suffering from this disorder exponentially more than these mothers are found in the general population.³ This means that film has crafted an excuse to continue delineating between Good and Bad, for the Good Mother has gone Bad for good reason. And it is temporary; therefore, it is only necessary to anchor the mother's psyche again in order for the Good Mother's return. With that said, there is literally no discussion or terminology to describe the everyday emotional states into which mothers are intermittently forced during the long years of childrearing. *Childbearing*, we admit, can ignite temporary trauma, risky for both mother and infant, but *childrearing* is a much more sustained encounter with a child that can intensify and extend suffering.

People generally assume that once in the childrearing stage, mothers settle into the daily life of the family without incident or cause for concern, but these New Mother characters suggest that the daily life of the family can also be dangerous. Childrearing imperils women in ways rarely shown in their terrific mundanity. There may be many cinematic mothers who testify to the imagined joys and terrors of motherhood, but there are few like the New Mother who plausibly depict the grueling trudge of feelings aroused by the plod of common, ordinary family life.

Such rich representations of mothers and their lives are extremely important to the project of cultural production. Although periodically shocking, these representations that are neither Good nor Bad but both, and terribly distressing for that, offer an expansion of the Mother character in film. In a sense these characters make us stew in our own expectations of mothers by foiling our hopes of her self-sacrifice (Good), and thwarting our desire to dismiss her as evil (Bad). These characters demand that we sit in the thrillingly uncanny space of unknowing throughout the majority of the films. In essence, these New Mothers offer a humanity to mothers that extreme labels have foreclosed for so long.

3 A recent study in *BMC Psychiatry* suggests that between 0.89 and 5 out of every 1000 women may suffer from post-partum psychosis globally (VanderKruik et al., 2017). A number of Gothic and Horror short and feature films have focused on mother protagonists with post-partum depression or psychosis recently. The following is a handful of examples from the last five years: *Lady Lazarus* (short film, 2020) directed by Jamie Lou, *Tully* (2018) directed by Jason Reitman, *Still/Born* (2017) directed by Brandon Christensen, *Mother!* (2017) directed by Darron Aronofsky, *Dreamlife* (short film, 2017) directed by Anna Mercedes Bergion, *Prevenge* (2016) directed by Alice Lowe.

New Mothers and Subjectivity

The Good Mother's heroic feats for the sake of her child require only feelings of sacrifice and obligation, which actively diminish a mother's own character development on screen, disallowing her a more full range of human emotion. Inversely, Bad Mothers who embody only antagonism require that cinema restrain a spectrum of character emotions and flatten expansion.⁴ Between these poles is the New Mother who lives the everyday monotony of parenthood and the flux of emotions associated with it. Much time is spent constructing this mother cinematically; therefore, she is the dominant figure, and we feel like we understand her in ways that other mothers disallow. The desperate feelings of pain which point hostility toward her child are nearly all understandable, given her depth of character.⁵ For the most part, this mother's experience is one that is common and ubiquitous, one that will resonate with mothers from all walks of life. For, mundanity is by definition an earthly slog.

There are various ways the films in this study portray their mothers as persons, with interests and concerns beyond the needs of their children. In *The Babadook*, for example, Amelia Vanek (Essie Davis) is struggling with something beyond her son Samuel (Noah Wiseman). We find this through the film's focal point, which is trained steadfastly on Amelia. "[E]arly on," notes Director Jennifer Kent, "people thought it [the film] should be about the boy, but it really was never about the boy" (qtd in Sélavy, 2014):

it always felt right to see it through her eyes. [...] Even when she goes to some really dark places, I still tried to keep it within her point of view as much as possible, so that people would... actually travel through that experience with her. (qtd in Sélavy, 2014)

And indeed the audience travels with her. Amelia is a person fatigued, exhausted, depleted, and most likely depressed, and these details manifest themselves through cinematic techniques such as color and lighting, which are used to drive the point home. The use of desaturated color throughout the film – a limited spectrum of "grays, blues and mauves" by cinematographer Radoslaw Ladczuk (Rooney, 2014) – is employed even in scenes outside the home. Low-key lighting, as well, seems to overwhelm the entire film, although it is used only within the private spaces of

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- 4 A few examples of Good Mothers in Gothic/Horror films are Chris MacNeil in *The Exorcist* (1973), Wendy Torrance in *The Shining* (1980), and Diane Freeling in *Poltergeist* (1982). A few notorious examples of Bad Mothers are: Norma Bates in *Psycho* (1960), Margaret White in *Carrie* (1976), and Pamela Voorhees in *Friday the 13th* (1980).
 - 5 Obviously there is a point late in *The Babadook* in which supernatural forces overpower mundane domestic life, and the audience must distance itself from heinous, even murderous behavior. However, until this point, I suggest, viewers continue to empathize with much of the mother's unpleasant feelings and behavior. Conversely, *Goodnight Mommy* works a bit differently; no supernatural exists, and the viewer is slightly uncomfortable with Marie-Cristine from the start. It is not until we understand the significance of the "accident" that we absolve Marie-Cristine of her earlier sternness, which will be discussed later.

home and car. There are only a handful of moments in which light demarcates difference in location within the film, but even these moments, which are lighter, are deadened by the limited color palette. This controlled use of color and light acts as a dulled rinse that bathes each scene in mundane weariness. It projects to the audience that this is a dulled life, an exhausted life, a life without life.

Other ways in which the film emphasizes Amelia's very human fatigue and thereby her despair are through setting and costume, as well as transitions between scenes. The film subtly underscores Amelia's sleep deficiency by dangling the idea of sleep throughout the film just out of her reach. For example, the majority of film time is spent in a darkened house; roughly sixty-six minutes out of the eighty-six minutes of the film are set in the dim home, signifying night even during daylight hours. Costume, similarly, is suggestive of sleep. Although the film spans only six nights and days, and she wears a reasonable four different outfits at various times throughout those days, all outfits meld into the same mien. Amelia spends nearly seventy percent of her time in a nightgown. But, even when out of her nightgown, her clothing seems remarkably reminiscent of it: loose, dull, and formless, they suggest a desire for a return to home and bed. Likewise, as a care worker, her box-formed work uniform and one of the two of her outfits with peter pan collars suggest a nursery with the associated promise of naptime.

The film also points toward Amelia's desperation to fulfill her own needs, such as human intimacy and alone time. She has a foiled attempt at masturbation, and is an unwitting voyeur of a couple's intimate kisses in a parking garage. She pretends her son is sick in order to leave work one afternoon to window shop and eat ice cream alone. The extradiegetic music backgrounding the scene mimics the ways in which sleep has evaded Amelia. The soft, tremulous chords beneath a chiming and simple melody has both a surreal and worrisome affect, as if one might relax but for the minor key and fretful, anxiety-inducing tremolo from major to minor thirds.

In *Goodnight Mommy*, although our access to Marie-Cristine Mettler (Susanna Wuest) is more restricted than Amelia, we also have a character who is shown as a person in her own right and whose concerns lie beyond her children. These concerns manifest through various moments of isolated sadness or grief resulting from the plethora of significant life changes witnessed only by the audience. Marie-Cristine is the mother of ten-year-old twins, Elias and Lukas (Elias and Lukas Schwarz). She has been some time absent after having undergone cosmetic surgery, which we find out later in the film. She returns home around the film's seventh minute.

Change seems to be a major theme at this point in Marie-Cristine's life. Although still quite young – perhaps mid-to-late thirties – we glean through the twins' computer sleuthing that she has felt the need to alter her appearance. She is a local television celebrity of some notoriety and relative financial success, according to websites seen by the children thirty minutes into the film, and she

is on the cusp of middle age. Although no reasons are given for her surgery, the media's idolization of youth is perhaps one incentive; the fact that she has also rather recently re-entered the dating scene (as seen on her website dating page), is possibly another motive. Moving into middle age as well as currently attempting to negotiate her way through online dating can be challenging to anyone's self-confidence of mind and body.

Furthermore, the family home is currently on the market to be sold. At the hour-mark in the film after the children have run off,⁶ Marie-Cristine offers an explanation to the local minister who returns them: she references an accident and a divorce, suggesting that the not so distant past has been tragic and overwhelming. This is one of the handful of controlled moments in which the audience witnesses a vision of the consequences of these changes on Marie-Cristine's mental state, and reveals her vulnerability. She stands drenched on the porch of her home in a close-up shot, mascara streaming down her wet face, arms hugging herself against the cold. As her face begins to indicate a full sob, the automatic porch light flips off, hiding her face, and the sound of the storm drowns out any sound she might make. It is a confined and brief vision, but a powerful performance by Wuest expresses Marie-Cristine's despondency.

In her dim room after this event, she swallows a painkiller as she quietly cries herself to sleep. At nearly one minute, this is the longest shot of Marie-Cristine's concealed emotions. A similar instance earlier in the film is after she has aggressively – and physically – argued with Elias, forcing him to admit she is his mother. While Elias nurses his wounded ego, she retires to her darkened room and silently weeps alone, unmoving, away from the camera. There are other solitary scenes as well in which she simply examines the work done to her body, all isolated and silent on her part. The viewer can only guess what is going on in her mind. Together these moments work to exhibit Marie-Cristine as a multidimensional human being with many concerns about the changes in her life not solely related to her children.

These major changes as well as her bodily transformation are hints of changes to come for the household, for Marie-Cristine makes clear she will focus foremost on her rehabilitation. She immediately places her recuperation above any other interest. Upon her return, she explains to her sons that her convalescence requires silence and rest; she is not to be disturbed unless it is very important. She wants no visitors. The curtains should be closed to avoid sunlight. And finally, the children should play outside quietly, and not bring anything into the house.⁷ Although her sons intimate that an uncharacteristic sternness of demeanor has been intro-

6 A plot point is necessary here: suspicious that Marie-Cristine is an imposter, the twins run away to the nearest village and seek out the minister, whom they implore to take them to the police station.

7 This seems a strange rule at first, but we find soon enough that the children apparently engage in this activity often, evidenced by their sizeable collection of *Gromphadorhina portentosa* or hissing cockroaches, as well as the hidden stray cat (more than likely diseased and sick) under their bed.

duced upon her return, and the audience feels a sense of uneasiness, they generally understand her responses physically and mentally.

Women and The Gothic

In the Introduction to their 2016 collection *Women and the Gothic*, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik state that “Gothic texts still frequently convey anxiety and anger about the lot of women” (p. 1). Although narratives such as these may “vary in expression and representation across the centuries and across cultures,” they suggest, the volume of these types are “depressingly constant and suggest that women have been and still feel disadvantaged and disempowered” (p. 1). This sentiment seems obvious, for indeed it is sometimes disheartening in 2020 to see yet another woman in another film in dire straits mostly because she is a woman. Still, the Gothic has never been so transparent as to always and only suggest one thing. Although the lot of women can sometimes be discouraging, one can take heart in the Gothic’s inherently unreliable nature. It is true anxiety and anger reside in the image of the terrorizing and terrorized women of the Gothic. But, it is also true that it has always been a genre “preoccupied with women’s experiences,” notes Paula Quigley in “*The Babadook* and Maternal Gothic” (2019, p. 186), a genre in which women have been brought to the forefront. Quigley, Horner, and Zlosnik all agree that the woman-focused Gothic concentrates on what women undergo throughout their navigations and negotiations “within patriarchal power structures” (Quigley, 2019, p. 186). Horner and Zlosnik further propose that although it is demoralizing to witness women’s continuing struggle in the Gothic mode, the “use of Gothic effects to celebrate transgressive female energy and iconoclasm,” is “perhaps greater and more subtle now than it was [...] in the early nineteenth century” (2016, pp. 1–2). In other words, reading women in the Gothic today is a much more nuanced endeavor, that may bring about anxiety and fear, but also an increasing dismantling of the image of “woman,” and resistance to the systems that oppress her.

One oppressive system visited and revisited by the Gothic and resisted again and again by Gothic protagonists, is a system that forces women, especially women who become mothers, into primary relationships with the domestic. According to Norman N. Holland and Leona F. Sherman, “women-plus-habitation,” among other things, has been a standard association typical of the Gothic mode “since the eighteenth century” (1977, p. 279). Therefore, it is no surprise that the action of both films in this study takes place largely in the home. In *The Babadook*, the audience meets Amelia Vanek in her bedroom, witnessing her dream-turned-nightmare of the birth of her son: roughly 82% of the action takes place in the home. Marie-Cristine Mettler is not home at the outset of *Goodnight Mommy*, but upon her return, she stays within the walls of her home for the remainder of the

film: nearly 89% of the film's setting is at or in the home. As noted judiciously by Eugenia Delamotte in her 1990 *Perils of the Night*, women in the Gothic “just can't seem to get out of the house” (p. 10).

Hence, these two films have stayed true to the Gothic setting, the relationship between “mother” and “home.” But they also masterfully hang the audience on that which is most important in Gothic: ambiguity. As noted by Diane Waldman in her article “‘At Last I Can Tell it to Someone!’ Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s,” the “central feature of the Gothic is ambiguity” (1984, p. 31). She defines ambiguity as “the hesitation between two possible interpretations of events by the protagonist and often, in these filmic presentations, by the spectator as well” (p. 31). She suggests that although other genres share this feature, in the Gothic, “the hesitation is experienced by a character (and presumably a spectator) who is female” (p. 31). The Gothic tool of ambiguity, as stressed by Waldman, has been so meticulously exercised in crafting hesitation surrounding these New Mothers, that we continue to reel, unable to even in the end find sound footing.

The Babadook and *Goodnight Mommy* each revolve around two hesitations, which mirror each other. Both hesitations encompass questions of identity. In *The Babadook*, for example, our first hesitation pertains to the identity of Samuel. We are drawn into a story of the grueling grind of parenthood, even more demanding, single parenthood. But, there is ambiguity surrounding Amelia's young son who has a penchant for making weapons, throwing temper tantrums, acts hyperactively and thinks over-imaginatively. He is sympathetic in many ways too, obviously, but this troubled child is clearly a drag on his mother's health, body and spirit. We are thus, drawn into the mundane, quotidian life of a mother attempting to survive the years after the death of her partner. Although Samuel is a challenging kid, he does not seem to mean harm. But the reality of our assumption becomes ambiguous when it seems perhaps Samuel is more disturbed than we think. His aggression we have brushed off as simply excessive energy. His use of firecrackers and booby traps we have chalked up to weird, but harmless child's play. However, when glass is found in the soup, it seems Samuel may be more dangerous than we had before given him credit. In retrospect, then, the magic, the booby traps, and his obsession with the unseen Babadook seem more nefarious. Add to this the defaced images of Amelia and husband in the photograph, as well as Samuel screaming “Do you wanna die?!” when Amelia attempts to disarm him, and our view of him becomes more alarming. Perhaps it is at this point that the story of the grueling grind of parenthood with a child who may be disturbed, becomes one suggesting that he could also be dangerous.

The second hesitation involves Amelia herself. So sympathetic a figure for nearly an hour, we allow this New Mother a certain latitude in her desperate survival. We empathize with the daily exhausting unhappiness of her life; we even empathize as she begins lashing out at her son because of it.

Samuel: Mum, I took the pills, but I feel sick again. I need to eat something. I couldn't find any food in the fridge. You said to have them with food. I'm really hungry, Mum.

Amelia: Why do you have to keep talk, talk, talking? Don't you ever stop!

Samuel: I was trying...

Amelia: I need to sleep!

Samuel: I'm sorry, Mummy, I was just really hungry.

Amelia: If you're that hungry, why don't you go and eat shit!

The medium close-up of Amelia's face in this moment is terrifying, and it clearly shocks the viewer, as this is out of character for Amelia up to this point. As we watch her face soften in the recognition of what she has done, and her subsequent remorseful and guilt-ridden apology to Samuel and promise of a special morning at a local restaurant for breakfast ice cream, we forgive her ugly words and expression because every, single, mother watching this film has had at least one similar moment: ugly words said at a breaking point – albeit perhaps not as ugly as Amelia's – followed by florid apologies attempting to overcompensate for the ugly moment. This is just shy of the hour mark in the film, and we continue to feel sympathy for Amelia as she sits at Wally's with Samuel, surrounded by children arguing and yelling, a strained smile on her face as she rubs her jaw because of a chronic toothache.

Although very strange indeed, we even continue to empathize with her as she rams into another car on the road, and once home, sits fully clothed in the bathtub. More than anything, these incidents seem to display her inability to function because of exhaustion. She makes it clear yet again that she needs sleep. And, again, those knowledgeable about the fatigue of childrearing sympathize with this mother whose life has become simply attempting to survive each day.

Even when she picks up the knife out of the drawer, we want to give her the benefit of the doubt. She is a frightening figure, and a threatening one.

Samuel: It's just the Babadook made you crash the car and then...

Amelia: What did you say?

Samuel: I said, the Babadook...

Amelia: The Babadook isn't real, Samuel. It's just something you've made up in your stupid little head.

Samuel: I just didn't want you to let it in!

Amelia: I'll make sure nothing gets in tonight. Alright Samuel? Nothing is coming in here tonight. Nothing!

We are relieved that she uses the knife only to cut the phone cord, and once she has locked all the doors and windows, she seems to return to her recognizable self, confused and frightened by her fluctuating moods and anger. Later, she is fright-

ened by the bloody vision of Samuel on the couch, the imagined newscast about herself as his murderer, and flees the Babadook to her upstairs bedroom as it pursues. It is only after she is gorged in the back and her behavior becomes more bestial and erratic, that our hesitation ends and we lose faith in Amelia.

In exact opposition to *The Babadook*, the first hesitation, not the second, in *Goodnight Mommy* surrounds the identity of the mother. As noted earlier, she returns to her home after cosmetic surgery. Her face is bandaged, and her sons immediately begin questioning whether or not she is truly their mother. Indeed, they listen to voice messages in which she speaks more lovingly to them than does the mother who returns; and upon her return she does not speak to one of the boys at all. Her newly brusque deportment as well as the strict house rules make the brothers skeptical of her identity. In searching for clues to that effect, the children find a photograph of their mother with another woman they do not know. The two look alike and are dressed alike. “Could the woman in the photograph be impersonating their mother?” the camera asks in an over the shoulder shot, as they confiscate the photo for evidence later. Also, “where is the identifying mole on her face, and what color are her eyes really?”

The ambiguity of this hesitation is strong as the viewer follows the boys and their suspicions. They are incredibly sympathetic as they pray for the return of their mother at a wayside shrine. The mother’s bandages bend us toward an imposter, the jump cut of her bruised and bloodshot eye in the makeup mirror suggests the monstresque, as does her mascara-streaked face after standing in the rain explaining herself to the local clergyman. But, during the children’s detective work, the audience is also sympathetic to the mother. The mother vacillates between a disagreeable imposter and a woman, noted earlier, as simply recuperating from some major trauma in both body and spirit. Neither identity prepares us for the next hesitation.

Once the film has passed the hour, the second hesitation occurs. Although we have found many clues about Marie-Cristine, we have allowed our interest in her identity to cloud the clues about the children’s. We are as surprised as Marie-Cristine herself to find her tied to her own bed. The masks both boys don indicate both intimidation and war, and much to her surprise and our horror, within minutes the torture begins. The earlier homemade weapon and booby-trap construction, a hobby much like that engaged by Samuel in *The Babadook*, takes on a sinister turn.⁸ Our hesitation regarding the identity of the mother seems to all at

8 It would be interesting to interrogate more closely gender in the first two films. The fact that the children are boys preoccupied with weapon construction, who in the first case *might* terrorize, and in the second case, *do* terrorize women – their mothers – could be an interesting exploration. Although in the end, Samuel does end up truly attempting to protect his mother with his weapons, the boys in *Goodnight Mommy* use them to intimidate and threaten their mother to a horrifying extent. It should be noted that people like Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* (2014), and Lies Lanckman in her 2019 chapter suggest a rich Freudian reading can be done with the film, but perhaps a rich study could also be done beyond psychoanalysis. Full citations of these works can be found in the bibliography.

once fall away. Our dawning realization of the two boys as the brutal antagonists is shocking and terrifying, spurring our final sympathies with Marie-Cristine.

Sublimity of the New Mother

The sublime is a term that has been theorized for centuries, and has become an integral part of the Gothic mode. It is an intermingling of *affects* upon witnessing something one cannot grasp, observing a (super)natural phenomenon that one cannot entirely understand or explain. The sublime evokes complex emotional responses in the viewer. Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry*, suggests that the extreme feeling of the sublime is an amalgam of a number of emotions: pleasure, terror, and astonishment. Pleasure is its generic terror being that which is evoked by fear of pain. According to Burke, pleasure and terror are balanced precariously against each other in the sublime, producing the "strongest emotion the mind is capable of feeling" (1823, p. 45). He further suggests that the stability of the sublime depends on proximity, for one's propinquity to that which is being witnessed can either extract one from the experience or put one too near. If too distant from the terror of the experience, the sublimity of the experience is lost, since terror is an absolutely crucial element of the sublime (1823, p. 57). If too near, terror overwhelms and only causes pain.

Another essential emotion imbedded in the sublime is that of astonishment. When "the great and sublime in *nature* [...] operate most powerfully," they produce the "passion" of "astonishment" (p. 73), which, he argues further,

is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. (p. 73)

Burke ends with the statement that "astonishment [...] is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree" (p. 74). Indeed, Lyotard's book *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, as noted in the introduction, expresses Burke's idea of astonishment as "insoluble" and "irreducible" (1994, p. 127); in other words, in the presence of the sublime, our minds have a clear inability to hold fully or comprehend its magnitude.

The reason why these three concepts – pleasure, terror, and astonishment – and indeed the sublime itself, are introduced here is because the New Mother generates the sublime on screen, and witnessing her arouses the various emotions delineated above. This carefully amalgamated character is a pleasure to watch, a terror to behold, and leaves us in a state of energized and prolonged astonishment. In an interview, Essie Davis, who plays Amelia in *The Babadook* attempts to explain what I would say is a confrontation with the sublime in the script. She

notes that Amelia's actions and reactions are "horrifying and terrifying, and as a mother myself, very recognizable, which, um, which I found... awful" (Davis & Kent, 2014). She expounds further in another interview:

I recognize Amelia. And, I definitely know the parts of myself that are her. And, I know lots of people who have parts of her. Um, I can completely relate. [...] Lots of mothers, I think, recognize themselves, and, obviously not all the way, but, um, Amelia's a beautiful person, and she really does want to love her son, who's also a beautiful person, who's only trying to protect his mother. (Davis, 2015)

Within these interviews Davis unknowingly alludes to the sublime; her understanding of the powerful contradiction in Amelia attests to this fact. Amelia evokes both terror and beauty, and these two opposing forces that wrestle without besting each other makes for our sense of pleasure. The final twenty minutes are shocking. We are horrified by the way she looks and speaks to Samuel, but we are thrilled at seeing an angered middle-aged woman take stairs two-by-two, hang herself on a doorframe attempting to kick in the door, and when she finally claims her territory against the Babadook, emit perhaps one of the most resonant screams in film history.

The depth of narrative and character in Jennifer Kent's gothic New Mother expands and overwhelms us in ways one can only describe as sublime. Kent herself describes Amelia along these same lines: "Once I kind of finished the role, I was like, wow, this is like as wide as it gets" (2014).

Although the crafting of Marie-Cristine in *Goodnight Mommy* is more controlled and restrained than Amelia, she also presents us with both terror and pleasure. The bandaged face – a thrilling throwback to such characters as Anna Holm in *En Kvinns Ansikte* (*A Woman's Face*, 1938), and Christiane Génessier in *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes Without a Face*, 1960) – with the uncanny effect of a smile, is immediately startling and intriguing for the audience. Her appearance after the film opens with footage from the 1959 *Die Trapp-Familie* is especially jarring, as the Good Mother embodied by Maria von Trapp singing Brahms' Lullaby is replaced presently by the monstrosity bandaged Marie-Cristine. Lies Lanckman's 2019 article "I See, I See" reinforces this idea by stating that the clip "establishes motherhood as the central theme" of the film, but also readies us for "a contrast between 'good' and 'bad' motherhood" (p. 172).⁹ Further, Olivia Landry's article "Pre-Face, Sur-Face, Inter-Face, Post-Face" (2019) notes that "the image present[s] a historically loaded trace of the cinema past" and "remind[s] the viewer of (Austrian) cinema's inescapable heritages [...] in the figure in of the maternal face" (pp. 95–96).

9 Lanckman suggests that the Austrian film and its variation *The Sound of Music* (1965) are "essentially" stories "about [...] good and bad motherhood," pitting Maria against Princess Yvonne/Baroness Schraeder (2019, p. 172).

At twenty-two minutes the doorbell rings, and Elias knocks on his mother's bedroom door. As one recalls, her new rules state that she is not to be disturbed; which is why the viewer is shocked, but also secretly delighted by Marie-Cristine feigning sleep in order to be left alone. Societally, mothers are pressured to respond to all of their children's queries – the term “helicopter parenting” did not come from nowhere after all¹⁰ – but every mother more than likely wishes she could sometimes ignore them. What makes this scene even more delightful is that once Elias leaves the room, Marie-Cristine's eyes fly open and she crunches down on a biscuit already in her mouth. She had stopped mid-chew to ensure herself unbothered. Her matter-of-factness in resuming this activity is both humorous and horrifying; sublime.

Finally, the strongest incident of the sublime in this film is the transformative scene in which the camera trails Marie-Cristine as she walks into the woods, methodically shedding clothing and finally bandages with each step. It is a beautifully choreographed scene, with the persistent undercurrent of Olga Neuwirth's unnerving film score adding mood to the andante cinematography: a fluidly long take with low-key lighting that does not so much cut-away from the protagonist as it meanders along behind her in hide and seek fashion, sometimes finding her, sometimes losing her, but always in motion. When she finally stops, her back to us, the camera does not. In an arc it moves around her and toward what everyone wishes to see: her face. But as the camera moves, so does Marie-Cristine. She turns away, nodding her head in quick acceleration that ends in ten seconds of jarring, jolting body horror as the camera continues into a full-frontal close-up. The juxtaposition between transformation and despair is beautiful and terrifying – or sublime – in this scene: In vigorous liberation, a lone woman bearing hidden despair, metaphorically peels away the trappings of the world to get to the self, but this liberation ends with a horrific insinuation of who that self might actually be. Still, in terms of motherhood, the body horror, as frightening as it is, can be seen as empowering to an audience; it is not often one is offered such a deep, raw, *human* representation of a mother's pain. *Her* pain, and hers alone.

