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Women in a Changing World

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE FEMALE VOICE: JANE EYRE'S TELLING AND CONTROLLING HER STORY IN GATESHEAD

NÓRA SÉLLEI

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I propose to investigate Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* within the framework of autobiography as a genre, and address the question of how the female autobiographer can come into possession of a voice that capacitates her to tell a story of her own, and how the capacity of *telling* the story is conflated, on the level of textuality, with the capacity of *controlling* her life.

Jane Eyre can be read as the protagonist's attempt to create a (life) story of her own against conflicting and counteracting stories that, by way of their power position, are capable of invalidating and annihilating the story Jane Eyre means to tell. The scope of this paper allows me to explore only the first stage of Jane Eyre's gaining a voice: her communicative patterns in Gateshead, where she struggles apparently in vain to articulate a story of her own. Her attempts at telling a story here, however, imply all the future modes of communication: trying to set against the voice of power (to counteract her aunt's, John Reed's and even Bessie's stories), using body language (to fight like a "mad cat" when taken to the red room), and a non-coercive communicative situation which, using Kaplan's term (1996:15) supposes an "ideal speech situation" and an "ideal listener", in this case the apothecary, who is willing to listen to what she wants to communicate in a complex way.

As a result, Jane, though, can indirectly take control of her life and thus has the first experience of the power of storytelling. The process of her gaining a voice can at the same time be interpreted as parallel with Jane Eyre's transformation from being the object of stories written of her by others into gaining a status as a subject of a story of her own, a position radically questioning the prevalent image of women.

The voice of the protagonist, that of the fictitious autobiographer seems to have been of central significance for contemporary readers as well. Elizabeth Rigby, a reviewer wrote:

> We do not hesitate to say that the tone of the mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*. [...] The impression [Jane Eyre] leaves on our mind is that of a decidedly vulgar-minded woman – one whom we should not care for as an acquaintance, whom we should not seek as a friend, whom we should not desire as a relation, and whom we should scrupulously avoid for a governess. (quoted in Skilton, 1993:66-67)

The question is why Jane Eyre's tone and voice are so appalling and threatening of revolution, why – even by the simplest utterance – they endanger the political establishment as such.

Analysing the narrator's voice, Susan Sniader Lanser defines the narrative dynamism of the text in the following way:

> the trope that will structure virtually every narrative turn [is] Jane's rejection of other people's representations of herself in favour of a "new way of talking" based on the authority of her own perceptions, feelings and experience – that is, on an essentially Romantic authority. [...] Jane's struggle, then, is not to gain a voice but to sustain it in the face of increasingly seductive pressures to yield. (1992:183)

Whereas one cannot but agree with the first part of this quote - that the text can be read as the creation of a narrative in opposition with all kinds of antagonistic narratives - the second part of this interpretation is highly questionable. One can only wonder whether the voice of the narrating Jane coincides with the voice of the narrated Jane from the very beginning of the text and ask, rather, whether one of the central problems of the autobiographical 'I' is to recapture the process through which she can come into possession of an authoritative autobiographical voice as a result of which she becomes both a controlling subject and an object of her own story. Janet H. Freeman's argument approaches the text from a similar angle: in her opinion, Jane feels "the need to put her experience into words. [...] Readers of *Jane Eyre* also understand, once the novel is nearing its end, that Jane's true story is her own property and that no one else has the right to tell it" (1984:683).

In Gateshead, in Mrs Reed's house, the still anonymous first-person narrator's first question, and the response to it from her aunt, imply the conflict of stories and the problematic status of Jane as a speaking subject:

> 'What does Bessie say I have done?'
>
> 'Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners; besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.' (Brontë, 1992:1)

Both the question and the answer serve as points of departure since Jane's question implies the story Bessie told about her to Mrs Reed - a story that remains hidden and is never revealed either for Jane or for the reader. This story, however, has such a discursive power that it results in Jane's exclusion from the family circle, "from the privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children" (Brontë, 1992:1). The story made up independently of Jane's subjectivity and exclusion are, thus, in a cause-and-effect relationship and have further implications inasmuch as finding a voice means not only controlling her story and life, but also means that constant exclusion can be replaced by inclusion, by belonging somewhere, to someone. In this way, one can shed new light on the well-known dynamic of the text, that is, Jane's search for a family: her finding a voice, finding and controlling her story, and finding a family, that is, belonging are just different aspects of one and the same process.