Conclusion

In the Gothic, Ellen Moers states in *Literary Women* (1976/1985), “fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the commonplace, and the supernatural over the natural” (p. 90). As seen in this chapter, the New Mother complicates these binaries by reversal: throughout most of the film the audience is focused on

10 “Over-parenting” or “hyper-parenting” are known colloquially as “helicopter parenting,” a type of parenting, according to Steven Horowitz in *Hayek's Modern Family* (2016), in which “parents are deeply involved in every aspect of their children's lives even through their college years and beyond, often as a way of protecting them from any perceived danger or possible failure” (p. 184).

the common, the real, the natural of the mother's complicated life. The humanness of the protagonist outweighs the fantastic or the strange. What is more, although Moers (1976/1985) suggests the Gothic is meant to "get to the body itself, its glands, epidermis, muscles and circulatory system, quickly arousing and quickly allaying the physical reactions to fear," not to "reach down into the depths of the soul and purge it with pity and terror" as tragedy attempts to do (p. 90), it is clear that *The Babadook* and *Goodnight Mommy* do not quickly dispel our fears nor do they quickly allay our physical reactions to what we see on the screen. No, these films do not go away. They overwhelm and empower us; their humanity wounds us; their sublimity bolsters us, and hangs like a residue upon us.

This chapter cannot stress enough how enormously satisfying it is to witness these Gothic protagonists, these mothers who have such depth of character. To see remarkable and stimulating women characters shown in exhilarating complexities, even now, is delightfully astonishing. That audiences can also be repelled and disturbed by these "mothers" who step so clearly out of cinematic stereotypes, but simultaneously electrified, is a sublimely discomfiting experience, and one, in all fairness, this author hopes will be repeated in new films for years to come.

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Melanie Duckworth

Women, Animals and Fairness

An Ecofeminist Reading of Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things* (2015) and *Animal People* (2011)

Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things* has been variously described as a "dystopian fable" (Wyndham, 2015) and a "horror parable" (Newman, 2016). Set in a time that greatly resembles the present, in an unspecified location in outback Australia, and called "*The Handmaid's Tale* for our age" (*The Economist*, 2016), the novel has been celebrated as a fierce and timely engagement with misogyny. The novel was the 2016 winner of the Stella prize, an annual award for fiction or non-fiction written by Australian women. As the narrative begins, ten young women wake from a drugged sleep to discover they are imprisoned in brutal and dehumanizing conditions. They come to the gradual realization that their imprisonment is due to their involvement in sexual scandals, often with prominent men, and they are supposed to understand themselves as "the minister's-little-travel-tramp and that-Skype-slut and the yuck-ugly-dog from the cruise ship; they are pig-on-a-spit and big-red-box, moll-number-twelve and bogan-gold-digger-gang-bang-slut" (Wood, 2015, p. 47). The premise seems too horrific to be true but is in many ways chillingly realistic. Each scandal is reminiscent of incidents reported in the Australian media over the last few years,¹ and the prison itself is partly modelled on the Hay Institution for Girls, where girls born into poverty, including many Indigenous girls, were horrifically abused between 1950 and 1974 (Wyndham, 2015; Hart & Carter, 2014). Most reviews of *The Natural Way of Things* have focused, understandably, on its fierce feminist agenda (Newman, 2016; Lever, 2015; Goldsworthy, 2015), but the novel is also deeply engaged with the natural world – particularly animals, with whom the imprisoned young women are relentlessly compared.

The novel interrogates not only the mistreatment of women, but the parallel subjection of animals as pets, food, and symbols. In this way it builds on the preoccupations of Wood's earlier novel, *Animal People* (2011), which is a philosophical reflection on relationships between humans and animals. As Susan Wyndham points out, "it is possible to see *Animal People*, which examined the

1 For example, army cadet Daniel McDonald secretly filmed himself having sex with another cadet and broadcast it over skype. His partner was called a "skype slut" and bullied until she left the army (ABC News, 2013). In Australia in the early 2000s there were several instances of gang rape by rugby players (Fickling, 2004), that Wood drew on for Yolanda's back story. Verla's back story of an affair with a politician who claims to love her and then denounces her has some parallels with the resignation of former New South Wales Health Minister John Della Bosca (Watson, 2009), although there are also a number of other similar cases (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2009).

way humans treat animals, as a logical precursor to *The Natural Way of Things*, in which humans are treated like animals” (2015). Wood herself notes that “[t]here’s all kinds of stuff that’s going to be lost in the way people talk about [*The Natural Way of Things*] – stuff about nature and animals and a dream world and non-realism in writing and language and beauty and landscape” (quoted in Wyndham, 2015). For James Bradley, “[a]s the women descend into wildness, [the landscape’s] mute, brooding presence elides the distinction between escape and self-erasure, self-assertion and self-destruction” (2015–2016). Kerryn Goldsworthy observes that “[t]he natural world and its creatures provide much-needed relief – to the reader as well as the characters – from [the] world of brutality, bad food, and hard labour, and the pragmatic tenderness towards animals that was evident in Wood’s novel *Animal People* is present again here” (2015). The roles inhabited by animals and the natural world in the text, however, go beyond providing “relief” or “a brooding presence”. In a discussion of feminist taxidermic practices in *The Natural Way of Things*, Laura White argues that “[r]ather than simply critiquing the objectification of women or seeking to restore women marked as deviant to human status, Wood utilizes the position of the animal-object to challenge patriarchal constructions of the human” (2019, p. 139). My analysis agrees with and builds on White’s perspectives.²

In their juxtaposition of women and animals, *The Natural Way of Things* and *Animal People* can be effectively approached through the dual lenses of feminism and ecocriticism. Where feminism examines the subjection of women, and ecocriticism examines the subjection of nature, ecofeminism interrogates the connections between the two. As Karen J. Warren puts it, “ecofeminism’ has come to refer to a variety of so-called ‘women-nature connections’ – historical, empirical, conceptual, religious, literary, political, ethical, epistemological, methodological, and theoretical connections on how one treats women and the earth” (1994, p. 1). Drawing on ecofeminism – particularly that of Australian philosopher Val Plumwood – and critical animal studies, this chapter proposes an ecofeminist reading of *The Natural Way of Things* and *Animal People*, in order to show how each novel interrogates the connections between the subjection of women and animals in the Western cultural imaginary.

As Lisa Gruen observes: “The categories ‘women’ and ‘animal’ serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society [...] The role of women and animals in postindustrial society is to serve/be served up; women and animals are the used” (1993, p. 61). In this chapter I discuss several different ways in which women and animals intersect in the texts. I first consider instances of women being dehuman-

2 As this chapter was going to press, I discovered that Bárbara Arizti (2020) recently published an article “At Home with Zoe: Becoming Animal in Charlotte Wood’s *The Natural Way of Things*,” which discusses *The Natural Way of Things* using the lenses of posthumanism and transmodernism. Drawing on a different – though related – theoretical paradigm to that which I am using, Arizti arrives at a reading of *The Natural Way of Things* that resonates with my own.

ized and “treated like animals”, before discussing the novels’ references to animals in literature, psychoanalysis and dreams, and the characters’ relationships with real animals in the texts. Both novels also conceptually link female reproductive processes and meat production and consumption. Finally, I discuss what can be seen as a powerful and unsettling piece of “ecofeminist art” created by the two main protagonists of *The Natural Way of Things*, a doll created of rabbit skin and human hair, that destabilizes the boundaries between nature and culture. At the end of the novel, the protagonists Yolanda and Verla embrace their animality as a source of liberation – having claimed their inner animal, they seek to locate their sense of self beyond gender, beyond culture, and beyond the human.

Ecofeminism, Nature and Fairness

Ecofeminism draws attention to a connection between the subjection of women and the subjection of the natural world. One way in which women and nature are aligned is by the traditional Western binary that places masculinity with culture, the mind, logic and civilization, and femininity with nature, the body, emotion, and wildness. Warren terms this the “logic of domination” (1993, p. 322). According to Viktoria Davion, traditionally “women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract” (1994, p. 9). This observation has informed much ecofeminist scholarship, including that of the influential Australian philosopher Val Plumwood. As Greg Garrard puts it:

Plumwood’s most important contribution is a critique of the gendered reason/nature dualism. She presents it as ‘the overarching, most general and most basic and connecting form’ of a historically varied series of dualisms. It can serve this general analytical function because ‘reason’ has so often been called upon to hyperseparate both men from women and humans from animals, and so can stand in for both dominant terms. (2012, p. 28)

While the premise of the “twin dominations of women and nature” (Warren, 1987, p. 4) is compelling, some theorists have built on this formulation in ways that perpetuate rather than transcend these categories. Ecofeminists such as Ariel Kay Salleh (1984), Sharon Dubiago (1989) and Marti Kheel (1991) argue that the salvation of the earth is dependent on “feminine” qualities of care and intuition (Davion, 1994, pp. 17–26; Garrard, 2012, pp. 26–27). Davion criticizes these approaches as “ecofeminine” rather than “ecofeminist”, and argues that “while ecofeminists are correct in challenging dualisms such as human/nature, reason/emotion, and masculinity/femininity, the solution does not lie in simply valuing the side of the dichotomy that has been devalued in Western patriarchal frameworks” (1994, p. 36). A dismantling of these categories and an openness to new ways of thinking about the natural world and our place within it is essential.

Like Davion, Plumwood likewise believes these dualisms contribute to a “master narrative” that privileges reason over nature and men over women. She argues that to be defined as “nature” rather than “culture” entails a loss of power and autonomy:

To be defined as ‘nature’ in this context is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject [...] It means being seen as part of a sharply separate, even alien lower realm, whose domination is simply ‘natural’, flowing from nature itself and thus the nature(s) of things. (1993, p. 4)

The notion that women are conceptually degraded by their association with nature has been explored by a number of others, including Sherry B. Ortner, who asks: “Is female to male as nature is to culture?” (1974). Ortner concludes that in Western societies an association with nature underscores the oppression of women. Plumwood goes further to suggest that not only women but the natural world itself are endangered and unfairly compromised by the reason/nature dualism, as both nature and women are seen to invite domination, which flows “from nature itself and thus the nature(s) of things” (1993, p. 4).

Building on similar observations, the title of *The Natural Way of Things* is a provocation. Is unexplained incarceration, misogyny and abuse “natural”? The word “natural” overlaps in several ways with the concept of “fairness”. When something is regarded as “only natural”, it is seen as “the way things are”, unquestionable, fair enough. Often, however, what is claimed to be natural is not at all. As William Cronon explains:

When we speak of ‘the natural way of doing things,’ we implicitly suggest that there can be no other way, and that all alternatives, being unnatural, should have no claim on our sympathies. Nature in such arguments becomes a kind of trump card against which there can be no defense. (1996, p. 36)

Culturally ascribed gender roles are frequently understood as “natural”. Aggressive male behavior is sometimes defended as “natural” – “boys will be boys”. And even more troubling still, female victimhood is often implicitly depicted by the media as a “natural state”. Verla, one of the novel’s two main protagonists, reflects:

What would people in their old lives be saying about these girls? Would they be called *missing*? [...] Would it be said they were abandoned or taken, the way people said *a girl was attacked*, a woman was raped, this femaleness always at the centre, as if womanhood itself were the cause of these things? As if the girls somehow, through the natural way of things, did it to themselves. They lured abduction and abandonment to themselves, they marshalled themselves into this prison where they had made their beds, and now, once more, were lying in them. (Wood, 2015, p. 176)

As Verla gradually realizes that no one will come for her, she comes to understand that the world outside is complicit with her disappearance and degradation.

Verla's reflection on "the natural way of things", quoted above, is the only point in the novel in which its title is explicitly stated (2015, p. 176). The concept of nature and the natural, however, ricochets throughout the text in myriad ways. The many versions of the "natural" evoked by the novel sit uneasily beside the meaning of natural as "fair" or "expected". Encounters with "nature", particularly in the form of animals, occur on nearly every page. Animals are a constant presence, on several registers: literal, metaphorical, and mythological. The women encounter actual animals, both dead and alive, they listen to the sounds of birds, they live alongside insects, they kill rabbits for food. They also dream animals, remember animals, and hallucinate animals. The women are compared to animals and treated "like" animals, but at the end of the novel, for Verla and Yolanda, an identification with animals offers a kind of salvation – in fact the *only* salvation presented as possible within the text. Their assumption of animal identity is not, however, an acceptance of their degraded roles. Nor is it an "ecofeminine" celebration of a "natural" woman-animal connection. Rather, *The Natural Way of Things* unsettles and questions the boundaries between the animal and the human – a task already taken up in *Animal People*.

Treating Women Like Animals

Like *The Natural Way of Things*, the title of *Animal People* operates on multiple registers. On the surface it refers to people who feel affection for animals. The protagonist Stephen, a hapless middle-aged man who works in a café at Melbourne zoo and is contemplating breaking up with his adored girlfriend, often feels judged as he does not see himself as an "animal person". He is allergic to cats and dogs, has no interest in pets, and struggles to understand the intense emotional connection his neighbours display to their pet dog, which contrasts ironically with the scorn and ill-will they show to homeless people. Through Stephen's eyes, however, the novel provides a kaleidoscopic account of animal-human connections. The phrase "animal people" comes to stand for these entangled connections, as well as for the novel's ultimate revelation of kinship – humans, and the creatures living around them, are all animal people: humans are animals, and animals are people.

Epigraphed by a quotation from John Berger's seminal essay "Why Look at Animals?" (2009), this novel is part story, part philosophical treatise.³ Over the course of a single day, like a modern day Bloom, the aptly named Stephen roams Melbourne and contemplates hundreds of examples of animal representation, idealization, companionship, incarceration, cruelty, and activism.⁴ Through Stephen's eyes, humans encounter, consume, and appropriate animals: from the butcher

3 Stephen's reflections on the disconnect between zoo animals and zoo visitors draw heavily on Berger's essay.

4 James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922/1998) describes a single day in the life of Leopold Bloom as he wanders about Dublin, intersecting with Joyce's alter ego Stephen Dedalus.

shop to awards for animal bravery, from stuffed toys at the zoo to a young girl's fairy skirt whose scraps of fabric settle about her "like the puff and shiver of flamingo feathers" (Wood, 2011, p. 177). At the same time, Stephen thinks about women – his mother, his sisters, his girlfriend Fiona, and her daughters are the most significant figures in his life. Indeed, while the novel examines the "unfair" way animals are treated in a general sense, on numerous occasions it draws attention to a conceptual link between animals and women, from sexualized "my little pony" toys for young girls, to the face of a female crack addict that reminds Stephen of an animal.

Early in *Animal People*, Stephen accidentally crashes his car into a pedestrian, who turns out to be a crack addict. She is described in animalist terms, and reminds Stephen of photographs of tortured animals that a young female animal rights activist has shown him earlier in the day:

For an instant, seeing the girl cornered in his car, Savannah's animal torture photographs returned to him: the grizzled narrow head, the thick face pocked and pierced and blotched, the panting mouth, eyes closed in pain and fear. (Wood, 2011, p. 75)

He tries to take the wounded woman to a hospital, but she directs him instead to a methadone clinic and disappears. Still in shock, he relays the story later in the day to his co-workers at the zoo. His colleagues, initially shocked that he has injured a pedestrian, assure him that she is a junkie, less than human. They marvel at his innocence (he comes from a country town) and are horrified that he has given her his phone number, assuming she will attempt to take advantage of him. This callousness is contrasted with the inflated care, preoccupations and grief they display for favoured (and incarcerated) animals at the zoo. A parallel hypocrisy is discernible in comments made by the guards Teddy and Boncer in *The Natural Way of Things*. While Teddy shrinks from Yolanda's rusty rabbit traps, declaring them "cruel" (Wood, 2015, p. 150), he has no qualms going spear fishing, discussing his ex-girlfriends in belittling terms, or physically and verbally abusing the imprisoned girls.

In *The Natural Way of Things*, in a development and exaggeration of themes first broached in *Animal People*, the imprisoned young women are explicitly dehumanized and compared repeatedly to animals. The zoo of *Animal People* gives way to a prison. As the girls are admitted to their incarceration, their heads are sheared like sheep and they are shoved roughly into a room together: "Yolanda went sprawling, exactly as a sheep would totter down a slatted chute into the shocking light and shit and terror of the sheep yard, until she found herself in yet another room. Full of bald and frightened girls" (Wood, 2015, p. 17). They are chained and led like dogs: "Come on,' he coaxes, as if she is a small dog, and gives a little tug on the leash." (Wood, 2015, p. 19). At night they are locked in tiny rooms which have the appearance of kennels:

After that first day's marching, then the food (so-called), they had been driven here like dogs – Teddy this time, with a thick sharp stick he just picked off the ground – to what he called the shearers' quarters. He yelled it, a command: 'Get! Shearers' quarters!' they just stood there because they didn't know what the fuck he was talking about, and that was when he started whacking the long stick on the ground. Turned out it made sense to herd them like dogs, because shearers' quarters was what Yolanda had already seen and thought were kennels. They all did. (Wood, 2015, p. 49)

Through hunger and desperation, the girls even begin to behave like animals, as Verla observes: "they lunge at their dishes like dogs" (Wood, 2015, p. 45). Their captors refuse to tell them where they are, insisting that the most important question to come to grips with is *what* they are. The girls are supposed to accept their identities as "sluts" and "whores", who deserve to be treated like animals.

The bowls around her are scraped with spoons and the girls breathe through their mouths like animals.

You need to know what you are. Verla is not an animal. (Wood, 2015, p. 46)

The first part of the novel is packed full of statements like these, which are examples of the dual oppression of women and nature. White draws attention to Cary Wolfe's explanation that: "violence against human others [...] has often operated by means of a double movement that animalizes them for purposes of domination [...] a maneuver that is effective because we take for granted the prior assumption that violence against the animal is ethically permissible" (Wolfe, 2009, p. 567, quoted in White, 2019, p. 146). White argues that "Wood builds on a historical pattern of animalizing transgressive women to separate them from respectable women and justify violence against them, and she reveals the consequences that such conceptions hold for animals as well as women" (2019, p. 146). The reason it is terrible to be treated like an animal is, as *Animal People* affirms, that animals are treated terribly.

Animals, Feminism and Sexual Reproduction

The explicit juxtaposition of women and animals in the opening pages of *The Natural Way of Things* is buttressed by encounters with animals in both the physical world and in dreams. On one level, the animal presence of birds around the imprisoned girls is inherently calming. Birdsong provides a rare balm for the grim realities of the girls' new lives. The very first lines of the book are filled with the "lunatic" laughter of the kookaburra: "Here, on this first morning, before everything began, she stared up at the sky as the blue night lightened, and listened to the kookaburras and thought, Oh, yes, you are right. She had been delivered to an asylum" (Wood, 2015, p. 4). The natural call of the kookaburra, which resem-

bles harsh laughter, appears to give voice to the madness of her own situation. Later Verla hears other birds and makes up her own names for them: “The waterfall birds, whose calls fell tumbling. And the squeakers, the tiny darting grey ones. Who would have known there could be so many birds in the middle of absolutely fucking nowhere?” (Wood, 2015, p. 4).

The birdsong makes its way into the girls’ dreams. Verla dreams that the bonnets they are forced to wear are made from the bones of dead birds. In their dreams, the girls inhabit the metaphorical possibilities of animals. Hetty dreams viscerally that she is a tiger, killing and devouring a zebra, and Maitlynd interprets: “That’s not about food, it’s about sex!” (Wood, 2015, p. 107). Verla dreams that she has to wear a dead lamb’s head, dripping with blood, shoved on top of her own. She also becomes obsessed with the idea of a beautiful white horse she is sure will come and save her. She hears it galloping around the compound at night. At this point she does not understand the true extent of her politician ex-lover’s betrayal, and believes that he is still waiting for her. The white horse is associated with an unrealistic “fairytale” vision of rescue by a prince, as well as masculine sexuality. Towards the end of the novel she finds the carcass of a dead horse, and equates it with the horse of her dreams. While this affirms her belief that the creature really existed, it also embodies the death of her hopes of rescue from the outside world. The shape-shifting, amorphous animals of the girls’ dreams are contrasted grimly with the decomposing bodies of animals caught in and abandoned below the enormous electrical fence that circles the compound. Like these animals, the girls are flesh and blood, vulnerable, earthy, meat.

An awareness of the female human body as “meat” is a concept touched upon in both novels. Each novel explicitly links female bodies, meat, and the processes of reproduction, thus interrogating the conceptual link between them. In *Animal People*, Fiona discovers a nipple on a piece of pork she is preparing for the oven – “tender, pink and clean as Fiona’s own” (Wood, 2011, p. 52). In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams points out that “[w]hat is absent from much feminist theory that relies on metaphors of animals’ oppression for illuminating women’s experience is the reality behind the metaphor” (Adams, 1990, p. 61). The visceral depictions of the evidence of animal suffering in *Animal People*, however, address this problem, and attest to the fact that the animal references in *The Natural Way of Things* go beyond the merely metaphorical. Fiona is also reminded of the meatiness of her own body when her daughter is born via C-section: “She lay there with the baby on her breast, tearful and exhausted, while they cauterized something, some part inside her. Fiona’s grey eyes widened and her voice dropped to a whisper as she told him: ‘it smelled like a *barbecue*’” (Wood, 2011, p. 53). In *The Natural Way of Things*, Yolanda realizes that the messy, physical details of blood and flesh, which are inescapable aspects of the growth and birth of babies, are part of the reason for the hatred for and oppression of women (Wood, 2015, p. 122).

Femininity, animals and reproduction coalesce in Yolanda's disturbing memory about her brothers' pet mice. One of the mice produced a litter of baby mice every few weeks, which her brother scooped up and deposited in the bin at the back of their apartment. She was afraid of "the mother mouse and her cold, incessant production," but now feels a disturbing affinity for her, and intimates that her own imprisonment has something to do with the way the mouse was treated (Wood, 2015, p. 31). Ortner suggests that "[b]ecause of woman's greater bodily involvement with the natural functions of reproduction, she is seen as more a part of nature than man is" (1974, p. 76). Reproduction, of which women bear the physical and emotional brunt, reminds men too much of their own fleshly beings, their own mortality:

It was why they were here, she understood now. For the hatred of what came out of you, what you contained [...] She understood because she shared it, this dull fear and hatred of her body. It had bloomed inside her all her life, purged but regrowing, unstoppable, every month: this dark weed and the understanding that she was meat, born to make meat. (Wood, 2015, p. 122)

Plumwood describes the "denial of dependence on and contempt for the processes of life and reproduction" as part of the "Western master consciousness," which is built on the dualities of reason/irrationality, mind/body, men/women, culture/nature (1993, p. 77). These dualities underwrite both men's treatment of women and humanity's treatment of the environment. In a vignette that would be equally at home in *Animal People*, Yolanda remembers a YouTube video of an elephant giving birth and reflects on her own disgust upon the arrival of the enormous placenta: "Alien, monstrous, female" (Wood, 2015, p. 122). By overlaying animal and human reproduction, Wood makes a similar observation to Plumwood. Wood's relentless juxtaposition of women, animals, meat and reproduction underscores Simone de Beauvoir's comment that due to her time-consuming and physically dangerous role in reproduction, the female "is more enslaved to the species than the male, her animality is more manifest" (1953, p. 239). Fiona's and Yolanda's experiences of their own bodies as "meat" equate the human with the animal, but hinge on the biological realities of womanhood: menses and childbirth.

Later in *The Natural Way of Things*, Yolanda attempts to connect with the reproduction of animals in a healing and triumphant way. She finds a rabbit out in the open, ready to give birth, and scoops her up and warms her underneath her top. As she walks, the rabbit gives birth against her body:

Then oh! a throb of birth, she felt it against herself, a wet warm slide. It was coming, it would be safe. Another nuzzling wet slide, she walked so tenderly, curving and cupping the mother and the soft wet bulbs of the babies with her arms and body, and it was her own live born she carried, she was animal now. (Wood, 2015, pp. 210–211)

It is an incandescent experience. She looks forward to raising the baby rabbits, and imagines even sharing them with the other girls, their softness and sweetness providing companionship, redemption, relief. Here the novel toys with what Davion terms the “ecofeminine”, as discussed earlier – the idea that women have a deep and innate connection with nature (Davion, 1994, p. 36). But the rabbit kittens do not survive. This foreshadows the fact that Hetty, the only girl to become pregnant in the novel, kills herself midway through the pregnancy by clutching hold of the electric fence. *The Natural Way of Things* categorically denies the narrative of hope through new birth, and searches instead for grislier, darker narratives of liberation and the remaking of self. These darker narratives, which I discuss in the next section, at once deny the “ecofeminine” and confront the cultural assumptions that legitimize the oppression of women and animals, while questioning the belief that culture is superior to nature and that humans are superior to animals.

Culture, Animality, and Selfhood in *The Natural Way of Things*

At the beginning of *The Natural Way of Things*, the girls reject their forced identification with animals, but by the end of the novel, Yolanda and Verla embrace their animal selves. As the year progresses, food supplies run low, and the compound is completely cut off from the outside world. The power goes off, although not the power in the lethal electric fence that encircles them. The prison guards turn out to be prisoners as much as the girls are. They must find a means to survive. Yolanda starts trapping rabbits for food, and Verla collects mushrooms. For Yolanda, the rabbits provide an entirely new identity. She traps and kills them, eats them, skins them and wears their fur. This new identity as huntress and wild-woman gives her strength and power, and freedom from the men who still want to oppress her. As Laurence Buell points out, a significant insight of ecofeminism

is its exposure of the double paradox of ‘nature’ having been androcentrically constructed as a domain for males, in contradistinction to female-coded domestic space, yet at the same time symbolically coded as female – an arena of potential domination analogous to the female body. (2005, p. 109)

As Yolanda claims an identity as a huntress she is able to subvert this model and symbolically conquer Boncer. He desires to rape her but concedes finally that she has become stronger than he is: “In the iron sound of her traps she knew Boncer heard her new knowledge: she was strong, and he was weak” (Wood, 2015, p. 144). The remote bush compound is no longer “a domain for males”, but rather the space of Yolanda and Verla, who come to know and appreciate the natural world more deeply than any of the others, and learn how to depend on it for their own survival.

Through her association with the rabbits, Yolanda is wholly transformed. Verla respects what she is doing, but mourns the loss of her old friend “Yolanda, gone mad with rabbit filth and guts. She cries for the ordinary girl Yolanda who will never return” (Wood, 2015, p. 219). Yolanda’s only chance of survival is to reject entirely her former self, and the culture to which she once belonged, and to embrace her animality. Verla’s journey is more nuanced, and it takes her longer to let go of her old self and the outside world for which she still longs. Verla’s “crime” was to have an affair with a married politician and accompany him on what was effectively a “grand tour” of Europe on taxpayer’s money. This journey was transformative for her, and she bristles at the crude way the media and the public interpret it: “you can lead a whore to culture, they said in the comments” (Wood, 2015, p. 18). This remark, a play on the phrase “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”, at once compares Verla to an animal, and identifies her as a “whore” intrinsically incapable of appreciating culture. Verla’s encounters with European art, however, inform a process of self-realization in which she remembers, interrogates, and finally transfigures the art.

Throughout her captivity, Verla is haunted by the artworks she encountered in Europe, which seem to create almost exclusively male spaces, aside from the room adorned with tapestries of “The Lady and the Unicorn”.⁵ The over-engineered barbed-wire fence of the enclosure reminds her of the ornate architecture of Gaudi’s Barcelona, and as she treads through the grasses around the compound, Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* runs through her head. Her ex-lover had given her a copy, just as Bill Clinton gave one to Monica Lewinsky (Folsom, 2005, p. 97). When Yolanda cradles a dying kangaroo caught in one of her rabbit traps, Verla remembers seeing the Pietá in Rome. Her lover had tried to explain its history and proportions to her:

but in that bustling domed space Verla felt there was only herself and the woman. She understood her, as if those were Verla’s own fingers pressing against slack lifeless flesh [...] And now here Yolanda sits, her own pieta in the dirty grass beneath a bright cold sky, crooning and snuffling, murmuring into the dusty fur, cradling and rocking. (Wood, 2015, pp. 225–226)

In Europe Verla is most drawn to artworks that depict the tensions of female experience, and in the remote Australian outback she transforms them in her memory and imagination in ways that blur culture with nature.

Through a piece of art she creates together with Yolanda, however, Verla shifts from awed spectator to powerful artist. When Hetty agrees to offer herself sexually to Boncer, with the understanding that this “sacrifice” will leave the other girls

5 The tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn, completed around 1500, are normally on display in the *Musée de Cluny*, Paris, but visited the Art Gallery of NSW in 2018. For the occasion, Wood gave a speech on “The Lady and the Unicorn” (2018), in which she discusses how the tapestries’ themes of femininity, animality and captivity resonate with *The Natural Way of Things*.

free of his attention, she requests various items as “payment”, including, bizarrely, a doll. The other girls are flabbergasted and amused, but Verla and Yolanda simply get on with creating the thing. Verla thinks of Vincent Van Gogh, who out of madness created something beautiful, and decides to do the same:

They have at last, quite thoroughly, been driven insane. Verla sits, floating on her nest above the cirlet of mad girls, and is visited by the paintings in Paris. Madhouses, and mad deeds. The hospital garden at Arles. The hospital at St Remy. This is no hospital, but he made something of his madness. (Wood, 2015, p. 220)

Like Van Gogh, who painted images of Arles and St Remy through his madness, Verla wants to *create* out of the pain and confusion that surrounds her.

The doll that Verla and Yolanda sew together is an ambivalent and horrifying creation, but is a true piece of art: heavy with significance, layered with meanings which cannot easily be reduced. They make the doll with scraps of old clothes, leather and guts from the rabbits, and their own hair. It is not a baby doll they craft but a woman, sewing into its body their own pain and degradation: “It filled them with something deep, slow-burning, some determination they did not understand, but slowly the doll’s misshapen, ugly body grew out of the shames and degradations of their own” (Wood, 2015, p. 221). Yolanda hides a dead rabbit baby inside the doll. It thus contains bodies, and death, and a parody of new life. And later, it begins to stink. “Only now did the two girls look at each other’s faces in wonder at what they had made. A totem, it could be, or a ghost. It could be a warrior, voodoo doll, goddess, corpse” (Wood, 2015, p. 221). White points out that

[b]y coproducing a representation of cross-species progeny, Yolanda and Verla radically challenge confining notions of reproduction and family, and the reaction of the other women and the captors who find the doll deeply unsettling highlights how their creation disrupts expectations about the separation of human and animal lives and deaths. (2019, p. 155)

The doll is an ambiguous representation of their own suffering, but by the very act of creation they gain some power over it. The creation of the doll grants Verla and Yolanda autonomy and ownership of their own experiences, which contributes to a degree of self-knowledge and clear-sightedness which the other girls, to their doom, do not achieve. The doll also, in its strange merging of nature, culture, and female degradation and desire, becomes an arresting and ambivalent ecofeminist icon that resonates beyond the boundaries of the text itself.

Resolutions

The Natural Way of Things suggests that an acceptance of the “animal” is the only way forward. At the end of the novel, a bus arrives to collect the girls and take

them away – they assume to safety. Yolanda, half rabbit now, is nowhere to be seen, but waits by the compound gate to escape when the bus leaves. They are each given a bag of expensive cosmetics that they sigh and fawn over, but Verla soon realizes that the bus is not taking them to freedom, and the cosmetics are not a true gift after all. The cosmetics that the girls pounce on at the end of the narrative are symbolic of the systematic oppression of women and animals in a consumerist society. Animal rights movements have exposed horrific links between cosmetics and cruel practices of animal testing. Cosmetics, marketed nearly exclusively at women, underscore an acquiescence to patriarchal ideals, and a subjection to a capitalist system of inflated prices and desires. As Gruen puts it, “[b]y purchasing and using cosmetics, women become complicitous not only in their own reduction to the object of a gaze, but also in the suffering and death of animals” (1993, p. 71). The cosmetics also reinforce conceptual distinctions between human and animal, as the girls are “rescued” from their animalistic state, and become more “human” with the application of scents and creams. The cosmetics are bait, designed to lure the girls into false senses of security and relief, as they believe they will be welcomed back into the society which has cast them out. Verla recognizes that no welcome awaits them – they are being transported towards a fate worse than the one they have left behind.

Verla contemplates killing herself with one of her mushrooms, but the memory of and a living connection to Yolanda, her “fellow creature” changes her mind:

Her voice comes from a fine grey blur spinning through the grass, across the plains, and it is not old dead Walt Whitman’s voice she hears but the fresh, living rhythm of a beating heart, of surging blood and paws thrumming over the earth. Verla feels this pulse, urgently, in her body. (Wood, 2015, p. 310)

Internalizing Yolanda’s heartbeat, Verla decides to live, and, with the help of the other girls, forces the driver to let her off the bus. Alone in the outback, she realizes she may still die, but she at least has a chance, and her own animal totem, a little brown trout, springs to life in her mind.

At the end of *Animal People*, Stephen embraces his neighbour’s dog Balzac, who has just been fatally hit by a car. He gazes into its eyes and inhales the creature’s final “dank animal breaths” (Wood, 2011, p. 261). In this state he finally understands who he is and what is important: “It was in this abjection, he saw now – his eyes closed, face pressed into the dog’s neck – that we were most animal and because of that became most human after all. We are all only hair and bone and stinking breath” (Wood, 2011, p. 261). In becoming a “fellow creature” to a dying dog, Stephen is also finally able to accept and commit to the lives of Fiona and her daughters, whom he loves. He discovers he is most human when he is most animal.

By dwelling on the most basic of mammalian life processes – the heartbeat and the breath – each novel locates meaning, significance and freedom from the rea-

son-nature binary in the shared experience of life itself.⁶ This awareness of life itself is independent of cultural norms and gendered restrictions. The end of each novel crystallizes an epiphanic moment of being alive within and beneath oppressive structures, and of connecting with another being through a shared presence rather than language. As Plumwood notes:

The inferiorisation of human qualities and aspects of life associated with necessity, nature and women – of nature-as-body, of nature-as-passion or emotion, or nature as the pre-symbolic, of nature-as-primitive, of nature-as-animal and of nature as the feminine – continues to operate to the disadvantage of women, nature and quality of human life. (1993, p. 21)

These two novels are interrogations of and responses to these observations. As Stephen shares a dying dog's breath and gazes unflinchingly into his eyes, as Yolanda's heart beats in time with a rabbit's heart, and Verla vanishes into the scrub as swiftly and lithely as a fish, the characters experience a connection with their animal selves. These experiences dismantle the restrictive binaries between culture and nature, human and animal, male and female. Both women and animals are treated "unfairly" by world-views and power structures that view them as "naturally" ripe for domination. These novels attempt to imagine another way.

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6 This reading resonates with Arizti's (2020) discussion of the significance of Rosi Braidotti's (2013) concept of zoe, or life, in *The Natural Way of Things*.

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Marcus Axelsson

Helen Wells' *Peril over the Airport* (1953)

Norwegian and Swedish Translations of Gender

Because this volume focuses on fairness and women, it seemed an opportune time to concentrate my work in Translation Studies around gender. Translation Studies, a relatively new discipline, has not always considered gender important in its purview. However, in the twenty-first century, gender has now become a frequent focus (see López & Alvstad, 2017, p. 5). In her seminal book *Translation and Gender* (1997), Luise von Flotow called for combining Gender Studies and Translation Studies. She argued that the two disciplines have much in common. Both of them are interdisciplinary, and both evolved substantially during the latter part of the 20th century. They often also have language as a common object of study. In Gender Studies, scholars focus on revealing uneven distributions of power, expressed through a patriarchal language, whereas most studies carried out in Translation Studies have language as their object of study (von Flotow, 1997, p. 1). According to von Flotow (1997, p. 1), combining the two disciplines is fruitful since it enables scholars to highlight questions concerning gender differences in different countries, and helps to reveal how these differences are expressed in language.

My chapter in this fairness volume answers von Flotow's call for more research on women and translation by focusing on the translation of Young Adult (YA) detective fiction for girls – a genre with women protagonists, often written by women, for young women. In their anthology *Gender and Translation: Understanding Agents in Transnational Reception*, Isis Herrero López and Cecilia Alvstad (2017, p. 5) identify a research gap regarding gender and translation in Scandinavia, which I will contribute to bridging by directing the attention toward Norway and Sweden. The chapter consists of a qualitative case study investigating the Norwegian and Swedish translations of the American novel *Peril over the Airport* (1953), written by Helen Wells for the Vicki Barr series. My aim is to investigate how descriptions of female appearance and misogynistic comments uttered by the characters are translated in the two Scandinavian versions of the novel. I also focus on the translation of passages where the topic of women in aviation is brought up. In addition, I discuss the possibility that there could be activist translation strategies at work (see below).

Ideas of what is considered appropriate for women and men to do, think and say, change over time, and also between cultures. These differing ideas have resulted in many rewritings and omissions in translations over the years (López & Alvstad, 2017, p. 4). As an example of this, Ida Hove Solberg's (2017) study of the Norwegian translations of Simone de Beauvoir's works may be mentioned. Solberg

finds that several passages in de Beauvoir's works relating to sex or gender have been abridged or changed in the Norwegian translations, making the target texts less feminist than their originals. In this chapter, I am dealing with the genre of fiction, but it is still interesting to bear Solberg's results in mind when carrying out the present study. It should also be mentioned, though, that many translation scholars have found results that point in other directions than Solberg's results. As an example, López and Alvstad (2017, pp. 7–8) mention Paul Tenngart's (2017) study of how Baudelaire's poetry was translated into Swedish. Tenngart notices that the Swedish translations are, if not feminist, at least less misogynistic than the French source texts.

López and Alvstad (2017, p. 4) mention that at the birth of feminist translation studies, feminist translators became aware of the risk that they, when translating, reproduced the same misogynistic views they were contesting. Naturally, there are often activist tendencies in feminist translation studies, which is a discipline that aims to contribute solutions as to how translators could use translations to subvert patriarchal norms (López & Alvstad, 2017, p. 4). This study, however, is positioned within the field of Descriptive Translation Studies, which focuses on what translators do and not on how a translation ought to be done (see e.g. Hermans, 1999, pp. 7–9, 73; Toury, 2012). We do not know anything about the Vicki Barr translators' views on feminism and women's liberation and will therefore be limited to studying the effects of the translators' choices; we may only hypothesize about possible (activist) intentions. Activist intentions are closely related to "norm(s)" which is a key concept in Descriptive Translation Studies, where one views translation as a strictly norm governed practice (see e.g. Toury, 2012, pp. 54–55). In this study, the combination of the focus on norms from Translation Studies and my focus on women in aviation, may reveal the effects of target culture norms relating to sex and gender in the two target texts.

Feminist Approaches in YA Detective Novels for Girls

Although the literary quality of the 20th century juvenile series genre has been questioned, it is a fact that these novels were immensely popular among young readers (Black, 1995; Shoemaker, 1995; Theander, 2006, *passim*; Söderberg, 2010, p. 165). In her article "Reflecting on Girls' Series", Sherrie A. Inness (1997, p. 255) mentions that 20th century girls' series books have experienced a great increase in scholarly interest in recent years.¹ Researchers have focused on how these series help us understand the role they had in culture at the time, and how they contributed to shaping the values of future women (see also Theander, 2006, p. 20). Some scholars even argue that the series had a positive influence on the wom-

1 The title of Birgitta Theander's (2006) dissertation on girls' fiction in Sweden, *Älskad och förnekad*, ('Loved and denied') may epitomize the approaches to, and beliefs about, girls' fiction over the years.

en's liberation movement (see e.g. Theander, 2017, pp. 295–309; Woolston, 2010; Mason, 1995). For example, in *Girl Sleuth*, Bobbie Ann Mason goes as far as to ask “[w]here would women’s liberation be without Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton and Beverly Gray and Cherry Ames?” (1995, p. 6).

Both authors of the Vicki Barr series, Helen Wells and Julie Tatham, were active writers of young adult detective fiction for girls in the middle of the 20th century (Mason, 1995, p. 107; Sangster & Smith, 2019, p. 146). In their article “From Career Girl to Sexy Stewardess: Popular Culture and Women’s Work in the Canadian and American Airline Industries”, Joan Sangster and Julia Smith (2019, p. 146, 157) mention that both Wells and Tatham were aware of gender discrimination and expressed their feminist ideas in an understated manner. Wells herself said that she wanted to reach out to young women who were interested in meaningful careers and independent lives. Even though writing within the formula of juvenile mysteries was like writing in a straitjacket, Wells said that it was still possible to express “values one believe[d] in” in the novels (qtd in Mason, 1995, p. 109). This conscious address to the readers is one reason why it is interesting to read the Vicki Barr series from a fairness perspective. Even though I do not investigate the entire Vicki Barr series, I believe that it is important to note both the progressive and emancipatory tendencies that exist, and that 20th century girls’ detective fiction was highly influential for its readers (cf. Woolston, 2010; D’Amico, 2016, p. vii).

Peril over the Airport and its Translations

Grosset and Dunlap published sixteen mystery books in the Vicki Barr Flight Stewardess Series between 1947 and 1960. Thirteen of the novels were translated into Norwegian, whereas all sixteen were translated into Swedish. Helen Wells wrote thirteen of the novels, while Julie Tatham penned three. Wells wrote *Peril over the Airport* (1953), which was translated into Norwegian by Arnold Jacoby as *Vicki og spøkelsesflyet* (‘Vicki and the Ghost Plane’, Forlagshuset, 1954) and into Swedish, *Vicki vid spåkarna* (‘Vicki at the Helm’, B. Wahlströms, 1964), by Gudrun Ullman.

The Swedish translation of *Peril over the Airport* is considerably shorter than its original. Senior editor Louella Bergman at B. Wahlströms² hypothesizes that many of B. Wahlströms’ translations were shortened in order to maintain a low retail price by keeping down the costs for printing (see also Andræ, 2001, p. 38). Bergman believes the publisher may have asked the translator to cut text in order to meet the page count standard for B. Wahlströms’ series. B. Wahlströms had a tradition of being quite drastic in the revisions of manuscripts and translations. In

2 Louella Bergman, e-mail communication, October 28, 2019.

the latter case, the revisions were often made in order to adjust the target text to Swedish readers (Andræ, 2001, p. 38).

Giving an account of how the women's liberation movement evolved in the United States, Norway and Sweden, respectively, falls outside of the scope of this chapter, but let me still say a few words about this matter, in order to provide some historical background to the study. In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, which, in many ways, marks the beginning of the second wave of feminism, at least in the United States (Fox, 2006). *Peril over the Airport* was written before the second wave of feminism and will hence have to be categorized as "prefeminist", or at least, "pre-second wave feminist". The same goes for the Norwegian target text, which was published in 1954. The Swedish translation, however, is from 1964, one year after Friedan's book. At the time, much progress was made within the women's liberation movement and gender equality was on its way to becoming a norm in Scandinavia (cf. Ljungberg et al., 2017, p. 5). With the 1960s came ideological changes in Sweden where one was not supposed to differentiate between boys and girls. As a concrete example, Theander (2006, p. 10) mentions the 1962 government act decommissioning girls' schools. It is important to bear these facts in mind when conducting the present study, especially since Theander (2017, p. 315) has found that girls' fiction, to a large extent, mirrors the time in which it was written.

Analysis of Excerpted Units

In order to compare the three texts, I use a coupled-pairs analysis (see Toury, 2012, p. 33, 117–129), where I identify a unit of analysis in the source text (ST), match it with the corresponding unit in the target texts (TTs), i.e. the coupled pair, and compare them. As stated above, I focus on passages containing descriptions of female appearance, misogynistic comments uttered by the characters, and passages where the topic of women in aviation is discussed. When first embarking on this study, I read *Peril over the Airport* with the intention of uncovering occurrences of master suppression techniques as theorized by Berit Ås (1981, pp. 42–73). Master suppression techniques are techniques used to suppress women and women culture (pp. 42–43). I focused on the techniques *ridicule* (pp. 49–54), *withholding information*³ (pp. 54–57) and *objectification* (p. 67) and I found that these, to a great extent, appeared in passages with misogynistic comments uttered by the characters (*ridicule*), bodily descriptions of female appearance (*objectification*), and passages concerning a woman's right to enter a field from which she had been historically excluded (*withholding information*). This is the reason why these three units of analysis remain integral to my study. In this chapter, I pres-

3 *Withholding information* includes keeping women away from certain domains (see Ås, 1981, pp. 54–57). In this study, this technique is visible in passages where women's role in aviation is brought up.

ent the most noticeable examples of the excerpted occurrences. When presenting the examples, the ST is followed first by the Norwegian TT and then by the Swedish one. Literal back translations (BTs), i.e. translations that are translated literally from the TT language back into English, are provided when the Norwegian and/or Swedish examples are so far from the ST that they need a back translation in order to be understood by a non-Swedish or non-Norwegian speaker. For simplicity's sake, I present the examples chronologically, i.e. as they appear in the plot. Only page numbers (no dates or author names) are given for examples quoted from the investigated material.

Results

Peril over the Airport starts in medias res with Vicki's dreaming about something that seems almost unmentionable, in this case, "a forbidden love", which is also the title of the first chapter in the book. As the experienced Vicki Barr reader may have anticipated from previous novels in the series, this love is connected to her dreams of learning how to fly. The narrator refers to this dream as an "it":

Something had been going on in the back of Vicki Barr's mind for quite a long time now. At first Vicki had shut her wide azure-blue eyes and pretended it wasn't true. When that didn't work, she tried her best to ignore it. But it bobbed up, uninvited. "It" was dangerous, expensive, exciting. Certainly "it" did not seem a suitable ambition for a small, ash-blond girl. (1)

Noe hadde alt i lang, lang tid ligget og modnet i Vicki Barrs tanker. Først hadde hun lukket øynene og sagt til seg selv at det aldri kunne bli virkelighet. (5)

BT of Norwegian translation: Something had already for a long, long time been ripening in Vicki Barr's thoughts. At first she had closed her eyes and told herself that it could never become a reality.

Någonting hade rört sig längst bak i huvudet på Vicki Barr ganska länge nu. Först hade Vicki knipit ihop sina stora, blå ögon och låtsats att det inte var sant. När detta inte hjälpte, gjorde hon sitt bästa för att ignorera det. "Det" var farligt, dyrt och spännande. Och "det" tycktes faktiskt inte vara en lämplig ärelystnad för en liten, askblond flicka. (5)

BT of Swedish translation: Something had been moving in the back of Vicki Barr's head for quite some time now. First Vicki had closed her large, blue eyes and pretended it wasn't true. When this didn't help, she did her best to ignore it. "It was dangerous, expensive and exciting. And "it" was not an appropriate ambition for a small, ash-blond girl.

In the ST, it seems as if the narrator suggests that being a girl, in addition to being both small and ash-blond, are characteristics that would make flying even more unthinkable than if Vicki were a woman with other characteristics. It is probable

that Vicki, formed by the norms of her time, reasons with herself that she should not have any “unsuitable” ideas. At the same time as Vicki’s dreams are described as unsuitable, the passage also expresses some irony from the narrator’s side – i.e. the relevance of her hair color for flying – and even disapproval of the gender inequality in society, where flying is not for girls (like Vicki). The ST passage in the example above is typical for the Vicki Barr series, where Vicki’s body and looks are often seen as a hindrance for her. These hindrances are both practical – being too short to be a flight attendant (2) – and related to being treated unfairly, as a “decorative piece of bric-a-brac” (2), instead of being taken seriously. Concerning the translations above, it turns out that the Swedish translation renders the wording of the ST rather literally and hence retains its semantic content, expressing Vicki’s unsuitable ideas, her blue eyes – although no longer azure-blue, which suggests less focus on Vicki’s appearance – as well as the hint of irony associated with the irrelevant mention of her hair color. The Norwegian translation is shorter than both the American and Swedish versions. The part concerning Vicki’s being ash-blonde and small is omitted in the Norwegian translation. This also means that her doubts related to her gender and bodily features are omitted. In fact, the Norwegian TT just says that Vicki has new ideas. In addition, Vicki’s eyes are not described in the Norwegian text, which only states that she has closed them. In the example above it is thus the Norwegian translation which tones down or omits passages where looks are mentioned, resulting in the Norwegian TTs becoming slightly less focused on objectification and appearance than the other versions.

Peril over the Airport is especially interesting from a perspective of gender equality, since it represents a liminal moment in Vicki’s career. It is the novel where she earns her private pilot’s license. This license opens up new possibilities for her since she becomes more independent from her male pilot colleagues when solving the mysteries she is confronted with in the series. Sangster and Smith (2019, p. 147) argue that her license allows her to control her own fate. In his article “Configuring Identity and Flights of Fancy in the Vicki Barr, Flight Stewardess series,” Michael G. Cornelius goes so far as to suggest that flying symbolizes a liberation for Vicki, since it is: “suggestive of rising above the mundane world above us, of escape from reality (in Vicki’s case, the patriarchal world of both her hometown and the airline industry itself)” (2009, p. 43). Even though I am hesitant to stretch my interpretation of the novel that far, Cornelius’ point is an interesting example of the emancipatory content that may be present in Well’s authorship. However, at the same time as one may argue that there are feminist approaches in the Vicki Barr series, Sangster and Smith (2019, p. 147), as well as Mason (1995, p. 112), also point out some contradictions and paradoxes in the series. After Vicki has acquired her license, she does not give up her career as a flight attendant. Instead, she remains in the patriarchal aviation industry, deferring to men, constantly claiming that her flying is not a profession but only a means of recreation. In the very first pages of *Peril over the Airport*, it is for example made

clear that Vicki “wouldn’t trade the fun of being an air hostess for being a princess or a – a –” (2), where she does not even dare to pronounce the word “pilot”, but further on it is mentioned that Vicki “felt stewardess work to be a stepping-stone to something else” (4), suggesting that she has ambitions to use her license to move away from her current profession. In the Norwegian translation, none of these passages has its counterpart. In fact, the first pages of the novel, where Vicki’s doubts are expressed, are considerably shortened in the Norwegian TT. Instead, the Norwegian translation quickly goes on to the passage where Vicki and her friends discuss how she may proceed to get a license. This results in Vicki’s appearing more self-confident in the Norwegian TT than in the ST. The introductory pages in the Swedish translation, on the other hand, are close to the American ST, expressing the same contradictions and the same doubts.

A little later in the novel, Vicki convinces her father to allow her to start taking flight lessons. The narrator tells us: “[s]he had no doubt that her mother would loyally be her first passenger. Her dad, however, had some old-fashioned ideas and a bad habit of obstructing her plans” (12), which is quite literally translated in both TTs. It is not mentioned what these ideas consist of, but if one were to speculate on what is said between the lines, it is highly probable that these ideas have to do with women’s place in the aviation industry. When Vicki wants to become a flight attendant in the first novel of the series, she meets with great resistance from her father, although he eventually gives her his blessing and it later turns out that he is not at all as authoritarian as it first appeared. In fact, Professor Barr breaks gender barriers in his own way by entering domains at the time traditionally dominated by women. For example, he often takes over the kitchen in the Barr home. In all three texts, Vicki faces her father’s objections by trying to persuade him, but when that does not work, she simply makes an appointment for her first meeting when her instructor calls, despite her father’s disapproval. This is an instance of Vicki’s breaking norms and claiming independence by following her dream, which is rendered quite literally in both TTs.

Moving on in the novel, Vicki’s first meeting with her instructor, Bill Avery, a World War II veteran, is characterized by mixed feelings from both of them. Bill arrives late for their first appointment, and his sloppy appearance is disturbing to Vicki. When Bill later excuses himself for his appearance, Vicki says that she does not mind – which is, of course, pure civility – to which Bill gives a misogynistic reply.

Well, I’m glad you’re not one of those fussy females. So prissy and perfect — it’s not worth while livin’ with them around. (26)

Det er godt at De ikke hører til disse pirkete fruentimmerne. Mange av dem er så pertentlige og masete og umulige at det ikke går an å bo i nærheten av dem. (21)

BT of Norwegian Translation: It's good that you are not one of these over-ordered women. Many of them are so meticulous and nagging and impossible that one cannot live close to them.

Skönt att du inte är en sån där fjäskig typ. Så där noga och perfekt...dom är besvärliga att ha i närheten. (34)

BT of Swedish translation: Good that you're not such an officious type. So meticulous and perfect ... they are difficult to have nearby.