The first verbal exchange quoted above is worth interpreting from another point of view as well. Mrs Reed's response to Jane's question, which is really neither too polite nor too rude either, is so harsh that the reader inevitably starts searching for the implications of the exchange. The key to it seems to be Mrs Reed's closing imperative: "Be seated somewhere; and until you can *speak pleasantly, remain silent*" (Brontë, 1992:1 – emphasis added). Jane, asking her question, can by no means be called a 'caviller' or a 'questioner'. Rather, in her relation to Mrs Reed it is impossible for Jane to initiate a dialogue, a conversation, as their relative power positions exclude the possibility that Jane could pose a question, which would mean that she would be in control of the dialogue and consequently in control of the situation. She is a caviller and questioner exclusively from Mrs Reed's point of view as the question implies Jane's doubts and complaints about the authenticity of Bessie's story about her, a version which is, on the other hand, authenticated by Mrs Reed.

In Jane's position, the simple assumption that there might be some other stories - alternative stories - is a major transgression as, in this way, she questions the exclusive validity of Mrs Reed's 'authorised' version, the dominant story. Considering this rather shockingly revolutionary implication of Jane's first question, one can better understand the tone of Mrs Reed's response: with her question, Jane gives voice to her doubts concerning the absolute power Mrs Reed and a society based on authority is structured upon. Jane's 'innocent' question thus displaces a hegemonic discourse from its stable position, and this is what contemporary reviewers must instinctively have considered a most dangerous potential of the text. While stable, this hegemonic discourse will never allow Jane a place, a position to speak from and to act in: as an orphan, so in a sense an illegitimate child since she has no formal familial and thus social links, she is deprived of her voice and of any chance for action – she must be seated, that is immobilised, and remain silent, that is deprived of her voice to articulate her story.

In Gateshead, however, it is not only due to Mrs Reed's denial of Jane's right to her voice that she cannot speak out: in this phase, Jane practically has no story to represent herself by and in. At this time, she is just searching for this possibility by identifying with diverse narratives, and makes further attempts to resist the discursive power of others' stories that 'write' and 'shape' her.

Escaping from the family microcosm, Jane "slips" into the window-seat, where – as Gilbert and Gubar's sensitive interpretation points out – she takes her place in between fire and ice, hot and cold, the apparently irreconcilable elements of her nature. This is the only place she can experience as homely, but at the same time, it means enclosure, a claustrophobic space which she inevitably has to leave in one direction or the other (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984:339-40). The book Jane reads in the window, Bewick's *History of British Birds* is usually interpreted as a symbol of escape, her desire for freedom, and, undoubtedly, Jane's identification with the birds haunting those "solitary rocks and promontories, [...] those forlorn regions of dreary space, – that reservoir of frost and snow" (Brontë, 1992:2) can be interpreted as Jane's desire for escape. The book of birds, however, is interesting not only for its static pictures since Jane recalls and creates stories in the window-seat:

> Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie

> sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when she chanced to be in good humour; and when, having brought her ironing table to the nursery hearth, she allowed us to sit about it, and while she got up Mrs Reed's lace frills, and crimped her nightcap borders, fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and other ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of *Pamela*, and *Henry, Earl of Morland*.
>
> With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. (Brontë, 1992:3)

At this point, the different layers of time get conflated: it cannot be decided whether the two memories coexist in the autobiographer Jane Eyre's mind only or the very same associative links exist in the narrated Jane Eyre, the protagonist's mind as well. However, more important is the fact that the only moment of the first stage in Jane Eyre's autobiography when Jane can experience intimacy and happiness as opposed to exclusion and deprivation is associated with storytelling, with stories that offer a space for emotional identification. True, at this stage these stories are still incomprehensible, and fearful - they cannot be articulated - yet they carry the potential for Jane to identify with one narrative or another.

Seen from another aspect, however, the stories have dubious implications since the stories told by Bessie (who is normally interpreted as a positive figure, a surrogate mother as opposed to the archetypal wicked stepmother, Mrs Reed) are of two types and of an ambivalent nature. On the one hand, they stand for the intimacy and sense of home in which a child – even with all the anxieties of the stories – can feel perfectly safe. Bessie's story of Jane, on the other hand, serves Mrs Reed and her power. Jane's ambivalent and rather sceptical relationship to the stories of others, thus, seems to originate in this very ambivalence: stories make intimacy, identification and an awareness of her own power, strength and abilities possible; storytelling, at the same time, means the threat of being enclosed and appropriated by a(n authorised) story since both storytelling and the storyteller's voice are constituted as power, which by way of their discursivity are capable of creating diverse fictional worlds.