Even though Bill excludes Vicki from the “fussy females”-category, his utterance is clearly sexist and insulting, not only to Vicki but to all women. The translation into Norwegian, using the word “fruentimmer”, is possibly even more insulting than the American formulation. “Fruentimmer” has negative connotations and may be translated as ‘bloody women’. Its etymology is not derogatory,⁴ but it has taken on negative connotations over the years, and was considered an insult already in the 1950s,⁵ when the Norwegian translation was published. Moreover, in the Norwegian TT, more adjectives are added/replaced in order to describe how difficult women are; they are both “umulige” (‘impossible’) and “masete” (‘nagging’). In the Swedish version, however, there is another, much shorter solution, where women are not mentioned at all. Instead, Bill’s comment expresses criticism of hypocritical and false behavior in general, which makes the Swedish reader’s first meeting with Bill more positive than in the ST and the Norwegian TT. Since *Vicki vid spakarna* is shorter than both *Peril over the Airport* and *Vicki og spøkelsesflyet* it is no surprise that the Swedish translation of the example above is shorter than the Norwegian. What is interesting to note, though, is that there is one cut in a passage that expresses thoughts on gender and behavior. This translation strategy is one noted by Laura Leden, who, in her 2019 study, “Girl’s Classics and Constraints”, investigates how Lucy M. Montgomery’s *Emily of New Moon* series was translated into Swedish, and finds that the translator, when asked to shorten the TT, frequently omits passages relating to gender.

In neither of the TTs does Vicki instantly react to Bill’s misogyny, since the conversation quickly takes a new turn when Vicki sees the plane in which she is going to have her first flight lesson. However, Vicki is not unaffected by his tart comment. Her disappointment shows when the conversation eventually comes to revolve around Vicki’s clothes and their suitability for flying. Vicki notices that Bill is not happy with her shoes (“yellow cotton, sling back and open toes, with a flat bow atop” (26)), and she asks him why he is not pleased with them. The narrator mentions, “[h]is earlier remark about fussy females had nettled her” (27). This sentence is omitted from the Swedish TT, and also from the Norwegian version, which results in the Norwegian translation ignoring Vicki’s thoughts of having been insulted and hurt altogether.

4 Fruentimmer (n.d.). In *Ordbog over det danske sprog*.

5 Fruentimmer (n.d.). In *Store norske leksikon*.

Bill and Vicki's conversation about aviation goes on undisturbedly for a while, but it eventually comes to a halt when conversation turns toward their common background within flying, with Bill as a pilot and Vicki as a flight attendant. It turns out that Bill does not consider her experience of any value for learning how to fly, and he makes another insulting comment:

"Aw, that's not real aviation. That's just the plus trimmings. Servin' dinner, holdin' the passenger's hand — " [...] "Dressed up pretty all the time, keeps her plushy plane cabin in apple-pie order." (33)

— Det har vel ingenting med flyging å gjøre, iallfall ikke ordentlig flyging. Det er jo bare å servere frokost og middag og holde folk i hånden, og — (26)

BT of Norwegian translation: — That doesn't have anything to do with flying, at least not real flying. That's just serving breakfast and dinner and holding peoples' hands, and —

— Asch, det är en helt annan sak. Det är bara såna där extra krusiduller. Servera middan och hålla passagerarna i hand... — [...] och är fint och elegant klädd och håller din lilla lyxkabin i perfekt ordning. (41–42)

BT of Swedish translation: — Ah, that's a completely different thing. Those are just extra curlicues. Serving dinner and holding the passengers' hands... — [...] and is nicely and elegantly dressed and keeps your little luxury cabin in perfect order.

By criticizing her occupation in general, Bill also criticizes Vicki. This comment saddens Vicki, and even though she makes a terse remark where she criticizes fliers' narrow-mindedness and Bill's unordered airfield, she does nothing to point out that the comment is demeaning.⁶ Nevertheless, Bill half-apologizes by saying that "You sound like my sister. I guess I must be a hopeless mess" (33) – crediting Vicki for being right in some of her criticism. As can be noted in the example above, Bill's comment is translated quite literally in both the Norwegian and the Swedish TTs. However, the last sentence, which deals with clothing and the plushy cabin, is omitted from the Norwegian translation, which results in its focusing somewhat more on flight attendants' deeds than on their looks. One also notes that the phrase "plus trimmings" in the previous sentence has been omitted from the Norwegian translation. In the Swedish TT, it has been translated as "extra krusiduller," which describes something 'fanciful and curlicue-like'. This translation strategy adds to Bill's derogatory remark, since any kind of "fuss" is clearly not to Bill's taste. Throughout the series, we see examples of how Vicki counters misogynis-

6 It should be noted that although Vicki does not verbally resist Bill's sexism, internally she reacts much more strongly, as can be seen if one reads the passage in full: "Vicki was so hurt that for a moment she could not speak. Her work with people, and her secondary job of representing aviation to the public, amounted to a great deal more than this boy gave credit for. Vicki remembered her father last evening scornfully describe fliers as narrow. He had been right. About all Bill understood was torques and ailerons and manifold pressure. Vicki said so and wished she hadn't started to like him so well [...] 'Seems to me this field could stand a little apple-pie order [...].'" (33)

tic comments in the “understated manner” that Sangster and Smith (2019, p. 145) notice. She deals with them by pointing out the adversary’s shortcomings, as in the case above, but she seldom directly counters the comments by pointing out that they are misogynistic. After Bill’s half-apology above, for example, Vicki lets go of any lingering animosity against Bill and suggests that both she and Bill were stupid, and does not explicitly confront him any further with his sexism. This is typical behavior of Vicki’s, and it is translated in an ST-oriented way in both TTs. Although Bill makes some comments that Vicki finds insulting, it later appears as if Vicki has “won over” Bill to her side, by showing him how knowledgeable she is about aviation.

It is then Bill’s mechanic, Spin, who takes over as the misogynist in *Peril over the Airport*. Almost every time Vicki and Spin meet, he expresses negative thoughts on women in general and Vicki in particular. When Spin criticizes Vicki, he usually attacks her for being a flight attendant, something he judges to be an insignificant profession. Vicki meets Spin for the first time when she and Bill visit him at a neighboring airfield. This first meeting is entirely disagreeable for Vicki, not least because of his way of speaking about women. Spin does not shake Vicki’s hand when they first meet, and after Vicki has tried to engage in Bill and Spin’s conversation by asking a flight-related question, he looks at her with contempt for being ignorant. Spin then ridicules Vicki by telling Bill quietly:

“Number forty-seven of the things I’d like to see before I die. That’s a stewardess who doesn’t think she’s a gift of nature because she’s a female.” (55)

— En av de tingene jeg har drømt om å møte før jeg dør, sa mekanikeren lavt til Bill, — er en flyvertinne som ikke tror at hun er naturens største underverk. (44)

BT of Norwegian translation: — One of those things I have dreamt of seeing before I die, the mechanic said quietly to Bill, — is a stewardess who doesn’t think she’s nature’s greatest wonder.

Swedish TT: omission.

Regarding the translations of this passage, the Norwegian translation is just as unfair to flight attendants as the American ST, but it should be noted that it is less demeaning to women in general, since the part where women are mentioned (“because she’s a female”) is left out. In the Swedish TT, large parts of Bill and Spin’s conversation are omitted, including Spin’s demeaning comment about women. In the example above, it turns out that the Scandinavian versions are more prone to omit content where women are negatively commented upon. It may be hypothesized that the omissions mirror target culture norms, i.e. a different view of women’s position in the target societies. Nevertheless, Spin appears just as disagreeable in both TTs; it is only that the TT readers are faced with less misogynistic content. In association with the example above, it is also important to point out that it seems as if Bill has learned from his and Vicki’s first disagreement.

He does not acknowledge Spin's joke and he indirectly defends women by telling Spin that he himself learned to fly from female instructors. This passage is translated literally in the Norwegian translation, which is interesting to note, since only flight attendants, and not women in general, are criticized in Spin's snide comment in the above example. This makes the Norwegian TT even more supportive of women than the ST. Bill's answer is omitted from the Swedish TT.

Throughout the novel, Spin demonstrates his disdain for women. Except in the passage above, the two TTs do not tone down or omit Spin's insults. Some of the comments are omitted from the Swedish version, but these omissions are often associated with the omission of large parts of text. It thus seems as if Spin's derogatory comments are kept in order to draw attention to how reprehensible he is. Spin is, contrary to Bill, the villain of the story and the reader is not supposed to sympathize with him anyway. Spin's misogynistic comments appear so flagrant to the reader that they will not pass just as personal animosity toward Vicki, but also to all of the readers of the novel, who are (were) mostly young women. One may hypothesize that the strategy of keeping Spin's misogynistic comments is an activist strategy where the reader is invoked to react. This would hence be a strategy where the most politically correct way of translating a book would not be, as is most often done, to omit or tone down controversial content (cf. Billiani, 2009, pp. 28–31), but rather to keep it, which would be more conspicuous in Sweden in 1964 than in the source text from 1953.

In patriarchal language, Ås (1981, p. 52) mentions that animal metaphors often are used to describe women and men. She mentions that small and helpless animals are used to describe women, whereas strong and tall animals are used to describe men. In *Peril over the Airport*, Vicki is constantly being called "pigeon" by Bill, which can signify a 'young woman' in English slang⁷. The use of "pigeon" in this sense was lexicalized long before *Peril over the Airport* was written, but it is nonetheless an example of patriarchal language describing women as small. A direct translation of "pigeon" would have been unidiomatic in Norwegian and Swedish. The Norwegian TT has "vesla" ('little you') (see e.g. 99, 103, 152), "vennen min" ('my friend') (see e.g. 47, 61, 138), the completely neutral "flyger" ('flier') (99), or omissions (see e.g. 68) as translations for "pigeon". Almost all instances of "pigeon" are omitted in the Swedish translation, resulting in a TT with fewer patriarchal metaphors.

In the last example of this chapter, I would like to draw attention to the last lines in the novel. Despite some obstacles, Vicki manages to both earn her pilot's license and solve the mystery around which the novel revolves. Vicki is also assigned a new route by the airline company. This means that Vicki has to say goodbye to Bill, who has grown very fond of her. The novel ends with Bill expressing his worries that Vicki will disappear now that she has managed to get her license. The example below contains descriptions of Vicki's looks as well as men

7 Pigeon (n.d.). In *Merriam Webster Dictionary*.

expressing their approval of Vicki's accomplishment – her successful entrance into the male-dominated domain of aviation:

Bill looked down on Vicki and said, "I almost wish I'd never taught you to fly, if it's going to take you away." "I, too, wish you'd never taught her," her father said, but he smiled with pride. Vicki shook her silvery-gold hair. "This isn't the end," she said happily. "It's the beginning of something new — and wonderful." (211–212)

Bill skottet ned på Vicki og sa: – Jeg skulle ønske at jeg aldri hadde lært deg å fly — hvis det er det som tar deg fra meg. — Jeg skulle også ønske det, sa faren, men han smilte da han sa det. Vicki ristet de gule krøllene. — Dette er da ikke slutten, sa hun lykkelig. — Det er begynnelsen — til noe nytt og vidunderlig. (172)

BT of Norwegian translation: Bill peered down on Vicki and said: — I wish I had never taught you to fly — if that's what takes you away from me. — I would also wish so, said the father, but he smiled as he said it. Vicki shook her yellow curls. — This isn't the end, she said happily. — It's the beginning — of something new and wonderful.

Bill tittade på Vicki och sa: — Jag önskar nästan att jag inte hade lärt dej flyga, när det tar dej ifrån oss. — Det önskar jag med, instämde hennes far. Men han log ett mycket stolt leende när han sa det. (188)

BT of Swedish version: — I almost wish I hadn't taught you to fly, when it takes you away from us. — I wish so too, her father agreed. But he smiled a very proud smile when he said it.

Before comparing the translations, it is interesting to point out that the example above shows one characteristic of the Vicki Barr series: Vicki never becomes especially involved in the romantic opportunities that appear throughout the series. Her love of flying and experiencing new adventures is always stronger than any romance involving men, in this case what could have developed with Bill. Concerning the translation of the example above, it turns out that the Norwegian version is very ST-oriented. One of the first things that one notices in the Swedish TT, is that it is shorter than the other versions, and the last lines of the novel are simply omitted. This strategy results in the disappearance of Vicki's own voice and her father having the last word, but at the same time, it also focuses less on Vicki's looks, since the yellow curls are gone. In the beginning of the Swedish example, one also notices that Bill does not look down on Vicki, instead he just looks at her – from a more equal perspective.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has focused on women and translation. I have studied how passages containing descriptions of female appearance and misogynistic remarks uttered by

the characters have been rendered in the Norwegian and Swedish translations of Helen Wells' *Peril over the Airport*. I have also, to some extent, examined how passages regarding women in aviation are brought up and translated in the two TTs. No Norwegian and Swedish culture norms relating to sex and gender are clearly expressed in the text in the form of additions, but it is possible to conclude that the two Scandinavian TTs seem to contain fewer descriptions of Vicki's appearance, and fewer instances of misogynistic comments. In the translated passages concerning women's role in aviation, Vicki faces fewer negative remarks from other people around her, and she appears more confident than in the American ST as to whether she has the right to follow her dream. This is true especially for the Swedish TT, but also in the Norwegian text. In the case of misogynistic comments, one notes that there are a few instances where the Norwegian TT has become more derogatory toward women than the ST, but the occurrences where the opposite is the case outnumber the former.

I have only had the possibility to highlight select excerpts from the novel. When looking at the overall results from the analysis (i.e. including text passages that have not been presented in this chapter), it turns out that gender perspectives in many cases are translated in an ST-oriented way, i.e. with no major changes. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the Scandinavian readers are faced with less sexist and misogynistic content than are the ST readers.

The Swedish TT is shorter than its original and it is therefore not surprising that it contains frequent omissions. It appears as if several of the omissions are made in passages with sexist or misogynistic content. This is an interesting result and one may hypothesize whether this strategy mirrors the society in which the TT was published. Earlier, I put forward the possibility that this study may reveal the effects of target culture norms relating to sex and gender in the two TTs. The Swedish text was published as late as 1964, which is more than ten years after the American publication. As mentioned earlier, gender equality was on its way to becoming a norm in Scandinavia at the time and the Vicki Barr translations may mirror these changes. Theander (2017, pp. 312–315) mentions that mid-century's girls' fiction mirrors the society in which it was written. In passing she suggests that one, when looking for information on attitudes to gender roles at the time, instead of turning to historical and sociological methods, might study how these books deal with gender (Theander, 2017, p. 11). Could we then, following Theander's suggestion, proceed in the same way when studying translations?

Let me for one moment return to the topic of misogynistic comments. López and Alvstad (2017, p. 4) point out that the views on what is considered appropriate for, among others, women to do, say, think, etc. change over time. This means that the views on what may have been perceived as misogynistic in the 1950s and what is considered misogynistic today not necessarily correspond. In this study, I have focused on misogynistic comments uttered by the characters in the novel, which would, no doubt, have been perceived as misogynistic also by the mid-cen-

ture readers. One may have missed, however, other – most probably unintended – authorial, comments, that the readers of today may perceive as misogynistic. In a future study, it would be highly interesting to study whether there are different strategies at work when translating comments uttered by the characters and comments uttered by the author or narrator.

Considering the feminist leanings critics have witnessed in the Vicki Barr series, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, I would argue that the two translators (or the publisher, editor, or another literary agent involved in the translation-revision process), measured by today's standards, have done Wells a favor by making these leanings more evident in the two TTs; this is mainly achieved by omissions, but also by reformulating words with neutral connotations. However, some passages – for example the one in which Vicki defies her father and takes flying lessons – are translated in an ST-oriented way in both TTs. This orientation results in a forwarding of Wells' feminist tendencies to the TT readers.

In the introduction to this chapter, I referred to López and Alvstad's (eds., 2017) book on gender and translation, where they mentioned that there are activist tendencies in feminist translation studies and that feminist translators are trying to subvert anti-feminist discourse in translation. In the case of the translators, Arnold Jacoby and Gudrun Ullman, we do not know much about their views on feminism and women's liberation. Directing the interest toward these specific translators may be a possible area for future studies. What we do see, though, is that they have – as also Tenngart (in López & Alvstad, 2017, p. 7) noted in the case of Baudelaire's poetry in Swedish – toned down anti-feminist discourses in the Scandinavian target texts, hence indirectly making them more feminist than before.

Lastly, I have made the assumption that omitting or diminishing misogynistic comments or sexist content make the TTs more progressive in terms of their emancipatory potential. In addition, I suggest the possibility that these passages *per se* are activist. It is possible that they are activist, serving as eye-openers for how unfairly women are treated, and to provoke the readers to react.

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Part III

Women in the World Telling Women's Stories

Deanna Benjamin

Writing Someone Else's Story

Entitlement and Empathy in Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman"

*While interviewing her for my memoir a few summers ago, my grandma told me, "Do what you will after I die, but don't tell that story while I'm still around," and like a good granddaughter I told her I wouldn't write about it, knowing full well that the story she didn't want me to tell was critical to the story I was writing. We were sitting in her one-bedroom apartment in Denver, she in her walker-chair, me in a cane-backed rocker. She was telling me about the time her husband was in Kuwait. He was an architect, and he had been contracted to help out with post-Gulf War construction. My grandma stayed behind in the United States. The story that I am not supposed to tell is the story of what happened to her while he was overseas. Around the same time, I was taking a course in women's literature and one of the books we read was Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir *The Woman Warrior*. For the first time, I was learning about silence as a family construct and what it means to break that silence. Now, as I contemplate the edict my grandma issued, I wonder about the consequence and meaning of telling a story that seems to belong to someone else.*

Introduction

We live at a time when the stories of women are under assault. Whether being dismissed as the ravings of a lonely woman, or being silenced as a threat to a community's wellbeing, such stories are often stored away in a family's vault of cautionary tales or swept under the proverbial rug. This form of silencing is done despite the moral imperative that such stories must find their ways into the fabric of a society's memories if that society is ever to become whole. Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman" is one example of a woman taking the mantle of such a moral imperative. In essence, this first chapter to Kingston's memoir, *The Woman Warrior* (Kingston, 1989), exemplifies what it means to resist the expectation of silence that society, as it is represented in the family, impresses upon women.

When I read Kingston's memoir twenty-five years ago, I was struck most intimately by the imaginative license she exercised in telling the story of her all-but-forgotten aunt on her father's side. When I began teaching it five years ago, I became keenly aware that such license was essentially a guidebook for telling another woman's story. In "No Name Woman," Kingston presents the story of her

deceased aunt by imagining different ways to fill the gaps her mother left when she retold the story of how her aunt had shamed the family and, as a result, died in a well. Blending what few facts her mother offers with her own understanding of being a young woman, Kingston alights on a narrative for her aunt that removes a history of blame. It represents her aunt not as the static protagonist of a cautionary tale but rather as a dynamic human being who was raped by – or perhaps fell in love with – a villager who was not her husband. In short, Kingston tells the story of her aunt – a woman she never knew – and she does so with an eye to fairness, presenting her aunt as someone who was more than the embarrassment to the family that her mother insists the aunt was. Now, all these years later, Kingston’s choice to imagine the narrative of her aunt compels the question: *How does one tell a story that is not one’s to tell?* More than that, *how does one tell a story that one has been told explicitly not to tell?* In this chapter, I answer such questions using not only Kingston’s story itself but also the research of Amy Shuman and other folklorists whose interest has focused on fair and empathetic representations of their subject’s experiences and perceptions.

Kingston opens “No Name Woman” with her mother, Brave Orchid, commanding her, “You must not tell anyone” (Kingston, 1989, p. 3), before she tells the story of the aunt who “jumped into the family well,” killing herself and her newborn baby (p. 3). Brave Orchid remembers the villagers throwing mud, rocks, and eggs at the house after the aunt gave birth. She heard the family’s animals being slaughtered among other things (p. 4), and when she gets to the end of the story, Brave Orchid summons up a litany of warnings:

Don’t let your father know I told you. He denies her. Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don’t humiliate us. You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful. (p. 5)

After Kingston finishes Brave Orchid’s story, she tells us, “My mother has told me once and for all the useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by Necessity” (p. 6), nothing but what is needed to “warn [her children] about life” (p. 5), for it is “a story to grow up on” (p. 5). But Kingston wanted more. Indeed, she needed more. She needed to know why her aunt did what she did, and she needed to know how her aunt became pregnant to begin with.

Kingston conjures up a handful of imagined stories to fill the gaps in her mother’s story. She “wonder[s] whether” the father of her aunt’s child “masked himself when he joined the raid on her family” (Kingston, 1989, p. 6). She imagines the man threatening her, “If you tell your family, I’ll beat you. I’ll kill you.”, and she laments that her aunt “might have separated the rapes from the rest of the living if only she did not have to buy her oil from him or gather wood in the same forest” (p. 7). Or “perhaps my aunt [...] let dreams grow and fade” (p. 8). Maybe she saw in this man “warm eyes or a soft voice or a slow walk” and “gave up [her] family”

all for love (p. 8). Or “[i]t could very well have been,” Kingston ponders, “that my aunt did not take subtle enjoyment of her friend, but, a wild woman, kept rollicking company” (p. 8). Kingston not only tells the story that her mother told her not to tell. She also creates new stories, an act that must, one might assume, challenge some code of ethics when it comes to telling the stories of others. To understand what this code might be and how it manifests, I turn to the study of folklore, for in folklore one endeavors to record community practice and to explicate meaning from observation and analysis.

Entitlement and Empathy

In her 1986 book *Storytelling Rights*, Amy Shuman – Folklore Studies Professor devoted to telling other people's stories – looks at fight stories told among urban adolescents in a U. S. junior high school; she concludes that acceptable storytelling depends on the identities of the storyteller, the listener, and the story itself. Shuman explains, “the adolescents' narratives were inextricably connected to the situations in which they were told” (Shuman, 1986, p. 31). Only if the teller had been involved somehow in the act was s/he entitled to tell the story. This “entitlement,” Shuman says, directly “corresponded to the rules of privacy” (p. 35). She found, for example, that though her subjects “revealed details of family life in off-hand stories, they never asked each other questions about such areas” (p. 35). Such “knowledge [...] could be used as a weapon, and statements about someone's family, whether true or not, derogatory or not, were often perceived as insults or as invasions of privacy” (p. 35).

Brave Orchid's narrative, albeit neither a fight story nor an adolescent one, serves as an example of what is acceptable storytelling. Kingston's mother is entitled to tell the story by virtue of having played a role in the situation. She “remembered” seeing her pregnant sister-in-law and hearing the screams of the livestock (Kingston, 1989, p. 3). Further, there exists the potential for the story to be perceived as an “insult.” Why else would her mother have said, “You must not tell anyone” (p. 3)? Why else would Kingston's family speak as though the aunt “had never been born” (p. 3)? Kingston even closes “No Name Woman” as if she were aware of the code of silence and the privacy rule that one “never asked each other questions about the details of a family story” (Shuman, 1986, p. 35). At the end of the chapter, Kingston writes, “In the twenty years since I heard this story I have not asked for details nor said my aunt's name” (Kingston, 1989, p. 16), recognizing the code of silence and simultaneously breaking it. Kingston sees the silence as an act of “punishment” levied upon her aunt, and she refuses “to participate in” it (p. 16). Instead, she defies her mother's warning and tells her aunt's story. In this telling she subverts the unwritten, unspoken protocol of storytelling and implic-

itly raises the questions: is she entitled to do this? Can she tell her aunt's story, or rather, can she imagine new stories for her aunt?

Twenty years after Shuman observed the storytelling practices of urban adolescents, she wrote the article "Entitlement and Empathy in Personal Narrative," expanding her discussion of entitlement to include empathy. In it, she considers the space where entitlement and empathy "stabilize and destabilize personal experience narrative" (Shuman, 2006, p. 148). "Entitlement," she says, "reclaims the personal in terms of ownership of experience," whereas "empathy appropriates the personal with the goal of greater understanding across experiential differences" (p. 149). Entitlement serves, she suggests, to preserve the rights of the original teller, while empathy serves the teller and the experience, including the "other voices" who appear, in Marjorie Harness Goodwin's terms, "in the form of reported speech and other people's experiences" (Goodwin qtd. in Shuman, 2006, p. 149). In this way, Kingston meets and subverts the role of entitled storyteller by telling the story of the raid that led to her aunt's "suicide" (Kingston, 1989, p. 16) through the reported speech of her mother. Once she tells her mother's story, Kingston subverts that entitlement by imagining and retelling her aunt's story, or several possible stories, in order to comprehend the circumstances of her aunt's death.

Empathy, as defined by Shuman, is "the act of understanding others across time, space, or any difference in experience, but a shift is required to cross those differences" (Shuman, 1986, p. 152). Such a shift "destabilizes entitlement by creating the possibility that people can retell each other's stories," allowing for "other voices" to become part of the storytelling process, making room for the story itself and permitting these other voices to "reframe experiences to find common ground" (p. 152). In this light, Kingston is then, essentially, seeking "to find [some] common ground" with her aunt (p. 152).

Scholars who have written about *The Woman Warrior*, such as Andreia-Irina Suciu in her article "Voices and Voicing in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," argue that Kingston's memoir is an act of "self-invention," where Kingston shows how she "emerge[d]" from among "so many other voices that speak or had spoken for her" (Suciu, 2014, pt. II.2, pars. 3 and 4). This sentiment is echoed in Jeehyun Lim's article "Cutting the Tongue: Language and Body in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," in which Lim states that Kingston weaves the imagined voices of her aunt "into a part of her [own] identity" (Lim, 2006, p. 56). Once Kingston "records the secret story of her No Name aunt" and tells the stories of her mother and other aunt – as Deborah Homsher argues in "*The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston: A Bridging of Autobiography and Fiction" soon after the memoir was released (Homsher, 1979, p. 94) – then Kingston "can see her mother" and, consequently, "herself as an entire and complex adult rather than as a crazy mosaic of mutually exclusive pieces" (p. 98). In short, critics such as Suciu, Lim, and Homsher seem to align themselves with an idea that

is best articulated in Moira Gatens' "Let's Talk Story: Gender and the Narrative Self". Kingston, she says, is writing about "becoming an autonomous self who is capable of self-transformation" (Gatens, 2014, p. 45). For Gatens, Kingston transforms herself by "construct[ing] and maintain[ing] an ongoing coherent narrative about [her]self in relation to others and in a given context," namely the "maternal, familial, cultural stories into which she has been thrown" (p. 50). This idea is what characterizes Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Kingston pairs the reported speech of her mother's account with her own imagined narratives of her aunt in order to map a path that will lead to her self-invention. It is a map that responds to the silence that has haunted her aunt's story for a generation, a silence that is constructed of cultural knowledge and cultural expectation.