In Gateshead, Jane is absolutely exposed to these ambivalent, yet mostly aggressive stories aimed at annihilating her subjectivity and narrative power, stories against which her own versions are inefficient and weak. It is almost inevitable that John Reed should break upon her in the window-seat while she is looking through Bewick's book, that is, while she

is imagining autonomous stories of her own. John Reed's argument is just as pertinent: he denies her the right to books on the basis of her being a penniless outlaw in the house. Jane's real fault in this exchange seems to be her response: she hits back by trying to prove that she is an insider in the cultural tradition, and turns patriarchal discourse against John Reed:

> 'Wicked and cruel boy!' I said. 'You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors!'
> I had read Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, and had formed an opinion of Nero, Caligula, etc. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud. (Brontë, 1992:6)

Quite evidently, it is not Jane's possession of the book as an object that provokes John Reed's aggression, but her argument incorporating her own alternative reading of the great historical events and figures, her possession and appropriation of the essence and lessons of the library – that is, of culture, knowledge, writing, all a man's privilege – that lead to John Reed's violence, physical brutality and Jane's incarceration in the red room.

This scene shows appropriately the impossibility of Jane's gaining an authentic and articulate voice and story of her own: the only response possible to physical violence is the language of the body, the "mad cat" (Brontë, 1992:7), or total loss of consciousness. While she is being taken to the red room she feels "beside [her]self, or rather *out* of [her]self" (Brontë, 1992:7), that is, she is not in control of herself, she has been taken in by all those power mechanisms that are willing to accept only John Reed's version as true and authentic (on the plot level, everyone believes John's story that it was Jane attacking him not vice versa).

Clear parallels can be drawn between Jane's incarceration in the red room and Bertha Mason's incarceration in the attic of Thornfield Hall, as several critics have pointed out. The basis for the parallel is provided by the colour symbolism, by the motif of violence based on arbitrary and compulsive patriarchal ideology, and by the motif of madness (cf. "mad cat" and Bertha's madness associated with her animality). As for Jane's voice, the scene in the red room is of crucial significance as her voice, at this time, is reduced to a scream, it is her body speaking instead of words. This is the most desperate moment of her storytelling, yet a moment of some power since right after her almost pathological hysterical fit the door opens up. Her scream, thus, has a power for communication: it can

evoke some response from her environment, even though it can last just for a short time, until Mrs Reed's appearance, who says: "it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you. [...] Silence! This violence is all most repulsive" (Brontë, 1992:14). Mrs Reed's conditions of Jane's liberation make the nature of her "violence" evident: Jane's voice and speech are unbearable aggression, her "liberation," thus, can come about only within the framework of Mrs Reed's narratives, at the expense of perfect submission, total self-annihilation and obedience. The only response Jane can give is through her body again: she has "a species of fit: unconsciousness close[s] the scene" (Brontë, 1992:14), that is she loses conscious control of herself, and psychic symptoms are replaced by somatic ones. She does fall ill, and through her voiceless voice she exacts a new communicative situation from her environment: Bessie at least takes some care of her, so in a way she attains the centre of attention – the unconscious aim of so many Victorian women's psychosomatic diseases – and thus gets to a certain extent reintegrated into the household and the family.

While recovering, however, her attitude to stories told and read out to her changes considerably: she can no longer find the sense of home either in her beloved books or in Bessie's songs – this sense of homeliness seems to be lost for ever.

> Yet, when this cherished volume [*Gulliver's Travels*] was placed in my hand – when I turned over its leaves, and sought in its marvellous pictures the charm I had, till now, never failed to find – all was eerie and dreary; the giants were gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions. I closed the book, which I dared no longer peruse, and put it on the table, beside the untasted tart. (Brontë, 1992:18)

Though *Gulliver's Travels* cannot be directly related to Jane's story, the sudden strangeness and estrangement of the book is a sign of Jane's mode of existence: her alienation, exclusion, her incessant wanderings and search for a sense of home. The estrangement of the once favourite book is reinforced by the untouched food, which, in the context of the novel, is always a sign for the lack of love and sense of home, and, further, by Bessie's songs. Two lines of one of her songs refer to wandering about, and another song is about an orphan child who can find no home, no family, who is tossed about, who is always on the point of being lost and sunk in the marshes. Jane obviously recognises herself in this story, a possible narrative of her life, a version in which she has no power to

take control of her own life story. This is the reason why she feels alienated from these stories (and is yet another reason why it is highly questionable whether Bessie can really be interpreted as a good and supportive surrogate mother for Jane).