More than the Storyteller's Story

In his "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," Mikhail Bakhtin observed that silence in a conversation between two people sometimes represents an "extraverbal context" wherein non-verbal cues reveal the meaning of "semantically empty" words like "Well!" (Bakhtin, 1994, pp. 3–4). Depending on the situation and the speakers present, words such as these become a kind of "'password' known only to those who belong to the same social purview" (p. 5). In the case of Kingston's narrative, both she and her mother seem to share this same extraverbal context because they share "a common spatial purview" (p. 5). They are in the same room when her mother tells her the story of her aunt. However, they do not truly share this context because they neither possess "common knowledge and understanding of the situation" of Kingston's aunt nor do they share a "common evaluation of that situation" (p. 5). Kingston's mother knows about the aunt, but Kingston knows only what her mother tells her. She does not have "common knowledge" (p. 5). She has secondhand knowledge. Furthermore, Kingston does not share her mother's "evaluation of [the aunt's] situation" (p. 5). She only knows that, "[w]henever [her mother] had to warn us about life, [she] told stories that ran like [the aunt's story]" (Kingston, 1989, p. 5). The value of her mother's story about her aunt (or anyone else for that matter) is strictly in the hands of her mother. Kingston has no common knowledge of the situation and therefore no capacity for evaluating that situation. In fact, one might argue that the whole purpose of this first chapter to Kingston's memoir is *to evaluate* the story of her aunt. If she wants to evaluate it, if she wants to share in the extraverbal context of her mother, of her family, then Kingston must invent a narrative that she can understand so that she, too, can participate in the evaluation of her aunt's situation; this must be done even if that evaluation differs from her mother's and places her squarely outside of their own personal extraverbal context.

This dialogic nature of discourse, argues Shuman, “involv[es] a tension between openness to interpretation and adherence to social relationships, expectations, and assumptions” (Shuman, 2015, p. 44). Kingston adheres to the social relationship by allowing her mother – the entitled storyteller – to characterize the night the aunt died, while she, Kingston, simultaneously interprets the story by imagining the circumstances that led up to it. She not only tells the story of her mother telling the story, she tells another story entirely. It is an example of Bakhtin’s notion of *heteroglossia*, or “diverse forms” of language that “mimic and represent from various vantage points another’s words” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 50). For Shuman, this *heteroglossia* “produces double-voicedness: voices in dialogue with each other” (Shuman, 2015, p. 44). This double-voice calls into question the story’s ownership, eliciting “the possibility of more than one voice, more than one speaker, and more than one meaning” (p. 44). Kingston adds her own voice to the story and the intended meaning of the entitled storyteller, her mother, is compounded. At first, the story had been a simple warning against getting pregnant, but with the additions, Kingston converts the story into another warning, one about silence and voice and what happens when a community values silence over voice.

The story, then, becomes more than the storyteller’s story. It becomes the listener’s story and, even, the story’s story. All the players – including the extraverbal context – become necessary to understanding the story and even each other. With this dialogic relationship between social expectation and individual interpretations – a space where teller, reteller, and listener co-exist – all are able to reach “the goal of greater understanding across experiential differences” (Shuman, 2006, p. 149). However, this goal cannot be reached if the speaker or the listener silences the story.

Silence and Story

Robyn Fivush examines the relationship of silence to power within the context of storytelling in the article “Speaking Silence: The Social Construction of Silence in Autobiographical and Cultural Narratives.” She acknowledges the idea that silence is the result of being denied power through the act of “*being silenced*” (Fivush, 2010, p. 88). This kind of silence, she says, is an “imposed silence” that is “almost always conceptualised as negative [...] with the victims *being silenced* somehow, by the perpetrator or cultural norms” (p. 91). This representation of being silenced likely underlies Kingston’s drive to tell her aunt’s story and ultimately her own. Kingston seeks to “break silence” (Kingston & Carabí, 1988, p. 143) because it is in that breakage that she will emerge with her own voice. By unsilencing her aunt’s story, Kingston unsilences herself. She “find[s] a brand new voice” (p. 144).

Fivush points out that silence can also carry with it “the freedom *not* to speak, to be silent, the freedom to assume shared knowledge that comes from a posi-

tion of power” (Fivush, 2010, p. 94). This type of silence, she suggests, is an act of exercising power for it allows the teller of an experience to decide *what* she wants to tell or *if* she wants to tell. Sometimes this silence occurs as a matter of respect for the listener (“Are you sure you want to hear my stories? They’re hard to hear”) (p. 91); other times it is a defense, a way for the teller to protect herself from the story because it is “too painful or disturbing to remember” (p. 92). Had Kingston’s aunt lived after the raid, one might rightly gather, she may have chosen to be silent for either of these reasons.

There is a third kind of silence – a “shared silence” (p. 92) with the added complication of power. Kingston, while expected by her mother to take part in the extraverbal context of the story of her aunt, is silenced because she does not share with her mother the same knowledge and evaluation of her aunt’s story. Kingston is silenced not only because her mother warns her to be silent but because she is denied full participation in the extraverbal context. Her mother, while perhaps unintentionally, exerts power over Kingston in requiring her silence. However expectant Kingston’s silence might be given her mother’s command and her incapability of sharing with her mother an evaluative understanding of her aunt’s story, within the scope of Fivush’s argument, this “shared silence” might be what Kingston’s mother intends, a silence that is a source of power and intimacy where mutuality can emerge, a silence that “creates a shared space where the speaker and listener are emotionally attuned” and “a sense of pulling together, of sharing great emotions” exists (p. 92). However because Kingston is denied full participation in the extraverbal context of her aunt’s story, she cannot share her mother’s silence.

In response – or perhaps in an effort to be able to share her mother’s silence – Kingston builds what Fivush calls a “new, more nuanced cultural narrative” (Fivush, 2010, pp. 92–93). She instead “break[s] the silence” and “find[s] a brand new voice” (Kingston & Carabí, 1988, pp. 143–144). Kingston’s narrative becomes a new story by which to define her private culture and the shared and public culture of first-generation Americans. She overcomes what noted folklorist Barre Toelken identifies in his book *The Dynamics of Folklore* as “channels of classical tradition” (Toelken, 1979, p. 29), or “rigid [...] fossilized structures of technical instruction” (p. 32), whereby “matters of content [...] have been *passed on* by the culture, but not invented by the performer” (p. 37). Kingston takes what her mother tells her – this “master narrative,” as Fivush calls it (Fivush, 2010, p. 94) – and reappropriates it, thus inventing a new understanding about her aunt so that she is better able to understand her own voice. In the process, she takes the world that her mother constructs, and commands her not to speak of, and creates “a unique niche” for herself within it (Gatens, 2014, p. 43).

The Stigmatized Vernacular

In the introduction to the 2012 special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research*, “The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability,” Diane E. Goldstein teams up with Amy Shuman to define a recent interest among folklore scholars: “the stigmatized vernacular” (Goldstein & Shuman, 2012, p. 114). This “stigmatized vernacular,” they suggest, is made up of “spaces of silence [...] in which speaking is or is not possible” (p. 123). *Vernacular* in a verbal sense is generally understood as the language of a particular group of people and/or of a particular time; *stigma*, generally speaking, signifies a mark of disgrace or disapproval placed on one person or group by another person or group. Within the scope of folklore research, “the concept of the vernacular [...] was intended to replace other, more stigmatizing terms and phrases, such as low culture, primitive, or even folk itself” (p. 117). However, according to Goldstein and Shuman, the term seems to have taken on the role of stigmatizer itself. In fact, at the time of the article’s publication (2006), folklore research scholars had been grappling with the idea that “double stigmas” were at work, that there were “situations where not only are individuals stigmatized, but so are the vernaculars associated with them” (p. 114). That is to say, language and people are stigmatized because their way of life is stigmatized.

Ann Ferrell’s study of tobacco farmers suggests, as Goldstein and Shuman argue, that “stigmatized vernacular [relates] to discourses of heritage” (Goldstein & Shuman, 2012, p. 118). Goldstein and Shuman sum up Ferrell’s argument:

[S]ome narratives about tobacco farming are more tellable than others in particular contexts [in part because] the economic and symbolic discourses about tobacco have been discursively separated, such that [...] tobacco as heritage becomes less stigmatized in comparison to tobacco growing as an ongoing way of life. To some extent, then, stigma erases one vernacular in favor of another. (p. 118)

In this case, the tobacco farmers are examined and labeled based on the vernacular of their labor. Either the farmers are valued because of the “heritage” vernacular or they are stigmatized because of the way-of-life vernacular. In the former, they are encouraged to speak, to tell their stories. Researchers want to know about the farmers’ heritage. They want to know what goes into the making of that world. However, because the “vernacular cultural discourses keep stigmas in place” (p. 118), the farmers’ way-of-life is stigmatized, their heritage is stigmatized, and as a result, they are denied a voice because their voices are less valued. They exist in those “spaces of silence [...] where speaking [...] is not possible” (p. 114).

Taken within the context of this chapter, then, what happens when we value rather than stigmatize silence? Kingston’s “No Name Woman” might then be considered an example of *stigmatizing* a vernacular. It’s easy to say that as an immigrant family in America the practice of “talk-story,” as Kingston calls her moth-

er's stories, could be an example of stigmatized vernacular. The story of Kingston's aunt is stigmatized by virtue of the tradition in which it is passed on: it is a story that cannot be told. If this implicit silence, instead, embodies that which is valued – as evidenced by Brave Orchid's insistence that Kingston tell no one the story of her aunt – then the silenced story becomes the valued vernacular, and Kingston's telling of it (albeit imagined) becomes the stigmatized vernacular – insofar as it is stigmatized by her family. Since her *telling* of the story is stigmatized by her family and, therefore, not valued by them, Kingston becomes entitled to speak; but her refusal to stay silent is not because her story is stigmatized, nor is it simply an act of subverting her mother's talk-story practice – the established “channel” of the traditional story about her aunt.

Rather Kingston tells the story with what Shuman might understand as “the goal of greater understanding across experiential differences” and it is this goal that distinguishes empathetic storytelling (Shuman, 2006, p. 149) and helps to bridge the gap between silence and power. While Kingston tries to understand the circumstances behind her aunt's death, she wants equally to understand her aunt's experience so that Kingston has power over her own experiences. Kingston “need[s] to explain, justify, rationalise, convince” (Fivush, 2010, p. 94) herself of the significance not only of her aunt's experience but of her own experience by way of her aunt's story.

There is an interesting moment when Kingston second-guesses the rationale of one of her imagined scenarios, as if to empathize with her aunt. After considering the possibility that “perhaps” her aunt had fallen in love with the man's “warm eyes,” Kingston entertains another possibility: that her aunt was a “wild woman [who] kept rollicking company” (Kingston, 1989, p. 8). “Imagin[ing] her free with sex doesn't fit,” she says. “I don't know any woman like that, or men either. Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help” (p. 8). Kingston deviates from both her mother's narrative and her own. After considering situations that are plausible within the cultural context of a young woman pregnant in 1924 with the child of a man who was not her husband, Kingston reverses the lens and attempts to look not at herself through the lens of her aunt, but at her aunt through the lens of herself. Moves such as these – where she introduces imagined scenes with textual cues like *perhaps* (p. 6) or *I wonder* or *It could very well have been* (p. 8) – grant Kingston the authority her readers require if they are to accept her storytelling. She is not “entitled” to tell the story, according to Shuman, since a storyteller must have been involved somehow in the situation central to the story. Kingston is not, by virtue of her absence, entitled to tell the story, but she is entitled to tell her own imagined representation of the story, and such entitlement is indelibly linked to her empathy. Through these “perhaps[es]” and “It very well could have been[s],” Kingston strives for what Shuman would call a “greater understanding across experiential differences” (Shuman, 2006, p. 149) and in the process possesses the authority to tell the story even though she was not, like her

mother, a participant in the story. She is able to tell her aunt's story because in retelling her aunt's story, she is trying to find "greater understanding across [the] experiential differences" of her own "life branching into" her aunt's life (Kingston, 1989, p. 8).

Tellability, in Conclusion

Empathy, however, is not enough to compel the reader (or listener) to accept the teller's authority. The story itself must also be tellable. In her article "The other side of the story: Towards a narrative analysis of narratives-in-interaction," Alexandra Georgakopoulou's discussion of non-canonical stories (such as those resulting from interviews or, arguably, those imagined by empathetic storytellers), defines *tellability* as that which "captures the aesthetic, affective, and subjective aspects of narrative; the dynamics of experientiality" (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 238). This idea of tellability at first seems closely aligned with Shuman's idea of entitlement: that one must experience the situation of the story in order to develop its aesthetic and, especially, subjective characteristics. However, Georgakopoulou calls this view of story-tellability into question. She argues that when there is more than one participant in the storytelling process, the "longstanding commitment to defining tellability on the basis of aesthetic criteria and ultimately linking it with notions of performance and display of skill and efficiency" is shortsighted (p. 251). When there is more than one storyteller, "co-tellership rights" change in that: 1. they shift the way we consider our labels, and 2. they separate the link between tellability and "telling roles, co-tellership rights and issues of entitlement" (p. 251).

The question is not about whether a story is aesthetically pleasing, or whether the teller (or co-tellers) experienced the situation, or whether the story was told in an entertaining, performative way. Tellability is about how the storytellers view themselves within the scope of the story. It is about how the "narrative recollection of the past is seen as being at the heart of self-discovery and the process of storying oneself, integrating oneself in time" (McAdams cited in Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 236). Tellability affords the storyteller entitlement based not simply on his or her presence at an event but rather on the event's effect on the storyteller regardless of the physical, or even temporal, proximity of that storyteller to the event. Perhaps more importantly, Georgakopoulou intimates that the way in which storytelling rights are determined needs to be redesigned. The entitled storyteller, by Shuman's definition, is responsible for the "shaping of a story" (p. 237), but so is the reporter of that story, e.g. the interviewer or, in Kingston's case, the interpreter, by virtue of her interaction with the subject.

Does the fact that more than one participant is active in the storytelling process make a story untellable? Perhaps not. Even without an interviewer in the equation, there is and always has been more than one participant in the storytell-

ing because the storyteller responds to the listener and the listener to the storyteller – not to mention the storytelling situation itself, where Bakhtin's idea of an extraverbal context could shift among listeners and situation. In their 2012 introduction, Goldstein and Shuman open with the story of Rosaldo and the headhunters, a familiar story to folklorists. In the journals Rosaldo kept while he studied the Ilongot headhunters of the Phillipines, he noted "his inability to understand grief and anger so powerful that it would lead to such a brutal action" as "to cut off a human head" (Goldstein & Shuman, 2012, p. 113). Because of this inability, Goldstein and Shuman suggest, Rosaldo is ill-equipped to tell the headhunters' story. He can record what they say, yes, but the story is untellable. He is not *entitled* to relate a story of their headhunting experience because he has neither "cut off a human head" nor experienced the "grief and anger" that would lead to such an act. He is, therefore, incapable of presenting the story in an aesthetically or performatively pleasing way. However, after his wife dies, after he *experiences* a "grief and anger so powerful," he becomes *entitled*. After his wife dies, he is able, according to his own reflection, "to grasp what [the] Ilongots had told [him] about grief, rage, and headhunting" (Rosaldo qtd. in Goldstein & Shuman, 2012, p. 114). "During all those years," he continues, "I [had] not yet [been] in a position to comprehend the force of anger possible in bereavement, and now I am" (p. 114). Though he may still not have "engage[d] in its performance," Rosaldo was able to "make tellable things that resist representation, resist reading, resist hearing," all because he was able to empathize with the "grief and anger" of the Ilongots: he was able to arrive at a "greater understanding across experiential differences" (Shuman, 2006, p. 149). He was able to do so not only for himself but for those who read (or hear) his story about the Ilongots.

What makes a story tellable, then, is not the storyteller's entitlement to tell the story but rather her empathy with those to whom the story belongs. To study narrative, Shuman says, is to assume "that people tell stories about their own experiences and then come to understand each other better" (Shuman, 2006, p. 149). This comes into play in understanding why "empathy appropriates the personal with the goal of greater understanding across experiential differences" (p. 149). Shuman suggests that, because people's personal stories are mutually informative, the storytelling itself "inevitably include[s] other voices in the form of reported speech and other people's experiences as well" (Goodwin qtd. in Shuman, 2006, p. 149). What is at stake for the story and the storyteller, then, is the act "of conveying a true understanding of human experience" (p. 150). This "true understanding" depends on the availability (read, *tellability*) of the story. That is to say, it is not only the question of whether or not one has access to "a corpus of narratives," it is a question of negotiating what does and does not "get told" in those narratives (p. 150). It is about what is revealed and what is silenced.

Entitlement, Shuman suggests, can be "negotiated" in order to establish a "fault line in the relationship between narrative and experience" (p. 151). That is, because

someone's "first-hand knowledge" can be "usurped or questioned," the reins of entitlement can change hands (p. 151). The entitled teller – the teller who experienced the event – may choose to exclude something that a listener may remember as having happened. Kingston's mother excluded most everything that occurred before the night of the raid. Indeed, for all Kingston knows, the aunt may have confided in her sister-in-law about the circumstances that led to her pregnancy, but Kingston's mother excludes this possibility and many others, so Kingston, in her attempts to understand the situation, "usurp[s]" the narrative from her mother and constructs these other possibilities (Shuman, 2006, p. 152). She takes the "license to tell a story" (p. 152).

This shift in entitlement can also be "used to prevent someone else from telling" her story (Shuman, 2006, p. 152). It can be used to silence the storyteller, whomever she might be. Looking back at Kingston's imagined stories, one could argue rightfully that she does not prevent anyone from telling the story. In fact, she goes beyond prevention. She invents. She gives voice to someone who had been not only physically prevented from speaking (as shown by the villagers' night raid and her consequential death), but also literally prevented (as shown by Kingston's mother's version of the story, in which the stories of the aunt's life and character before and during the raid are omitted). Kingston, through the imagined possibilities of the circumstances leading to her aunt's death, "reclaim[s]" that which has been appropriated" by her mother, notably an entitled storyteller (Shuman, 2006, p. 152). She reclaims her aunt's story.

Shuman argues that a story told through the lens of empathy "rarely changes the circumstances of [the subjects] who suffer" (Shuman, 2006, p. 152), that "empathy is a weak claim to entitlement" for it "is almost always open to critique as serving the interest of the empathizer rather than the empathized" (p. 153). Within the context of Kingston's opening chapter to her memoir, it is clear that "rarely" does not mean *never*. Though Kingston's aunt has not come back to life in a physical sense, her story has been recovered, and while Kingston, as empathizer, may be writing this memoir in service to her own interests in discovering her own voice, the story of her aunt also is written in service to her aunt, to understanding her aunt fifty years removed from the night her aunt "jumped into the family well" (Kingston, 1989, p. 3). "No Name Woman", then, may equally be about discovering the aunt's voice.

Like the story of Kingston's aunt, my grandma's story is an incomplete as well as a cautionary tale, and it's not only about discovering my grandma's voice but also about discovering my own. Still, I'm left with the question that haunts many writers of memoir: Is it my story to tell? Would I be breaking "the rules of privacy" if I were to tell it? Would I, then, disrupt my status of entitlement? Perhaps not. Perhaps writing her story is about recognizing that I have as much right to tell her story as she does. Perhaps it is just as much my story as it is hers. It is a story that I remem-

ber and one in which I participated. It is a story that, by Shuman's definition of entitlement, I have the authority to tell. Equally, it is a story that could insult my family, and my telling it could be interpreted "as a weapon" (Shuman, 1986, p. 35) against them. But therein lies the kernel. It's not so much that I cannot tell the story, tell her story and mine. It's that I must strive to express the love that I feel for my family, my grandma, and myself. It's that I must express — as Shuman observes so keenly and Kingston models so well — empathy for them all.

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Rania Maktabi

Female Lawyers in the Middle East after the 2011 Arab Revolts

Addressing Family Law and Domestic Violence in State Laws

The chapter elaborates on how female lawyers in three states in the Middle East addressed issues related to family law and domestic violence in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab revolts. In 2015, roughly five years after the 2011 Arab revolts, I interviewed around 30 female lawyers in three Arab states – ten from Morocco, ten from Lebanon, and ten from Kuwait. The responses of these professional women reflect their opinions and aspirations regarding reforms in legal fields related to women's civil rights in marriage and divorce. The female lawyers commented on the need for the state, the police and courts to protect women from violence at home, at work and on the street. Almost half of the female lawyers interviewed were engaged in women's associations or the women's committee at the Lawyers' association. Through individual courage, and in collaboration with organizations, these lawyers addressed privileges that men have in the state's patriarchal laws.

The main question of research is how did female lawyers relate to and seek to reform existing patriarchal tenets in the state's family law and criminal law in ways that address women-centred concerns. 'Patriarchy' denotes a system of social relations that privilege male seniors over juniors and women in the private and public spheres (Joseph, 2000a, p. xv). By extension, 'patriarchal state laws' reflect the codification of norms, laws and regulations formed and enacted by state authorities in ways that privilege male and elder rights as embedded in kinship-based power structures stratified along gender and age lines (Joseph, 2000b, p. 16).

In general, more than two thirds of the thirty lawyers interviewed questioned the patriarchal nature of existing state laws that embed principles of male guardianship over adult female citizens in the state's family law and criminal law. Through the interviews, I looked particularly at how female lawyers addressed two fields of law: First, family law which regulates marriage, divorce, custody over children and inheritance, along other legal aspects related to kinship and childbirth. Secondly, criminal laws that fall short in acknowledging sexual atrocities and domestic violence against women and children of both sexes in the private and public spheres. Female lawyers in all three states pointed out the weak protection of women and girls in the state's criminal laws and penal codes that did not safeguard women in their homes. In Lebanon and Morocco, some lawyers indicated connections between criminal law and family law in issues related to cases of marital rape, and cases of single mothers seeking to register their children.

Objectives, Theory and Method

This study responds to the call by political scientist Lisa Baldez who noted the puzzling inattention of comparative research on women's representation and political participation. She invited researchers to look at how women's interests and demands vary from state to state, and to clarify concepts, central questions, and key variables in order to facilitate cross-national comparison of when and how women mobilize on the basis of their gender identity (Baldez, 2010, p. 203). This comparative study of female lawyers as professional group in three states seeks to elaborate on similarities and differences pertaining to two domains that impact women's citizenship – family law and criminal law.

The Arab Uprisings erupted in Tunisia in December 2010 and spilled over to Egypt and other Arab states after January 2011. The revolts provide a unique historical juncture where similar events – mass demonstrations and the articulation of claims for political reforms – impacted social mobilization and change in different states in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA).¹ Women took to the streets, established new associations and raised claims to change patriarchal state laws (FIDH May 2012). Seen in analytical terms, women sought to expand female citizenship, understood here as strengthened civil rights and wider legal capacity, individual agency and autonomy unmediated by men within state law (Maktabi, 2017a).

The female lawyers were interviewed during two weeks' fieldwork in Kuwait (March 2015), in Morocco (October–November 2015), and in Lebanon (December 2015). The interviews were conducted in Arabic, and I translated the answers into English. In Kuwait and Morocco, I applied a "go to court" strategy where I inquired at random among female lawyers who stood in the corridor, or who sat at the lawyers' restroom, whether they would be willing to be interviewed. Those who responded positively were eventually interviewed at the lawyers' private office, or at the premises of the Lawyers' Bar Association. In Kuwait and Morocco, the court system is civil, with the exception of the Jewish community in Morocco which has retained its own family law and secured its Rabbinical court. In Lebanon, there exists a dual court system where religious courts regulate and adjudicate each of the 18 religious community's family law, while civil courts adjudicate all other legal spheres. There, I had to apply another method to interview female lawyers because family law is adjudicated in 11 religious courts. I simply did not have the time to visit all courts in order to secure variation at random among Lebanese female lawyers. I therefore contacted female legal academicians and lawyers who raise cases in five different religious courts – the Shi'a, Sunni, Maronite Catholic, Greek Catholic (Melchite), and Greek Orthodox. Interviews were open-ended. In Kuwait, I did not use an interview guide: interviews and con-

1 MENA covers here the 18 of the 22 member states of The Arab League, excluding thus the four non-Arab speaking states Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, and Mauritania.

versations were non-structured. In Morocco and Lebanon, an interview guide was used, and some questions allowed open-ended answers.

Morocco, Lebanon and Kuwait were chosen for four reasons. First, each state represents a sub-region within MENA. The three states share, moreover, a history of autonomous women's groups and associations. Thirdly, they have independent media outlets that allow for higher freedom of expression compared to other Arab states. Finally, the 2011 revolts did not lead to the disruption of political order in these states. The use of violence against protestors was restrained, although the state apparatus was repressive throughout the revolts as reflected in the jailing of political opponents (Khatib & Lust, 2014).

In general, the Moroccan lawyers interviewed emphasized poverty-related issues that impact women's living conditions to a larger degree than female lawyers in Lebanon and Kuwait. Significantly, economic indicators show sharp differences between the three states. In terms of GDP/capita, Kuwait boasts roughly around 82,000 USD; Lebanon around 16,000 USD; and Morocco 7,000 USD. As such, Kuwait is among the richest states in the world, while Lebanon and Morocco are middle- and low-income states, respectively. Economic differences are in part reflected in educational achievements at the state level where literacy rates among female citizens aged 15–24 years is around 99 per cent for Kuwait and Lebanon, and 74 per cent for women in Morocco (Jehan, 2015, pp. 246–249).

The Rise of Female Lawyers: Figures and Features

Women in Kuwait, Lebanon, and Morocco are reaping the fruits of the government's investment in higher education since the 1960s. Rising numbers of female students in the field of law who have become certified lawyers have occurred at a remarkable rate over the past two decades. The female lawyer population constitutes roughly a third of the total number of practicing lawyers: 30 per cent in Kuwait, 29 per cent in Lebanon, and 22 per cent in Morocco. This educational and professional revolution has occurred over a period of less than two decades. Similar percentages of female lawyers in Western liberal states were achieved over a period of more than a hundred years.²

2 Estimated 2010 figures give a comparative picture for female lawyers and total number of lawyers in parentheses: *Kuwait* 1,291 (4,319); *Lebanon* 1,597 (5,595); and *Morocco* 4,640 (20,715) (Michelson, 2013, pp. 1115–1117). The percentage of female lawyers in Nordic countries are 31 per cent in *Norway* (2,198 out of 7,150); 28 per cent in *Denmark* (1,555 out of 5,562); and 22 per cent in *Sweden* (1,010 out of 4,601). In *Germany*, the figure estimated in 2010 is 32 per cent (48,393 out of 153,250) (ibid.). On the historical professional development of female lawyers see Schultz, 2003, p. xxxiv. At the time of writing (January 2020), the percentage in favor of women lawyers in all states has grown over the past decade in all these states. Nevertheless, figures reflect a fairly representative comparative picture of professional lawyers from a global perspective.

More than two thirds of my interviewees (22) have at different points in their careers transgressed the limits set by their job as professionals. For instance, they became spokespersons on women's issues in the media, or they became activists and legal advisors in women's associations. As such, they went beyond their role as representatives of litigants and raised legal matters pertaining to women at a higher societal level. Roughly half (16) of the interviewees pressured for reforms in patriarchal state laws in order to strengthen women's *de jure* legal capacity and juridical autonomy within these laws.³

The thirty lawyers could be grouped roughly into three age cohorts which reflected to a certain extent the length of their professional experience as well as their position as potential caregivers. Eleven lawyers belong to younger age cohorts and were between 25–34 years old when they were interviewed. Many expressed that their appearance gives them away as less knowledgeable on legal matters than their male, or older female peers. Most gave the impression of being ambitious, diligent, and attentive to new trends: several articulated an interest in trying new ways of addressing legal issues, such as grappling with digital crime. One had suggested that the lawyers' union should arrange rehearsal courses to improve the performance role of all lawyers in court. Her suggestion was opposed at first by older male colleagues who were in leadership positions, but – after she had carried out an internal training course at the union – she was later praised for the initiative by the same persons who had frowned at her proposition.

Many lawyers belonging to the age cohort of 35–45 said they became engaged in the field of law following personal experiences which made them champion initiatives for reform after which they became profiled and active in the public sphere. They share a track record of excellence as top of their class during their early education and professional careers. Most had passed the small-child phase of motherhood. They pointed out that they had become interested in questions related to justice early on in their childhood. Interestingly, all eleven female lawyers interviewed within this age cohort were active members in women's or human rights' associations. They shared experiences of political mobilization during their student days and fit into the description of 'cause lawyers' who "emerge as political actors – but as political actors whose work involves doing law" (Scheingold & Sarat, 2004, p. 3).

3 The term '*de jure*' is often contrasted to '*de facto*' rights. It refers to intangible legal rights which empower an individual, but which do not necessarily lead to a person gaining these rights. For example, a woman's rightful share of an inheritance, or her legal right to have custody over her children after divorce, may be '*de jure*' rights because they are ensured as legal text in state law. However, a woman may not be able to obtain these rights in cases where she is incapable of materializing these rights or in cases where she is actively hindered from gaining them by her family or ex-husband. *De jure* legal rights are therefore often seen as 'paper rights' because they do not secure women *de facto* wider citizenship. Nonetheless, the argument presented in this article is that *de jure* legal reforms, for instance in criminal law, strengthen women's civil rights. They should be seen as necessary though insufficient measures for expanding the content and depth of women's citizenship.

One of the older respondents who belonged to the age cohort of more than fifty years – a Kuwaiti lawyer in her early seventies – described how she gradually became more engaged in questions relating to women’s legal rights:

I started by writing reports. I used to collect court rulings on divorce and so on, found statistics, and wrote about these issues [...] I was asked to attend women’s associations, and I presented legal perspectives. I could point out to them and show: this is the situation in international law, whether it is ILO [International Labour Organization] or CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women], and this is our situation in Kuwait. I could take national laws that were unfavourable to women, write about them, and distribute texts and sections from international conventions which Kuwait has ratified. (Maktabi, 2021)

The female lawyers interviewed have extensive work practice. In addition, some female lawyers pointed out that personal experiences such as ending a marital relationship, marrying outside one’s religious community and challenges in combining home and job responsibilities intensified their interest in the legal matters they addressed on behalf of female litigants. Many, though not all, excel as pioneer women in various fields of law: in academia, as public prosecutors, and as leaders of women’s associations. Three of the four women lawyers interviewed within the age cohort of over 60 have a sharp eye to gender battles won since the 1950s. They have struggled against different kinds of barriers such as being seen as more emotional than male colleagues, less knowledgeable in legal matter, and – in Kuwait – not suited to become judges.⁴ But, they tended to mitigate their efforts, giving the impression that resistance and marginalization by male colleagues towards their presence in court or in academia were to be expected.

Women’s Citizenship and Body Politics: Family Law and Criminal Law

‘Body politics’ is a term that encompasses a wide range of issues such as contraception, pregnancy, sexuality, hair and clothing styles, domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape. Feminist scholars and activists have since the 1970s pointed out that bodies need to be analyzed as entities of enquiry rather than apolitical categories of analysis (Waylen et al., 2013, pp. 162–164).

Body politics implies here two different, but at times overlapping, sets of laws and policies that regulate women’s civil rights. Family law constitutes the first set of laws that define and regulate women’s status and kinship relations within the

4 At the time of the interviews in Kuwait in 2015, there were no women judges. In June 2020, eight women were appointed as first-time women judges (*Al Qabas*, 30 June 2020, <https://alqabas.com/article/5783441>). Kuwaiti female lawyers had, since 2009, pressured to be accepted as students at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies which is the only institution that admits candidates to be trained as prosecutors, and then appointed as judges (Maktabi, 2016).

family in matters such as marriage, divorce, custody of children, adoption and inheritance. Criminal and penal laws constitute the second set of laws that define and regulate women's security against harm, as well as efforts at protecting children and women from violence and sexual atrocities broadly defined as physical and psychological abuse at home and in public spaces.

In cases where a woman contemplates divorcing an abusive husband, family law and criminal law converge. Different types of considerations arise, such as the type of harm inflicted on the woman and children, the financial compensation a husband might be required to provide, the woman's legal right to have custody over her children, her financial capacity to maintain a living, and a woman's access to the marital home after divorce. Many women who live in abusive relationships refrain from using their right to divorce for various reasons. Two common factors are that women are not financially able to maintain a home as divorcees and fear of losing custody over their children.

When and how governments in the Middle East address, shape and respond to women's interests and demands in fields related to body politics is an important part of exploring the condition of women's citizenship. Body politics reflects, for instance, challenges women face in using their rights and acting in ways that substantiate the content and depth of their citizenship. Women's display of autonomous initiatives and decisions may in some settings breach with traditional and patriarchal norms of how a woman 'should behave' in relation to male kin, for instance, as an obedient and caring wife, mother, daughter or sister. In short, there is a gap between a woman's formal rights and her opportunities to use these rights. This gap reinforces the importance of dealing with body politics, whether family law or criminal law issues are at hand, as female-centered citizenship issues.⁵

The topic 'violence against women and children' was mentioned and/or elaborated upon by three lawyers in Morocco, six lawyers in Lebanon and four lawyers in Kuwait. Lebanon, Kuwait and Morocco differ to some degree in the modes through which family law and criminal law overlap. The main difference between the three states is institutional. Kuwait and Morocco share a common civil law system where all legal matters are addressed. In Lebanon, there exists a dual court system where family law is adjudicated in religious courts while criminal law is adjudicated in civil courts. Another significant difference between the three states, at the time of the interviews in 2015, is that there existed a law on domestic violence in Lebanon, while there was no law that defined nor regulated domestic violence in Kuwait and Morocco.

5 More in-depth analysis on differences and similarities between the three states concerning the issues raised in court are addressed in a forthcoming book with the working title "Courtship Women: Citizenship, Sex and the State in the Middle East and North Africa – Reforming Family law, Criminal Law and Nationality Law in Morocco, Lebanon and Kuwait".

The Politicization of Violence against Women After 2011

Before the revolts in 2011, violence against women in the Middle East was popularly associated with battered wives, and ‘honor crimes,’ i.e. male kin who murder female kin for their alleged shameful behavior (Hossain & Welchman, 2005; al-Raida, 2010; Baydoun 2010, 2011).

Penal codes, i.e. laws applied when a criminal act had been committed, were, in general, gendered. They covered mainly violence in the public sphere and did not identify or define violence at home as a public offence in legal terms. In short, none of the three states had definitions for what constitutes ‘domestic violence,’ nor was familial violence seen in legal terms as a criminal act.

In Morocco, Lebanon, and Kuwait, domestic violence was not defined and regulated in state law as a criminal act. Abuse committed in the private domain of the home was perceived as outside the confines of criminal law. In general, criminal law defined and regulated acts of violence in the public sphere.

The 2011 Uprisings yielded concerted collective efforts at articulating more forcefully the phenomenon of violence as a woman-centered political and legal issue. During and in the aftermath of the 2011 revolts, demands were raised to address violence against women and claims for change targeted law reform specifically.

The transformation of body politics from a ‘low politics’- to a ‘high politics’-arena has been particularly stunning throughout and in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. ‘High’ and ‘low’ are terms traditionally used by political scientists to differentiate between issues perceived as related to security, and therefore prioritized as ‘high’ on policy-making agendas. ‘Low politics’ refer to issues perceived at the margins of what decision-makers prioritize (Hunnicut, 2009; Hawkesworth, 2013, p. 45). Anger, indeed rage, against physical assaults, sexual harassment, and rape of women hit the political agenda in all three states where women participated in public arenas during the 2011 Uprisings. The transformation of body politics from a low politics to a high politics arena was particularly striking throughout and in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Political sociologist Deniz Kandiyoti commented on the rise of body politics in 2013: “What is at stake is no longer just women and their bodies but the body politic itself.” (Kandiyoti, 2013).

Societal pressures yielded tangible results in two states – Morocco and Lebanon. No legal reform occurred in Kuwait, but the issue of violence against women was adopted for the first time by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Religious Endowments as a main health related concern at a two-day conference in March 2015. Lawyer Shaikha al-Julaibi held a lecture on the issue, urged for legislating a law on domestic violence, gathering statistics, and establishing shelter homes (Al-Julaibi, 2015).

In Lebanon and Morocco, specific incidents led to turmoil on a massive scale. In Morocco, it was the suicide of 16-year-old Amina Filali in 2012, after her rapist married her, thereby evading prosecution according to article 475 of the penal code. In Lebanon, it was when 31-year-old Roula Yaacoub's husband was suspected, but found judicially not guilty, of beating her to death in July 2013. Rebellion against laws that did not address gendered violence was considerably reinforced in Morocco and Lebanon after these two incidents as elaborated on further below.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, a new law that aimed at protecting women against violence passed through parliament in April 2014. “Law on the protection of women and other members of the family from familial violence” – known as ‘the Protection Law’ or ‘Law 293’ – was a groundbreaking piece of legislation that materialized after years of preparation.

Pressures to articulate violence on women as a specific type of crime started in the end of the 1990s. Around 60 groups and associations gathered under the umbrella “The National Coalition for Legislating Protection of Women”. By 2007 a draft law was presented to parliament but failed to pass (Saghieh, 2014). In 2011, women's groups renewed their pressures and rallied once again with the objective of passing the draft law on familial violence. By January 2013, pressures hardened and protestors held banners and continuous sit-ins outside parliament. The legislation of Protection Law 293 a year later was a political breakthrough. Five Lebanese lawyers interviewed said the law was pioneering because judges were quick in implementing it, and because the law positioned women's claims more adequately in court. Lawyer Marie-Rose Zalzal who worked for more than fifteen years in different associations to pressure for legislating a law on domestic violence commented on the relationship between law and politics before Law 293 passed through parliament:

The president was a failure, parliament was a failure – they were not able to make any changes; the government was a failure [...] There was a struggle among many people to issue the law. [...] There was so much pressure on the government. Every word they said against the law, or against the women, became blown up on posters everywhere [...] there was a very strong media pressure. Each MP was forced to be accountable for what he said. The passing of the law became an electoral matter, and I think that was very important, because the nominated MP who did not adopt this law [...] then this meant that he would not be elected, not only by women, but also by all those who work with human rights. Therefore, this law did not only put on a social pressure, but also a political pressure.

Law 293 was an important legal achievement that strengthened female citizenship in Lebanon. However, Zalzal found some sections of the law amended in parliament disturbing. The inclusion of the words ‘marital rights’ in the protection law did not exist previously in law, Zalzal pointed out. This wording represented what lawmakers in the all-male parliament (126 out of 128 parliamentarians in the Lebanese parliament in 2014 were men) perceive as a husband’s legitimate right to sexual intercourse with his wife. Zalzal was critical of the linkages made between family law and criminal law:

There are many gender-specific holes [in Law 293]. [...] For instance, they entered segments from personal status law into criminal law. This has never happened before! [...] this very term – “marital rights” means that [intercourse by force] is not a crime, it is a right. [...] also, they point out that the crime is not that [the husband] raped her, the crime is that the act is harmful. When you state that there are some marital rights, then you eliminate the foundation of a crime. [...] Here you state that “this person is not raping his wife. This person is exercising his marital rights. So, where is the crime?” [...] It is not the rape act itself but the consequences, i.e. the harm inflicted as a consequence of the rape that may cause a criminal act, and that would – *de toute façon* [‘all in all’] – have been a criminal act.

Lawyer Fadia Ghanem disagreed with Zalzal. She argued that the current Protection law can be used in cases of marital rape:

The protection law permits you to enter the home and take out your things without the husband being able to say a word. Because, if he says anything, uses force, or beats you, or whatsoever, then [these acts] annul obedience [...] it can be used against [the husband in court] [...] All the female lawyers cried out: “the word rape is not written!”. But what does [the legal text] mean? ‘to extract marital right through force?’ What is marital right? Obviously, ‘to make sex’ [says this in English]. By force. [...] The language, the language, I tell you, the language is civilized [...] Do I have to write down the word ‘rape?’”

Although the two Lebanese lawyers shared an enthusiasm in that Law 293 was passed, they differ in their approach towards problematic features of the law. Whereas Zalzal preferred an explicit text which prohibited marital rape, Ghanem pointed out that the legal text allowed for an interpretation which criminalizes marital rape.

Morocco

In Morocco, a minor legal reform was made to article 475 of the penal code which had previously exempted a rapist from prosecution for committing a crime. The death of sixteen-year old Amina Filali in 2012 after she had married her rapist

was a decisive event. Following public uproar, article 475 was amended in January 2014. Pressures continued for four more years until Law 103.13 Combatting Violence Against Women passed through parliament in September 2018 (Al Jazeera, 2018).

At the time of the interviews in 2015, the law on violence against women had not been passed and female lawyers were occupied with addressing women's position in family law and with issues related to domestic violence. They perceived the amendment of article 475 of the criminal law to be incremental. It did not address two bigger social problems: domestic violence against women, and underage marriage where Moroccan girls under 18 years marry with the consent of fathers and judges who – in some cases – permit underage marriage according to the 2004 family law.

The Moroccan family law reform in 2004 – known as the *mudawwana* – came after more than a decade of intense political struggle which saw political debates regarding the position of religious tenets in state law. Pressures to equalize Moroccan women's civil rights in the family were at the heart of the debate (Buskens, 2003). A decade after the reform, female lawyers reported that serious challenges remained in implementing the law, particularly in relation to underage marriage (under the age of 18 years), documentation of marriage and registration of children, and divorced women's ability to extract capability of extracting financial rights.

Moroccan lawyer Latifa El-Hassani who is a practicing Muslim, and secular-oriented Khadija Rouggany, pointed out that there are powerful counter-pressures that oppose women's financial rights as guaranteed in the 2004 family law. They argue that although women have rights 'on paper', they are unable to make use and extract these rights due to a combination of conservative interpretations of the new law by predominantly older male judges, and traditional views about women demanding 'too many rights'.

Family law cases constitute half of El-Hassani's cases, while criminal law and commercial law constitute the other half. With the financial help of her parents, she established her own legal office in 1993. Married in 2006 and divorced two years later, she is keen on educating herself. In 2011, she began taking courses in shari'a law and Islamic banking in Indonesia where she has joined several lawyering seminars since 2008. Asked why she chose to study religious law after her education in civil law, she answered: "Because we are a Muslim country, and it is imperative that we go back to our primary sources." She is worried that women's economic rights after divorce are being infringed, despite stipulated safeguards on marital property rights in the 2004 *mudawwana*. "I do not fight for women. I fight for her rights", she insisted, adding:

It is good that the law states that all what enters into marital life should be divided [between husband and wife in the case of divorce]. But, the Moroccan woman is still reserved [...] there is fear in her demanding her rights. [...]

Also, courts are very slow in effecting rulings. This is a big problem. It takes such a long time for women to get what has been ruled. [...] ex-husbands use a lot of time to bypass their financial obligations towards a divorced woman and children. [...] There are also problems with judges who have ruled that the woman does not deserve financial matrimonial rights, because she was the one who initiated divorce. Now we may ask: is this a masculine reading of religious doctrine? Have these judges chosen an interpretation from the *shar'ia* [Islamic jurisprudence] which corresponds to their ruling? [...] My reading [of religious text] supports another understanding than the one given by a judge who denies the divorced wife her financial rights.

El-Hassani pointed out the financial barriers women face to extract their civil and financial rights. Although the right to divorce is guaranteed in the new 2004 Moroccan *mudawwana*, women still face obstacles by conservative clerics who interpret the letter of the law differently, thereby creating obstacles to women's efforts in dissolving marital relationships.

Picking up on the same line of argument, but from a non-religious point of view, Moroccan lawyer Khadija Rouggany, who has been active in women's associations since 1993, argued:

There has always been opposition against the *mudawwana*, and this opposition continues against the new changes that were made. [...] but still, there are lots of points that rest on inequality. For instance, there are differences between men and women in how a marital relationship ends, and [...] there is still inequality in children's custody, in inheritance, in guardianship over children – these are based and continue to be based on inequality. Nevertheless, the reforms introduce change. The reforms are themselves a form of opposition. For example, property issues and the division of marital property, these constitute huge changes in the *mudawanna*, [...] it is a question of mentality, there is a widespread masculine mentality in the field where people who work in implementing the law – judges, female lawyers, male lawyers, experts – they all share a common masculine mentality in an opposition towards achieving the reforms of the *mudawwana*.

Both Moroccan lawyers agree on the principle of safeguarding women's rights in the 2004 family law. However, they substantiated their arguments differently. El-Hassani based her arguments primarily on religious interpretations of the family law which she argued was in line with women's economic rights. Rouggany argued likewise for women's economic rights within marriage and after divorce, but was critical to the very basis of religious doctrine.

Lawyer Asma' Rzeiqat dealt with other types of problems related to documenting a child's birth in cases where the marriage remained unregistered at the central authorities:

I have a case where a woman had a small girl [...] She raised a case against her husband to give her alimony [...] the girl does not have papers [...]. The

father did not register her in the personal status registries. The mother is, in principle, able to register the daughter, but she lacks the required documents.

Rzeiqat emphasized here that although women were granted autonomy and legal authority in marriage and divorce, this is not the case in terms of registration of children:

There is article 16, there are gaps, undocumented marriage for distressing reasons, i.e. there are cases where there are no documents that prove marriage, and art. 18 which states that documentation is the only means for validating marriage [...] without a marital contract, then you have nothing.

She pointed out that family law and criminal law are intertwined in ways that are detrimental to women: single mothers are penalized when they are unable to register a child without having a marriage certificate. Administrative procedures require that fathers acknowledge that a child is theirs before a mother is able to register the child. The mother's inability to register her child represent serious holes in the current family law.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti women were granted political rights in 2005 after more than four decades of struggle to gain political rights of representation on a par with men who were enfranchised in 1962 (Maktabi, 2017b). Kuwaiti female lawyers have since learned to exercise their electoral and decision-making powers. Areej Hamada has 13 years' bank lawyering experience, but runs a private law office now. She has a weekly show on TV called *Ra'yuhunna* [Their opinion] that addresses women's issues.

At the time of the interview, Hamada was raising a case in the Court of Cassation on behalf of a woman victim of electronic crime. The woman's name and pictures of her were distributed through social media without her consent, along with allegations of a condescending sexual nature. In addition to representing her client at court since 2014, Hamada pressured the government to legislate a law on electronic crime in public debates and articles in the press. In July 2015, a law on electronic crime passed through parliament. It targeted primarily what lawmakers saw as external security threats and 'terrorist activities'. Hamada insisted that the law is important as a legal tool to protect women from serious electronic crime, and she has been credited for having profiled its gendered facet, and for agitating for its legislation.

No legal reform has occurred in state law in Kuwait with reference to violence against women since 2011. Although domestic violence is recognized as a societal problem, it is largely dealt with as a top-down policy issue. The issue has been addressed; however, at the judicial and ministerial levels. The Interior and Justice

ministries have opened up for women to gain positions of authority such as admitting women as police officers in 2009 and, in 2011, promoting women law graduates as criminal investigators for the first time. These steps allow women to attend to women's complaints regarding sensitive issues (Strobl, 2016, p. 11).

Female lawyers have also been admitted as trainees at the public prosecutor's office. In May 2014, graduate in law, Hagar al-Hagiri was one of the first twenty-two women chosen by the Ministry of Justice to enter training courses in order to become public prosecutor. "It is important for women to enter the field of investigation," she said. "Female plaintiffs find it difficult to tell things to male investigators, such as about being beaten. The Interior Ministry supports the expansion of women's role as investigators because they see the positive impact of women's presence in sensitive cases."

By and large, domestic violence in Kuwait is perceived by administrators and politicians either as a health-related concern or a moral-ethical problem where family members need counselling. Women's associations and lawyers have urged for legislating a law on domestic violence without success. However, two other laws passed 2015 addressed issues related to family law and domestic violence. The family court reform established separate family courts in each of Kuwait's five governorates, while the Kuwaiti Law of the Child's Rights law regulated the rights of minors. In both laws, the issue of familial violence was addressed in new ways such as the establishment of shelter centers for protection against domestic violence in each governorate (Maktabi, 2020, p. 271).

Conclusion

A main finding can be drawn from interviews with female lawyers who engaged in activities that supported reforms in patriarchal state laws during and in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab revolts: Female lawyers in all three states represent vanguards of change through cause lawyering. They apply means such as drafting new laws, raising cases in court, and supporting women's associations as legal advisers in order to obtain political objectives such as amendments in family law and criminal law.

Three reflections on the condition of female citizenship in the region after the 2011 Arab Uprisings can be made: Firstly, women in Morocco enjoy the strongest legal rights. However, low literacy levels among women coupled with relatively higher levels of poverty among the population compared to Lebanon and Kuwait modify and mitigate the full potential of women's *de jure* rights.

Secondly, despite the problems faced by women in Morocco in materializing the legal rights embedded in the *mudawwana*, Moroccan female lawyers viewed equal rights between women and men within family law as "here to stay". They pointed out that there are challenges in substantiating formal rights. By con-

trast, female lawyers in Kuwait and Lebanon pressured to reform existing state laws. They argued that educational and employment levels among women are not reflected in what they perceived as “antiquated” patriarchal state laws.

Thirdly, when women’s groups agree to focus on targeting one or two issues, and work collectively to amend existing laws, they have a chance to succeed in achieving reform. Before 2011, women’s groups worked on a wider range of political issues pertaining to women. With the Arab revolts in 2011, political objectives were significantly narrowed to specific targeted issues. In all three states, violence against women hit the political agenda. In Morocco and Lebanon pressures led to major legal reforms. In both states, new laws that protected women against violence passed through parliament in 2014 and 2018 respectively. In Kuwait, no law on domestic violence has been passed. Nevertheless, other laws such as the family law court and the Law on the Child passed in 2015 in response to changing societal norms such as greater observance by the Kuwaiti state regarding domestic violence, children’s welfare and women’s civil rights.

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Eva Lambertsson Björk and Jutta Eschenbach

Absolutely happy in myself

Four Women's Negotiations with Patriarchy

Introduction

There is no denying that patriarchal cultures are unfair to women. The inherent power structures in patriarchy limit women's lives, they limit women's possibilities and they limit, already from early years, the choices that women make. In short, patriarchy relegates women to gendered positions of subordination and inequality. Culture is a defining aspect of gender; the culture we grow up in defines what is appropriate for filling gender roles and how to deal with the power relations linked to them (Albertyn, 2009, p. 171).

However, culture may be seen as fluid, dynamic and subject to change¹, and there are possibilities for new vistas and development. There is hope that women move towards more fairness over time – having choice and freedom, and being treated “as human beings with equality and dignity” (Albertyn, 2009, p. 167).

While the issue of fairness for women is global, our focus here is local as we address individual women's lives in South Africa. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2003, n.p.) argues that:

By conceptualising patriarchy as a changing and unstable system of power, we can move towards an account of African gendered experience that does not assume fixed positions in inevitable hierarchies, but stresses transformation and productive forms of contestation.

Through individual interviews², we trace how four African women have contested and negotiated patriarchal power structures on their way to tenured aca-

1 Roughly, one can distinguish between two approaches to “culture”. The essentialist approach sees culture as a homogeneous entity that is stable and static. The more dynamic approach sees culture as constructed; it is fluid and it changes (see e.g. Dahl, 2016; Piller, 2011). Catherine Albertyn (2009) discusses these two approaches from a juridical point of view. In South Africa, she claims, there is a large discrepancy between the static cultural practices of various ethnic groups and the Constitution that specifically prescribes gender equality, and thus cultural change.

2 The individual, semi-structured interviews (45–55 minutes) were conducted, recorded and transcribed by us. The names of the interviewees are fictitious. All quotes from the interviews are in italics. – In order to keep the original living voices of the interviewees to the extent possible, we chose not to transform their natural speech into well-formed sentences. We have used very simplified transcription conventions from discourse analysis in our quotes:

ACcent = main accent

() = unintelligible passage

((...)) = omissions in transcript

(.) = pause

[...] = our explanatory comments.

demographic positions in South Africa. We discuss how their narratives bear testimony to a change in their identities within the boundaries of *African woman*, a social positioning that is brought explicitly into the discussion by one of our interviewees.³ We then show how this positioning takes on different aspects for the different women in different contexts.

We turn to Judith Butler for understanding how the four women interviewed negotiate their identities. Butler claims that gender is performative in that it is constructed as a “repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts” that “congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (2006 [1990], p. 45). In other words, these repetitions produce a false sense of gender that suggests not only its stability, but its use as a marker that is linked *naturally* with sex (2006 [1990], p. 184). Further, she argues that this takes place in a “highly rigid regulatory frame” in which social forces “police the social appearance of gender” (2006 [1990], p. 45); therefore people have little intentional control over this process. In spite of this, however, performativity does suggest that there are discontinuities and dissonance hovering under the surface of these policed appearances, which occasionally allow people – women in this case – to make evident the disconnection between sexed bodies and their genders. Defiant or otherwise unruly performances of gender can be useful in drawing attention to the *unnaturalness* of gender roles. In this narrow space, women can negotiate their roles, and challenge existing power structures to a certain extent. In this chapter, we trace and analyze how our interviewees attempt to problematize their gendered identities by performing in ways that challenge limitations placed on them because of their gender.

The challenging of gender roles involves empowerment. Drawing on Sarah Mosedale (2005) we understand “women’s empowerment as a process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted, compared to men, from being and doing” (p. 252). In short, as Nelly Stromquist puts it, empowerment is “a process to change the distribution of power” (1995, p. 13). For Stromquist empowerment includes first a cognitive component; women need to understand “their conditions of subordination” (p. 14). This “involves understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural and social expectations” (p. 14). Second, a psychological component refers to women believing that they “can act at personal and societal levels to improve their condition” and “that they can succeed” (p. 14). Women need to develop “self-confidence and self-esteem”, Stromquist claims (p. 15). Third, an economic component includes “some degree of financial autonomy” (p. 15). Fourth, a political component includes to “mobilize for social change” (p. 15).

3 *African woman*, as we interpret the category, is a gendered experience that transcends ethnicity and nationality. In this way, its use suggests an overarching validity of the category, the traits of which are abstract and become concrete only through the lived experiences of each individual woman.

For the conceptualization of power, we refer to Jo Rowlands (1997, p. 13). She distinguishes between four forms of power: *Power over* is controlling power that one may comply with, resist or manipulate. This type of power is finite, there is only a certain quantity of power, and if one has more, others have less. Power is therefore a question of win or lose. *Power to* generates new possibilities and new actions, but without the win or lose aspect of *Power over*, one person's gain does not need to be another's loss. *Power with* is when people pull together to solve problems. Last, *Power from within* is what makes us human, Rowlands claims. It is based on "self-acceptance and self-respect which extend, in turn, to respect for and accept of others as equals" (p. 13). In a way, "all power starts from here", Mosedale claims (2005, p. 250), power within is based on the feeling of self-confidence and of being of worth.

We discuss four interviews conducted in 2015 with women in South Africa about their journey to academia and their gendered experience along the way. Focusing on the interviewees' life narratives, we follow Bakare-Yusuf (2003, n.p.) who claims that an analysis of African women's identities is possible when "focusing on lived experiences and the intricacies, nuances, contradictions and potentialities of everyday life". These lived experiences are exactly what we are looking at in the narratives of our interviewees. Two were first generation academics (Mpho and Jane), while two came from families with academic backgrounds (Elspeth and Celia). Mpho originally came from Lesotho, and was about 40 years old at the time of the interview. She moved to South Africa to continue her university studies. Jane came from Uganda, and was approaching 60 at the time. She had worked as a teacher before moving to Lesotho and then to South Africa. Celia and Elspeth were from South Africa. Celia was already retired, while Elspeth was approaching retirement. Whereas Elspeth has Afrikaner⁴ background, the three other interviewees are black – a position that has impacted on their lives and their opportunities for education and work.

Girlhood

The four women's social positions as young girls differ markedly. Let us start by the two first generation academics, Mpho and Jane.⁵ Their lives as young girls are governed by similar disempowering structures. These include life on the periphery, poverty, and traditional cultural expectations as to gender.⁶ Jane was positioned,

4 "Afrikaner" is defined as "a South African person whose family was originally Dutch and whose first language is Afrikaans" (Afrikaner, n.d., n.p.).

5 For an analysis of three first generation female academics in South Africa, see Björk et al. (2019). The results show how they are able to construct a new sense of self.

6 'Periphery' here includes elements such as rural vs. urban and immigrant vs. South African. Poverty is not gender specific. However, women are the majority of the poor in the world, and globally for every dollar a man earns, a woman is paid 77 cents (Albright et al., 2019). Further, not only are women paid less than men, for example they also perform twice the

and originally positioned herself, within a broad framework of what she describes as *African woman*, which for her was defined by a rural context with fixed and frozen gender roles:

living up-country I was bound by the culture (.) of an African woman I knew my life was predestined by my parents I had to do and live the way my parents expected me to do

Living up-country as African woman entails performing a set role akin to Butler's idea that the "gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives" (Butler, 1988, p. 526). The gendered identity is predestined seemingly without room to negotiate boundaries. As *African woman*, Jane claims, she is inevitably steered towards the life of her mother, a life characterized by little choice and also by poverty and hard physical work, as she explains later.

Mpho does not focus on any particular set of cultural gender expectations. Her father does not see her, and therefore fails to grant her a sense of self. Mpho notes: *back home I was nothing*. She speculates that her being a girl is the reason for her invisibility: *I always had the feeling that he [my father] wished that I wasn't a girl I think he would have preferred had I been a boy*.

Mpho and Jane show an acute understanding of their disadvantaged positions as young girls. Such understanding is a requirement for being able to initiate an empowerment process (Stromquist, 1995). In addition, they are able to envisage escape, "a way out".⁷ For Jane a way out of the predestined role is to work outside the home, to *find a paying job (.) I wasn't ambitious anything of paying job teaching nursing anything would do*. Early on, Jane identifies one fundamental limitation for women; she sees how economic factors influence the possibility to challenge existing boundaries. Mpho's focus lies elsewhere, to her it is about self-worth. For her a way out would start by simply being seen by others, obtaining an identity at all.

Both girls come to the realization that education is the key to change.⁸ They decide to take the plunge, and to work hard, as Jane puts it: *I found ((...)) that my working hard at [primary] school started opening up doors for me*. Obtaining an education is their goal, and they set about realizing this. Jane and Mpho present themselves as being decisive, acting, and seizing every opportunity to change their lives. They are self-confident and believe that they have both capacity and power to act. These are vital elements to attain empowerment (Stromquist, 1995; Rowlands, 1997). Jane says:

amount of unpaid care work compared to men, and women have longer workdays (Oxfam International, 2020).

7 We draw on Sandra Jones (2004) in our understanding of "a way out", as breaking free from oppression because of class, gender and race.

8 That education represents hope for girls in Africa to change their lives is repeatedly stressed in research (e.g. Holmarsdottir et al., 2011; Schabort et al., 2018).

I went on a bus to boarding school and I knew the power of working hard academically can change and can add to my life and I GRABBED the bull by its horn and I said I'm going to STUDY come what may (.) that's my early my young time

Although limited, Jane's agency enables her to push the boundaries for what is possible already as a young girl. Attending boarding school is the first step towards challenging the original role of *African woman living up-country: I crossed those boundaries and I felt so good*. The move to boarding school is not only a geographical move, it is a move away from traditional norms to others that open up for more independence.

However, there are still many hindrances to overcome. Lack of funding remains a problem, and in Mpho's case the economic ordeal may be linked to her being a girl. She speculates about the reasons for her father's indifference:

I don't know whether he didn't support me per se because of that [being a girl] because there were times when he would pay for my brothers but not for me

Mpho returns repeatedly to the risk of being expelled:

the teachers in my school you know they would have (.) they would have in the morning during assembly they would have this list to call out those who have not paid fees ((...)) and then everyone knows that you haven't paid and then we would be told that we should pack our bags and go

The school roll call is socially stigmatizing; *then everyone knows*, she says. By the public denouncement she is stripped of dignity and placed in a low-status group, evidently with a severe impact on her social identity.

There are numerous other hindrances. Even the way to school is full of dangers for young girls.⁹ Jane says:

we had to run one kilometre everyday together to be safe as girls every day to school it was one kilometre away from me so we had to run it together for safety

In spite of these hindrances, Mpho and Jane are set on going to school. Already in primary school, they have made a decision, and they act upon it, in the belief that they will succeed.

They are not alone though, and both refer to their mothers. Mpho's mother offers financial support, although she has limited means. Jane tells the story of a mother who is instrumental in helping her daughter. Working on the land to *provide food* for her family and fulfilling the rural role of *African woman*, Jane's

⁹ Girls often have an unsafe way to school, and attendance becomes near impossible (e.g. Schabort et al., 2018). Dangers along the way to school include "being raped, robbed and assaulted" (Chiguvare, 2015).

mother wishes for her daughter not to have her life. She plants the seed of other possibilities in Jane and her siblings:

my mother had made sure that she educates us so that we won't live on the land tilling the land doing that was hard labour

Further, she convinces her husband to allow Jane to go to boarding school. Her mother also sees to it that Jane has time to study by freeing her from traditional female household chores. Her mother

would say you don't do anything all you do is to study (.) so the cooking cleaning the house going to the fields to dig that was other people she said I want you to study

She is herself bound by the role of a rural *African woman*, for her there is no escape. However, she uses her authority in the home as a facilitator for her daughter. Through her understanding of the situation, and her realizing how to change it, Jane's mother starts her daughter on a process of empowerment. Her support is exceptional *up-country*. Girls in rural areas are generally expected to do their chores first, homework second, with the result that the homework is seldom done (e.g. Schabort et al., 2018, p. 134).

Elspeth and Celia's social positions as young girls differ substantially from the ones above. Consequently, the points of departure for their empowerment differ.

Elspeth links her position as a young girl to that of women in earlier generations in her family. She puts herself in a line of a continuous empowerment process, and claims to be in a privileged social position. She refers back to a time when it was *unheard of* that Afrikaner women received higher education:

it's quite interesting that my grandmother was a teacher and she would now have been 105 () and for her time it was unheard of that's a lady who is a qualified teacher and is actually teaching my grandfather died early she was only 28 when he died so we grew up with a grandmother who didn't stay at home but she was a teacher ((...)) my mum herself is a teacher and my mum's only sister is a teacher

By using the evaluative expression *quite interesting*, Elspeth announces something important. Her grandmother is a trained teacher, and that was *unheard of* in her generation. The exceptionality of this speaks of constraints; higher education was not part of women's gendered directives. Elspeth presents her grandmother as someone with power from within and the power to push the boundaries of what is possible for a woman, and thus impact communal restrictions. Her grandmother's profession gave her the means to provide for her family after her husband's death. As a widow she became the head of her family, and traditional patriarchal structures no longer applied. Elspeth's grandmother acts as a role model by showing how education for women makes it possible for them to make a living for themselves. She influenced the role for herself, on a personal level, but also for future

generations of females in her family, thus initiating empowerment on a relational level (Rowlands 1997, pp. 14–15). Her position as a teacher, achieved through her own agency, makes it possible for her to show the way towards increased gender equality. After all, without some measure of financial self-sufficiency, female empowerment is bound to flounder (see Stromquist, 1995, p. 15).

Elspeth returns to her grandmother's extraordinary performance:

both my mum and my mum's sister went to university at a time when women just got married () two generations above me () having a higher education qualification

Her voice reveals admiration and recognition of her grandmother's accomplishments. Thanks to her, Elspeth is in a position to choose life as an educated woman. She repeatedly points to having grown up in a context where her parents stressed choice and also obligation to choose. This provides Elspeth with her individual starting position for how to fill the role of *African woman* as an Afrikaner. To be able to choose is unique, Elspeth claims, comparing her family's position with traditional Afrikaner culture:

coming from a very patriarchal situation with authority structures that in Afrikaner culture are very strong many of my fellow school children ((...)) would've been expected to come and farm again or expected to do that because that is the tradition my mum and dad were just the opposite if you want to come and farm you come and farm but if you don't want to we sell the farm and we use the money to send you to education (.) it's a different mind-set from what the traditional one was so I'm really in terms of that very very blessed

Elspeth describes traditional Afrikaner culture as *very patriarchal*, with distinct and significant *authority structures*, there is no choice; life is predestined.¹⁰ She feels *blessed*, when comparing the culture (*mind-set*) in her own family with general Afrikaner culture where, she claims, there is no freedom of choice. To Elspeth, as a young girl, choice is fairness.

Also Celia refers to patriarchal power structures. As a young girl she obeys her parents. Going to school is not an act of agency, but an act of obedience and dependence. Young Celia simply follows the norms of her culture:

OURS was to just do what the parents say if the parents say go to school you go to school no questions so I was educated because I'd you know what I mean nevertheless I didn't go to school or to university because I wanted to I went because I had to if my father said go then you go no question

In contrast to Elspeth, who may choose between farming or education, Celia has no choice but to be educated, she claims. Celia presents her family as adhering to an authoritarian patriarchal norm, she says *OURS was to just do what the parents*

¹⁰ However, she does not claim that lack of choice is gender specific. Boys and girls are bound by similar authority structures.

say, and she and her siblings obeyed their parents. Later she tells of her father's ambitions for all his children irrespective of gender, *he is the one who had aspirations for us*, and he uses his authority to bring his children's schooling about: *if my father said go then you go no question*. So in spite of being traditional with respect to demanding to be obeyed, her father is progressive in that he acts as a facilitator for his daughter's empowerment through education.

Womanhood

All four women have had to relate to gendered roles. However, they manage to challenge their roles in different ways, and negotiate the boundaries of what is possible to attain for a married, educated *African woman*. Celia's dependence on her father ceases when she is able to support herself:

I had MONEY so I could do whatever I pleased with my money so in that sense () sort of support I didn't need support anyone so I had money to do what I wanted to do with my money

Money's importance for Celia is evident through her tone of voice, and her repeating *money* several times. Financial self-reliance, important for achieving empowerment according to Stromquist (1995), gives her independence; she claims that she can do whatever she wants. Money buys her freedom, also from domestic responsibilities, as she can pay a maid to look after her four children.

As we will show, Celia's financial independence, in addition to her having several more university degrees than her husband, has an obvious impact on her gendered lived experience and the power structures within her marriage. However, she moves among different positions, and this is a challenge. Her solution is to separate completely between her *academic achievements*, linked to life in the city, and *married life* when visiting her husband's family in a rural area:

I had to behave like everybody else ((...)) when I went to HIS home I behaved like everybody else ((...)) academic achievements were TOTALLY divorced from the married life ((...)) if you saw me tomorrow if I were at his home I would be looking like any other woman there [wearing traditional clothes] whether they were gone to school primary school or no school at all you see because it's a cultural thing ((...)) they expect me to behave in a certain way and I behave in exactly the same way that they expect and you see I live in town in an urban area but his home is in a rural area but then that mustn't show you see what I mean behave like them so it's not stressful if you know what their expectations are because I also come from that culture

Education is restricted in the traditional gendered script for *African woman*; in a *rural area marriage is more important than education*, she explains afterwards. With marriage follows motherhood, and this gives status and dignity to women

in this traditional context (see Bakare-Yusuf, 2003, for a discussion of this aspect). Far from being fluid and dynamic, culture in rural areas is fixed and stable, Celia suggests. She has crossed a boundary and brought to life the role of urban *African woman* providing her with freedom from traditional constraints. In the interaction with her husband's family she suppresses part of her identity and adopts the demeanour of dependent wife, thereby contributing to the support of patriarchal power structures in the *rural area*. Celia claims that she is unable to choose differently, *I had to behave like everybody else*; and that it is really not an *issue*. Her purportedly effortless travelling from urban to rural contexts is marked by her change of clothes from modern to traditional dress. However, her conforming to the traditional script of rural *African woman* is only an act, aiming at placating or perhaps respecting her in-laws.

Within the confines of her city home, the story is different. Celia does not adhere to traditional cultural expectations of female behaviour, she is not submissive and her role is anything but subordinate. Celia presents herself as independent and being herself:

he [her husband] didn't get what he thought he was going to get because when you get a wife then you get some timid somebody who has to do as she is told see what I mean (.) THAT he did not get you see what I mean I've always been independent so I was MYSELF

Her being independent and resisting the norm of timidity of rural *African woman* singles her out as different:

in my culture it is an expectation that a woman must be subMISSive must listen to the husband even to the point where the husband makes decisions and the woman must obey the decisions now normal women will do that only women like me will not some people might blame my education for that () these educated women () normal women would tell you normal stories of fulfilling people's expectations but for me I've never fulfilled anybody's expectations

She is clear on men having the upper hand in her culture: *the woman must obey the decisions*. Celia continues to explain that those women who obey are *normal*, but some women will not obey: *women like me will not*. There are certain expectations in Celia's cultural background that she does not want to adhere to. She describes the "others" as *normal*, inferring that she, and women like her, are abnormal. Celia also gives a reason for this unwillingness to conform: *people might blame my education*. So, while education is the key to challenging the set boundaries, it is also what sets Cindy apart from *normal* women. In her insistency on the normalcy of the current state of affairs when it comes to gender roles, Celia echoes Butler's tenet that these roles, over time, become "a natural sort of being" (Butler 2006 [1990], p. 45), with precious little room for maneuvering. Something that she implicitly accepts by avoiding the issue.

Celia claims that *normal* women are not highly educated. In Mpho's case having more university degrees than her husband impacts the power structures of her marriage, with devastating results:

after I got my first degree I got married and the man I was married to ((...)) had a diploma in electrical engineering and well while we were dating it was fine then we got married and his mother started telling him that his married woman was more educated than him and therefore she will not respect him because she will bring more money into the house so I think the only thing that my husband was left with was to be violent and to be a womanizer

Mpho is unable to negotiate any leeway, as her husband adopts a position of *power over*, and he loses power, if yielding to her (Rowlands, 1997, p. 11). Her education and income, instead of giving her respect and dignity, threaten her husband's authority. Her mother-in-law argues that Mpho will be unable to respect her husband, and one year later Mpho is divorced. Mpho's empowerment threatened her husband's power, not only in terms of loss of power, but also in terms of loss of face in the patriarchal culture.

The negotiation of boundaries for an educated *African woman*, in a patriarchal culture, is different in Elspeth's case. In Elspeth's narrative of her early years, her very supportive parents stress choice in relation to education. However, when it comes to occupation, she has but one option if she wants to marry her future husband:

I actually wanted to be a veterinarian and a marine biologist so I started at [university X] to go into marine biology and I met my husband and he wanted to move to [city Y] and my mum said you can marry but you are going to do your teaching diploma because it doesn't matter where you are where your husband is taking you with a teaching diploma you'll always be able to have a job somewhere

Two aspects are noteworthy. First, it is assumed, and accepted, that Elspeth will be taken to wherever her husband has to go. This is, obviously, a severe constraint to her freedom of choice, far from what she claims is the hallmark of her family. Second, it is assumed that Elspeth must and will support herself, she is not to be a home-making, trailing spouse. This bears witness to how important economic and professional self-sufficiency is to Elspeth's mother, following the way already paved by her own mother, two generations apart from Elspeth.

Elspeth's education serves her well, although there may have been choices dictated by others. Reflecting on her past, she says: *if I could start all over again, I would not go into (.) teacher education I would like to do something different*. Taking her own close-knit, supportive family as point of departure, Elspeth explains how her husband's very close family followed a patriarchal structure:

being a close-knit family is having its disadvantages as well in terms of you go where your husband's going so moving from one place () although I've got the most wonderful open-minded husband that you can imagine

The traditional expectations of a wife following her husband are met. However, Elspeth does not blame her husband for having to uproot and move, it is one of the *disadvantages* of a patriarchal *close-knit family*. It is arguable that she sees them both as powerless to influence the situation, traditional family structures are difficult to challenge. Approaching retirement age herself in a few years' time, Elspeth now calls the shots, she decides about moving and trying something *different*:

I'm ready for some change now my children are now out of home my husband is retiring and he's said that he'll go wherever I want to go so I think of something different I just need a challenge not a time challenge just something to spark again the wonder and things that you feel that you've lost (.) maybe change things (.) I'm at a point where I have to decide on change now

The gender roles in their marriage are fluid and changing, as her husband will now follow her. Elspeth states that she currently has the chance to *decide on change* as her husband retires. Her grandmother had the power to become self-reliant when widowed, and she made this count also for future generations in her family. Elspeth follows her grandmother's lead in relation to education and professional self-reliance. However, she does not question the gendered position when it comes to following her husband to wherever his career takes him. Echoing her grandmother's life, Elspeth does not become free to *decide on change* herself until she is allowed to – admittedly not because she is widowed, but because her husband no longer decides on where she is to move.

Let us move on to another aspect of our interviewees' narratives. Patriarchal power structures are evidently found also at university. Mpho explains how academia has treated her, returning repeatedly to a lack of dignity. Prejudice and xenophobia run rampant, and as a woman Mpho is treated as the lowest of the low:

studying in South Africa as a black person is HELL it is HELL and being a black person of non-South African origin is twice that and being a black person of non-South African origin and a woman is three times that

The power structures that Mpho meets are near impossible to negotiate – being black, being an immigrant, and being a woman to boot – her life is made *HELL*. She continues: *it wasn't easy going the lecturers they were horrible they would have the most nasty things to say about people from my country*. There are blatant examples of power abuse:

you would have this white lecturer looking at you like you were some nasty piece of that he doesn't want to see in his lecture hall and you feel like you don't belong

The white lecturer uses his authority in the lecture hall to belittle Mpho; the possessive pronoun *his* signals that this is indeed his arena, something that is confirmed by Mpho's comment *you don't belong*. Against all odds, she manages to finish her doctorate in two years, and it is approved. However, again academia flexes its muscles:

*they refused for me to graduate, they said who can do a PhD in two years ((...))
ah that one from Lesotho should wait for graduation until next year I graduated one year after my PhD was passed*

The authority of the university administration is total – *they refused*. Again she is humiliated. However, Mpho does not give in, and there are also moments of pride and joy, she negotiates her own place at the university:

when I graduated ((...)) summa cum laude and I was the only one ((...)) this time my mother was there and she had brought a friend of hers and they saw everyone standing up dancing and ululating and all that they were so awed they thought WOW (.) so this is how you do things for yourself (.) YES

Mpho has pushed the boundaries for a black female immigrant in South Africa. In Rowlands' terms, Mpho displays *power* to generate new possibilities (Rowlands, 1997, p. 13). She has done things for herself and is granted dignity and gained a strong feeling of worth within this particular context. At long last, she has obtained the identity that she yearned for as a young girl. In the constricted gender roles in her culture, she has uncovered the false assumption that has existed under the surface of *naturalized* gender, namely that high achievement in academia is *unnatural* for women. She has worked relentlessly to dispel this myth, demonstrating that success in academia has nothing to do with gender.

Jane has left the set role of the rural *African woman* behind. Coming from a disempowered position where life was predestined; Jane has influenced her own role with the support of her mother. With education, she has moved into a gender role with other boundaries in relation to cultural expectations. Approaching 60, she now has *freedom* and an option of *personal choices*:

*I feel the biggest thing I've gained is THAT freedom to make my personal choices
I'm no longer that little girl who thought my parents (.) determined my destiny
now I'm an adult independently who makes my personal choices and who lives
by their choices and I feel I'm an independent individual and I feel absolutely
happy in myself*

With self-confidence and through self-determination she has gained freedom of choice. Her focus is on herself as an *independent individual*, and the happiness she has found in herself. Jane is now in a position to also help others reach for what is fair. With two years left to retirement, she thinks of writing a book:

that could benefit those young children who are growing up who may feel that there's something they can learn from reading my own life story I feel convinced that I have a story to share

The younger generation, Jane suggests, could benefit from reading about how it is possible to have an impact on assumed fixed social positions and gendered roles. Cultural values and power structures, although rigid, can be challenged. Jane may thus facilitate the empowerment of a new generation of girls, carrying on her mother's legacy. Her planned book may be a step towards more equity.

Celia also leaves a personal legacy to a new generation. Her choice, she states, is not to challenge the static cultural expectations of her husband's rural family. However, times are changing and her daughters living in the city will not conform:

it's a conflict like my children they just don't like visiting their husbands' homes because there is this expectation that they must wear () that they don't like so they'd rather not go

Her daughters will not dress traditionally, and they will therefore *rather not go*. This may seem an ineffectual protest, but there is more to their self-determination. Celia speaks of her daughters as very independent:

my youngest she's uncomfortably independent sometimes I pity HER husband she's just too independent it's amazing I've two daughters and two boys and then the two girls are very independent

Celia is well aware of her gendered role and has, to some extent, successfully challenged it. Her daughters, it seems, will continue this process of empowerment.

Concluding Remarks

We have shared Jane's, Mpho's, Celia's and Elspeth's narratives about highlights and deep despair in their negotiations with patriarchy, tracing their empowerment and identity development. Drawing on Bakare-Yusuf's understanding of how to analyze African women's identities by focusing on their experiences and everyday lives, we have shown how these women's narratives tell of contradictions, intricacies and obligations on the way to increased fairness.

There is no denying that patriarchal cultures are unfair to women. In cultures ruled by patriarchal values, men have *power over* women, and since in Rowlands' terms such power is finite, it is not readily yielded. Mpho is the clearest example of this as her increased status is seen as a direct threat to her family's power balance. However, all four women bear witness to how their lives were limited by cultural norms. All of them display an abundance of the fundamental *power from within*, and the cognitive aspects of empowerment are clear as their narratives show insight into the constraints of their gendered lives. Further, their psycholog-

ical strength is visible in their self-confidence and self-determination. However, they do not go it alone, they gain *power with* their facilitators as family members come to their aid. Finally, all four women develop the power to move the boundaries for what is achievable for a woman.

Stromquist stresses financial independence as one necessity for empowerment, and this is confirmed in the interviews. Jane aims for a *paying job* to escape her mother's hard life, Mpho is marked by the shame of not being able to pay her school fees, Elspeth is *blessed* – not only in relation to choices, but also financially, her parents would sell their farm to finance her studies. Celia claims explicitly that money has given her the possibility to *do whatever* she wants. When it comes to the political aspect of empowerment, it is, however, an altogether different story. There are individual legacies, such as Jane's planned book, but the political aspect would also involve a more collective social and cultural change than mere personal solutions. The examples that our interviewees have set, clearly reflect the unnaturalness of gender roles as discussed by Butler. Mpho, Elspeth, Celia and Jane contest the patriarchal boundaries of *African woman* and fill their gendered roles in new ways. They have challenged the *natural* fixed positions prescribed for them – positions that hinder them from a fair chance to reach their human potential, which for them implies autonomy, freedom of choice and dignity. They have succeeded where many would fail, but the patriarchal structures are, by and large, left intact. The title of our chapter therefore seems singularly apt to also close the text, and the conclusion resonates on a very strong, but also more individual note than we had originally presumed – *Absolutely happy in myself*.

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Mathabo Khau

Being and Becoming a Woman in Lesotho

An Autoethnography of Belonging

In this chapter, I use autoethnography as a tool to present narratives of my personal experiences, followed sequentially by presentations of theoretical models which will be used to analyse the experiences and engage in mindful learning on the status of girls and women in their search for fairness in different patriarchal settings.

“You were supposed to have been a boy! We had planned to have a boy after your sister, but you spoiled our plans.”

I remember my mother saying this to me when I was six years old. I had been wondering why I did not look like other girls my age. I was always dressed in pants, did not have earrings and my hair was never combed. One day, I decided to ask my mother why the other children called me a boy and why she was not getting my ears pierced. I did not understand her response that I was supposed to have been a boy. Therefore, I decided to ask my father to let my mother make me look like a girl, but I got an even more shocking response: *“If you were my child you should have been a boy! You are not my child. Your mother must have swapped you with someone else’s child.”*

After getting this response, I never asked about being a girl again. I decided that I would do my best to gain acceptance in my family. I continued wearing pants and I challenged my two brothers in anything they did. I could build a wire car better than they could. I could shimmy up a pole higher than they could, and I was always top of my class at school. However, nobody seemed to appreciate this.

At the end of term when we brought our report cards home, my parents would ignore me and focus on my brothers who had not performed well. Their excuse was that they already knew that I had passed and there was no need to make a fuss regarding my marks. They told me that my brothers needed more attention than I did because they were not very smart. This was a painful experience because I needed their appreciation and that is why I worked so hard in my studies.

My father was a prison officer while my mother was a homemaker. We depended on my father’s salary. My family was an abusive family where my father beat my mother even for the smallest things like disagreeing with him. One time when I was eight years old, my father beat mom up so badly that she ran away from home, for many years, leaving us alone with him. That is when he turned his fury on us. Whenever my father came home drunk, he would beat up my eld-

est brother. My brother also ran away from home leaving me with my disabled sister and younger brother. I became an adult before I could turn nine years old. I had to take care of my siblings while I was a child myself. I had to fight rats for food at the local mill sometimes. I would go in the evenings and gather flour that had fallen to the ground so that I could make something for us to eat. To get vegetables, I would sell some vegetables for our neighbours and then they would either pay me in cash or give me different kinds of vegetables. My father did not ask where all these came from. He was just happy that he did not have to use his money on us.

Due to my resourcefulness, being able to find food and feed my siblings, at such a young age, I thought that my father would appreciate me for being a girl, but he hated me more. He would go out drinking and come home late at night with a packet of meat which he would cook and wake my siblings to eat. I would only see the evidence of bones in the mornings when I woke up. One night I had to go to the bathroom at night. Unfortunately, that was the time when they were having their feast of meat. When my father saw me, he said: *“Even if you are awake, we will never give you our food. Go back to sleep.”*

I cried myself to sleep that night asking God why I had not been born a boy or with a disability. I decided that if he gave me meat during the day to cook for my siblings then I would eat my share. I learned to eat the meat while it was still cooking and hot in the pot so that he could not see me. I thought that maybe I should do even better at school to get his attention, in vain. Because my mother and my elder brother were no longer around, he decided not to pay my school fees. I loved school because my teachers loved me, and I always did well in all subjects. At school I felt like I was where I belonged. When the teachers realized that my fees were not paid, they decided to pay for me. I went through primary school by the mercy of my teachers.

At the end of my primary schooling, my mother gained legal custody of all of us, but my father was still supposed to take care of our needs. We moved to town with her where she was working as a house maid and left my father in the rural district where he was working. I got into one of the best high schools and I continued to perform top of my class, in vain. It never turned me into a boy! My father still refused to pay my fees! My teachers continued paying my school fees.

One day when I came back from school as a high school student, my father told me to my face that I was not his child; that my mother had conceived me with a foreign national. He knew that I was old enough to understand what he was saying but he did not even flinch when he said so. When I asked my mother about this allegation, she just laughed at me and told me that I was being disrespectful of her. I lost all hope of ever belonging to my family. I had done all I could to be a boy and belong without any success.

Some of the memories I report are more than thirty years old, but they reflect the reality of many families where boys are preferred over girls. According to Sekese (2002), the people of Lesotho called Basotho preferred boy children because they would keep the family name alive and would never leave. In terms of education, they explained that educating a girl was like throwing money away because she would get married and not work for her paternal family. Reflecting on my longing for appreciation by my family, I realized that there were probably many other young girls and women whose families would have preferred boys over girls.

The Context of Lesotho

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy headed by a king with the assistance of a prime minister. Lesotho has a constitution that embraces non-discriminatory policies and has ratified several conventions to this tune. However, Lesotho operates within two legal systems namely Customary Law and the Modern Legal System, and this creates obstacles for progress in driving women's agenda because under customary law women remain perpetual minors (Mapetla & Nkhasi-Tuane, 2003). The people of Lesotho are Basotho, with one person called Mosotho. The Basotho nation is ethnically homogenous with one ethnic language, Sesotho. Although the people of Lesotho are homogenous, differences occur in practices from one part of the country to another, between families and individuals (Guma, 2001). Basotho are a patriarchal nation with a belief in the power, privileges and superiority enjoyed by men.

Even though Lesotho is among the few countries in the world where school attendance is higher for females than for males, girls' attendance declines between the ages of 13–18 years because of several factors. According to the Bureau of Statistics Lesotho (2019), dropout rates have increased in recent years because of HIV and AIDS. Parental illness and death due to AIDS leave children with no financial support to attend school and most young girls must play the role of breadwinner or take care of sick parents and siblings. Adolescent girls also drop out of school because of pregnancy or marriage-related reasons (Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This report also notes that women in Lesotho constitute eighty percent of the unskilled labour force, occupying certain traditionally feminine fields such as care-work. Lesotho's patriarchal communities still treat girls and women as second-rate citizens (Epprecht, 1993), despite the enactment of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Bill in 2006 enabling women to secure their rights to land (Fogelman, 2017).

Autoethnography

Several authors have used autoethnography as a way of approaching writing and provoking thinking in the social sciences (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Denzin, 2003; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnographic writing puts the context just here with me writing “my story” (Denzin, 2003, p. 26) in my unique and complex everyday life. The authority of the story begins with the body and memories of the autoethnographic writer at the scene of lived experience. Ellis (2004, p. xix) adds that autoethnography “usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection”, while Spry (2001, p. 710) defines autoethnography as “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context”. Thus, according to Jones (2005, p. 765), autoethnography is a blurred genre which is characterized by “believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world”.

Autoethnography is a difficult genre to write in because one cannot write one’s individual story alone without including others who are part of the story. There is always a possibility of writing about “intimate others who are characters in the stories we tell about our lives” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). This is what Ellis (2007) calls “relational ethics”. Lincoln (1995, p. 287) argues that relational ethics value mutual respect, dignity and the connectedness between the researcher and researched, which can be individuals or the communities in which they live and work (see also Brooks, 2006). These authors argue that relational ethics require researchers to act from their hearts and minds; that they should acknowledge the interpersonal bonds we have with others.

As an autoethnographic researcher, one must be aware that there are ethical situations that do not fit strictly within the procedures specified by Research Ethics Committees. The idea of doing no harm seems to be the best guide such that in telling our stories we do not harm those who happen to be characters in our storied lives (Ellis, 2007). Freadman (2004, p. 128) has argued that self-revelations always involve revelations about others; that we do not own our stories, but our stories are also other people’s stories. This makes it challenging to expose our storied lives as we experience them. We must consider our stories “in context and with respect to the rights, wishes, and feelings of those involved” (Freadman, 2004, p. 124). Writing autoethnography helps researchers to understand what their struggles mean and how to live (Bochner & Ellis, 2002, p. 111). In the process of writing, we make ourselves vulnerable because the stories are often very difficult, such that sometimes we shed many tears before the story is finished. Thus, the stories become a gift to oneself, “a reflexive attempt to construct meaning in our lives and heal or grow from our pain” (Ellis, 2007, p. 26).

In writing my story, I had to include members of my family whom I had not told that they were part of the story. How do I make sure that I do no harm, espe-

cially to my late father and mother? What about the living, who might be identifiable? I have struggled with what I should tell, how much I should tell and what I should keep secret. Ellis's (2007, p. 14) argument that "when we write about ourselves, we also write about others. In doing so, we run the risk that other characters may become increasingly recognisable to our readers" is pertinent to my writing. I told myself that I would stick to doing no harm by telling my memories as I remembered them. My memories are, of course, my perspectives, and while it may be true that they do not necessarily tally with others, they are still my memories, and they have contributed to the person I am today.

In undertaking the study this way, I align myself with Clandinin and Connelly's (1994, p. 425) argument that "personal experience methods permit researchers to enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformation and growth". Thus, the researchers and their social world get transformed. Schratz and Walker (1995) also posit that if we are involved in qualitative research that helps us to become reflexive in our workplaces and practices, gain some insight into our perceptions, and awareness that others around us may perceive things differently, we will gain a deeper understanding of our situations and this can result in change. These authors see research as social action resulting from "processes of individual and social reflexivity and reciprocity" (1995, p. 118). They consider that individuals gain understanding of themselves and others through social interaction and that this gaining of different perspectives can lead to social change. Their suggestion of methods for doing research as social change include the use of memory-work, drawings, and photographs.

Memory Work

I used memory work to delve into my memories of being and wrote these memories as daily journal entries to allow for ease of analysis.

In the 1960s, Haug and other feminist socialists were the first researchers to name memory work as a research method in the fields of sociology and psychology (Schratz & Walker, 1995). Some of the key people associated with feminist approaches to doing memory work include Crawford et al. (1992) in Australia, and Mitchell and Weber (1999) in the Canadian context. These authors have used memory work in their studies of teacher development and they argue that memory work is a self-study method used to represent autobiographical inquiry with critical and reflective revisiting, and hence it is a situated inquiry.

Mitchell and Weber (1999) used memory work in a study with teachers to explore their experiences of childhood in relation to their identity and practice as part of professional development and to suggest how relevant memory work is in gaining insight into the experiences of teachers and students. They draw on the systematic and deliberate approaches to memory work suggested by Crawford et

al. (1992), Haug et al. (1987), and Kuhn (1995) and suggest ways in which teachers can work back through personal memories of school to make the past usable in their teaching.

Hampl (1996, p. 270) argues that “memories of negative experiences, especially painful incidents, are the most vivid in our minds”. In agreement, Mitchell and Weber (1999, p. 56) state that memories of grief can be put to good use. They posit, “retrieval of those memories can influence one’s work both in the classroom and professional life generally”. In addition, DeHay (1994) brings up the fact that in remembering, we reclaim and protect our past which dominant cultures often suppress. This, according to DeHay, implies that “remembering is crucial in the process of gaining control over one’s life” (pp. 43–44). In agreement, Mitchell and Weber (1999, p. 9) state that “remembering is a nostalgic act”, which can equip teachers with the skills to use their own schooling experiences to develop and improve their teaching. Thus, Allender and Allender’s (2006, p. 15) argument is “unless we as teachers are conscientiously aware of what is driving our choices of behaviour in the classroom, we are likely to revert to the ways of the teachers who taught us”. To conclude this argument, Samaras, Hicks, and Berger (2004, p. 908) point out that “our past experiences of learning create hidden personal narratives that have a profound and sometimes intractable impact on the way we teach our students”.

In agreement with these scholars, I began this chapter with memories of my childhood family life and schooling. Memories of being a tertiary scholar and eventually a high school teacher, wife and mother, were followed by memories of postgraduate studies and life as a teacher-educator. These memories were analysed according to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) description of thematic analysis to gain the meanings within.

Becoming a Scholar

I got a national scholarship to study to become a high school science teacher. My first job was in a poverty-stricken rural village high school. In this village, most of the women were unemployed while the men worked in South African mines. The only employed women were the teachers at my school, nurses at a nearby clinic and a shop attendant. The school had nine female and twelve male teachers. While I was the only female science teacher, I was also the most highly qualified science teacher in the school, having a Bachelor’s Degree in Science Education, and this positioned me as deviant and hence suspect in the eyes of my colleagues and school community. They could not understand that a woman could be more qualified academically than a man, and hence doubted my capability as a science teacher and head of department. In this community, a good woman was one who was a homemaker and bore male children.

During my first year of employment, I got married. I was only twenty years old and my twenty-two-year-old husband was a qualified electrician. We had met while I was studying for my Bachelor's degree in Education and he was studying for a Diploma in Electrical Engineering. I thought that having my own family would provide me with the appreciation I craved. Alas and alack! My mother-in-law hated me with a passion. She believed that because I was more educated than her son and earning more, I was not going to be a family woman. Eventually my husband believed the stories from his mother and he started being violent to show that he was still a man. He would go out drinking and spend days away from home. When I asked about this he would beat me, and if I did not ask then he would beat me. We got divorced within one year and six months of marriage. The court gave me sole custody of our one-year old daughter. My dream of having my own family had fallen apart. The local Catholic Church cut me off as a member because I was a divorcee. The church officials stopped me from attending mass or receiving any Sacraments. This was a custom of many Catholic churches in Lesotho for divorcees, but applied mostly to women.

This made my life impossible in the rural school where I was teaching. The community was very sceptical of me around their children. They believed that I had loose morals because I had divorced my husband; that I would teach their children to have loose morals too. My search for appreciation at the school was in vain. To fill the void I felt, I decided to pursue higher education. I felt empty inside. I needed some form of fulfilment, which I believed I could achieve by performing well in higher education.

I got another national scholarship to pursue an Honours and Master's degrees in South Africa. I paid my mother to take care of my daughter while I was pursuing my studies. I finished my Honours degree *summa cum laude* and I got a university scholarship. Then my life changed from bad to worse. The South African students were not happy that a Mosotho woman was getting a South African scholarship. I experienced the worst xenophobic attacks in class and outside. My experiences of xenophobia were not unique. The first displays of xenophobia in South Africa were in 2000 when the South African police implemented 'Operation Crackdown'. The police identified immigrants in Johannesburg and moved them to deportation camps (Masuku, 2006). In this process, police stripped down foreigners on the streets to identify their inoculation marks to distinguish them from the locals (Steenkamp, 2009).

Despite the attacks, I continued with my Master's degree and completed it *summa cum laude* too, which gave me immediate entry into a doctoral degree. My government could not sponsor me for a doctoral degree, so one of the professors, who taught me, gave me a bursary for the three years of PhD. She had a research project which I joined, and through this, she paid my tuition fees and stipend. Another flare up of xenophobic attacks happened in 2008 while I was in my first year of PhD. South Africans complained of foreign nationals who married South

African women, stole work from South Africans and were perpetrators of criminal activities (Tella & Ogunnubi, 2014). The attacks on me were getting worse because the money to do my PhD was “*supposed to go to a South African, not an outsider*”; but I persevered until the end.

I graduated with my doctoral degree and I received a postdoctoral fellowship at another university in South Africa the same year. I was grateful to get this chance because it would improve my standing as a researcher. However, my colleagues at the university were also asking the same question about me not being a South African. I did well in my first year of the fellowship and I was given another year after which I was immediately employed. I thought to myself that I was finally getting the appreciation I needed. I gave my all to my teaching and research and I participated in workshops and conferences in different countries. This created more animosity among my colleagues.

Teaching at University

Through my teaching at university I met diverse students. I was mostly interested in girls from rural villages because I had also come from one. I was teaching a module that addressed gender and sexual identities, gender stereotyping, normalisation of heteronormativity, gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS. Many of the girls found it easy to tell me their girlhood stories. They talked about how their parents had wanted to marry them off to older and established men. The parents had argued that a grade 12 certificate was enough for them to be good wives. Most of them got to university through government scholarships. I felt a connection with them because their experiences reflected mine. When I related my experiences to them, they were shocked, but they became free to come to my office to chat and ask for advice.

Palmer (1998, p. 1) argued, “We teach who we are”. Our diverse experiences make us who we are and therefore my experiences made me the teacher I have become. Palmer (1998) continues to argue that when we do not know ourselves, then we cannot know who our students are. The implication of this is that self-knowledge is very important in the classroom setting to enable teaching and learning. I agree with Palmer that my experiences enabled me to see my students for who they were and teach them at their level of need. Being willing to make ourselves vulnerable by teaching from the heart, we allow for connections between ourselves and our students to create a better understanding of the content; because teaching is not only about what and how, but also the who. Palmer (1998, p. 12) claims that:

The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students, and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require.

Teaching in a community with patriarchal gender order requires, especially a female teacher, to be aware of who she is and how she can connect with students and subject, irrespective of how the community perceives her. The subjects I taught at university were regarded as very sensitive and taboo in many communities while at the same time I was already a divorced Catholic woman. This positioned me as a deviant woman within a conservative university community and my colleagues regarded me as too 'liberal' in my teachings. However, knowing who I am and what I have been through, allowed me to make informed choices on how to address my students so that they could also make informed decisions for themselves.

My experiences of being a girl and a woman in a patriarchal society and household gave me the skills I needed to see the challenges my students were facing and help them accordingly. Each time I related my stories, I made myself vulnerable because I never knew how my students would relate and react. However, I realised that this story telling exercise created a better understanding between my students and me. They realised that I am not just their lecturer, but I am a human being. I helped them try to figure out what their stories meant. I did not have all the answers, but I could relate to their experiences because I had gone through most of them.

Theoretical Framing

To understand the social conditions and the positions from which I make meaning of my life, I employed Bourdieu's theory of practice. Bourdieu's theory of practice is concerned with our understandings and explanations of interactions between contexts and the social actions that are practised within those spaces (Webb et al., 2002, p. 21). Bourdieu's argument is that subjects act as agents in the construction and transformation of society. Thus, according to Bourdieu, one cannot understand "social activity outside the action of the subjects" (Krais, 1991, p. vii). Bourdieu (1990b) proposes that people are constituted within and by the practices in which they participate. He argues that "whether actors conform to norms or follow prescribed rituals is dependent on their interests" (Swartz, 1997, p. 99). Thus, their behaviour is not only shaped by "obedience to rules", but also their own vested interests in the practice (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 65). The implication is that in any situation, people are strategic improvisers responding to the opportunities and constraints in different situations in accordance with their dispositions. Bourdieu's theory has three main concepts, capital, field and *habitus*, which I discuss below.

Field, Habitus and Capital

Bourdieu argues that field is “a structure of relationships between positions” (Cheal, 2005, p. 155). To Bourdieu, people play the game of life by considering the amount of capital available to them in relation to the capital available to others. In other words, those who have capital also have the power to validate what constitutes capital in a specific field. The concept of field distinguishes between legitimate players and those without access to the game and its rules.

According to Bourdieu (1984), capital functions to structure society by offering access to power in a field during specified periods of time. As Cheal (2005, p. 156) suggests, capital refers to “a possession that gives individuals that ability to do certain things, such as exercising domination over others”. Those who have capital in the field have the power to validate and distinguish worthy practices. Therefore, possessing capital means having the ability to control other people’s futures as well as one’s own (Postone et al., 1993).

A person has economic capital when she has access to financial resources that are easily translatable into money. Those with economic power are often high on the hierarchical social ladder because economic capital is a key indicator used as the unit for class differentiation (Bourdieu, 1984). Cheal (2005) and Swartz (1997) argue that the more resources at one’s disposal mean one’s social capital is more viable. Social capital is acquired through interactions and associations with other people who have social, cultural, and economic capital. Thus, associating with those who possess economic or cultural capital increases one’s own social capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Social capital therefore is impacted on by group membership or social networks. This interrelationship requires active participation and exchange of benefits by members within the network.

Symbolic capital is defined as the “capacity to construct beliefs about the world and make them seem real” (Cheal, 2005, p. 159). In other words, symbolic capital is the embodiment of the other three capitals even though it is not dependent on any of them for its maintenance. In some instances, symbolic capital can take the form of reputation, prestige or fame and at other times it can be trust and respect associated with these symbols. The amount of capital one accumulates through life defines one’s social standing as well as one’s life chances. Thus, agents compete and gain various forms of capital in different fields. Competition, therefore, becomes an inherent feature of the field since those operating in a specific field compete for capital. Bourdieu suggests that the distribution and redistribution of capital is regulated by symbolic capital. Because people believe that those who have symbolic capital have power, they give over their own power voluntarily. Symbolic power, therefore, exists “because the person who submits to it believes that it exists” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 192).

Symbolic power is manifested through what Bourdieu (1990b) calls symbolic violence. Misrecognition is fundamental to understanding symbolic violence.

Violence in Bourdieu's terms is understood as enforcing power in ways that cannot be explained in justifiable terms. This enforcement, however, is not forceful but rather operates through complicity. An agent is subjected to symbolic violence with her complicity. Thus, agents can be given subordinate positions, denied access to certain public positions and spaces without them recognising this as violence. They take it as the way life should be.

The relationship between misrecognition and symbolic violence can be seen in the way gender relations have been traditionally defined in terms of male domination. According to Webb et al. (2002, p. 25), "patriarchy cannot be understood simply in terms of women's coercion by men". They posit that "gender domination takes place because women misrecognise the symbolic violence to which they are subjected as something natural". Consequently, women become complicit in producing the very performances that work to mark their domination. They implicitly recognize the existence of hierarchy in the field but rationalise this as the way the world is (Cheal, 2005).

Swartz (1997) argues that an agent's *habitus* results from one's early socialisation experiences through which external structures and limitations are internalised. In other words, *habitus* generates desires and practices that correspond to the structures of earlier socialisation while at the same time setting the limits for action. He posits that through *habitus*, individual action is shaped such that particular opportunity structures are maintained. The argument raised by Bourdieu (1991) is that people's *habitus* legitimates social and economic inequality through people's unquestioned acceptance of the conditions of their existence. Bourdieu agrees with Nietzsche (1966) in pointing out that people always act out of self-interest in any circumstance. He argues that every act is interest driven and that people have a will to power. All activities are informed by self-interest and are governed by the rules of the specific field in which the activity takes place, as well as the agent's place within that field.

Discussion

To make meaning of my stories, I use two themes: *trying to fit in and belong* and *accepting differences*.

Theme 1: Trying to fit in and belong

One thing that cuts across all the stories of my memories is that for a long time I have tried to fit in, to belong and be appreciated. For the most part of my life I wanted to win my family's approval and reduce their disappointment that I was a girl. I accepted the treatment I got from my parents as normal because that was what was happening in my society. I believed that as a girl I was not worthy of their love or appreciation. I was aware that I would never be a boy, but I wanted to

be appreciated like a boy. Thus, I challenged myself in everything I did to become as good as a boy. As argued by Bourdieu (1990a), all action is driven by interest. Thus, my behaviour and actions were shaped by my vested interest in the dominant position occupied by boyhood in society and the appreciation it enjoyed. I wanted my parents to see that I could be as good as a boy or better, so that they could appreciate me. I was so focussed on belonging to their world and playing in their field that I lost myself in the process.

These early socialisation experiences or *habitus* got me to internalise my subordination as a girl. In line with Bourdieu's (1991) argument, my *habitus* legitimated the social and economic inequality that I experienced within my family through my unquestioned acceptance of the conditions of being a girl. I eventually also tolerated the treatment I got from my in-laws because women were not supposed to get more educated than men in my society. Men were expected to be breadwinners and women to be homemakers. Despite these treatments, I still had hope that one day they would accept me. As argued by Webb et al. (2002), I was complicit in my subordination. It felt wrong, but I saw it as normal.

Working hard to fit in with my family allowed me to gain social capital within the academic sphere. The reputation I got from being a good student and scholar allowed me to create networks with people who had cultural and economic capital. Thus, through my academic endeavours, I gained economic capital to study further and get employment. However, this capital did not buy me acceptance within the field of South African academia because I was a Mosotho woman. I experienced symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990b) through which I was denied access to certain positions and spaces. I was complicit in this violence because I accepted it as part of the rules and regulations in the field of academia. In agreement with Nietzsche (1966) that people always act out of self-interest in any circumstance, my actions in normalising the violence I experienced within my family, marriage and academia were driven by my self-interest of wanting to belong in those fields.

Theme 2: Accepting differences

With the passage of time, I realised that I had failed to gain the type of acceptance I wanted within my family, marriage and workspace. My divorce had exposed me to more symbolic violence from the community and church despite the social and economic capital I had accumulated through my academic successes. I failed to gain the type of acceptance I needed within the workspace despite my hard work because I was a foreigner. Thus, I had to rethink my need to belong in these fields.

When I finally realised that I would never fit in and that I did not need to, I found myself. I accepted myself as a divorced Catholic woman and a Black foreign academic. I accepted that I was a different kind of Black playing in the field of South African academia but would never belong. Once I accepted my differences, I learnt to improve myself not for belonging but for personal growth. My sense of worth was no longer validated by an external sense of belonging. It was

validated by setting goals for myself and achieving them. I developed a new self-interest (Bourdieu, 1991) of improving the chances for other disadvantaged players in the different fields and learnt to harness my habitus so that I could gain different forms of capital in the different fields I played in, which I could use to assist others. My efforts in the interests of others, which were motivated by my new self-interest, simultaneously provided a purpose and meaning to my own life.

Conclusion

I have told my story of searching for belonging in different fields from childhood to adulthood. In each field, I faced a different set of challenges which made it difficult for me to belong. I finally had to accept that I did not need to belong in any field if I could still play in that field. My experiences present a lonely and painful journey of becoming. However, I appreciate the fact that these experiences have shaped me into the person I have become. While bell hooks (2009) talks of belonging in nostalgic and positive terms, I have no such experiences. I never belonged to my family because I was a girl. I never belonged with my in-laws because I was more educated than their son. I never belonged with my Catholic Church because I was a divorcee. I never belonged as a student and lecturer at university because I was a foreigner in South Africa, and Lesotho does not feel like 'home' anymore. Despite these experiences, I have found peace in focussing on things I can change. While my story highlights the unfairness of life and its systems, it also highlights that people have the agency and choice to change their situation.

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