Jane, however, makes an attempt at controlling her life when the apothecary, Mr Lloyd appears at her sickbed. Mr Lloyd, exceptionally, wants to hear Jane's story of her illness, not the versions of others, although Bessie wants to answer his first question and wants to interfere with her own version of Jane's illness later on as well. Jane, however, is more and more capable of giving voice to her own version even if it is not clearly articulated and thus claims for herself a narrative authority that will have an effect on the whole of her future life, since, as a result of their conversation, the apothecary advises Mrs Reed to send the girl to school. Remarkably, the apothecary marshals against Jane's basic complaint ("I cry because I am miserable" [Brontë, 1992:20]) all the counterarguments according to which Jane should be happy, content and grateful, that is, he seems to test all the narratives opposed to which Jane is to articulate her own story. This is why, on this point, I cannot agree with Carla Kaplan, who interprets the apothecary's "counterarguments" as if they reflected the apothecary's conviction, although by the end of their conversation the apothecary gives way to Jane's arguments and can clearly see what a bad state of mind she is in (cf. 1996:78-79). To my mind, Mr Lloyd is an empathetic, ideal listener, who does pay attention to Jane and her complex mode of communication: he functions as an *agent provocateur*, who makes Jane articulate her own story, and who can, at the same time, decipher and interpret all the signs Jane sends off towards him. In consequence, the girl's narrative has a power even though she cannot articulate it *verbally* in the way she wants to:

> How much I wished to reply fully to this question! How difficult it was to frame any answer! Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words. Fearful, however, of losing this first and only opportunity of relieving my grief by imparting it, I, after a disturbed pause, contrived to frame a meagre, though, as far as it went, true response. (Brontë, 1992:21)

Following the first successful attempt at a story, all the possible effects of storytelling come into perspective: she herself becomes aware of certain unadmitted relations, the story has an impact on her future, and this is how she learns the silenced,

muted story of her parents. This seems just a coincidence as it is by chance that she overhears Miss Abbot and Bessie talk; but considering the role of narratives in the text, this coincidence can be interpreted in a more meaningful way: Jane, as a result of her newly-gained voice, extends through her own narrative power, and the gaining of access to secrets until now unknown to her, so Jane's self-constructing narrative obtains a point of origin.

The experience of her voice's potential strength gives Jane further discursive power. This is the point when she becomes capable of successfully and openly counterposing her own narrative to that of Mrs Reed, who, therefore, finding herself quite weak and impotent, changes her coercive strategy: as she has no other means but infantilisation, she tries, instead of violence, to flatter Jane to divert her from her own "reading" of the story. Mrs Reed sends her back to the nursery, wants her to obey and lie down (an echo of her first order in the text: "Be seated somewhere") and hopes to render her immobile. It was Mrs Reed who came victoriously out of their first fight, but in this case, it is Jane who is in perfect control of their dialogue: Mrs Reed has only the power to respond, whereas Jane is the initiator all through, and these roles determine the outcome of the exchange.

The militant metaphors pervading the text at this point are more than expressive: "I was left alone – winner of the field. It was the hardest battle I had fought, and the first victory I had gained: I stood awhile on the rug, where Mr Brocklehurst had stood, and I enjoyed my conqueror's solitude" (Brontë, 1992:38).

Symbolically, in winning the field, Jane takes the position of Mr Brocklehurst, her future antagonist in Lowood, and this doubly victorious position reveals that the power relations between her and either Mrs Reed or Mr Brocklehurst can only be an either-or choice, so their stories can only be exclusive and excluding each other, as they presuppose absolute power and absolute submission. As for Jane, however, one cannot but notice the pangs of this kind of victory: she enjoys her "conqueror's solitude" for a short while only, but the reversal of absolute power positions cannot, even at this stage, provide her with happiness: "Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic as wine it seemed, on swallowing, warm and racy: its after-flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned" (Brontë, 1992:39).

This is the power position Jane never wants to take at any point of the text (including her return to Rochester, a scene sometimes interpreted as Jane's taking the upper hand), yet, it is more than functional at this point: as a result of her victory, as Bessie observes,

Jane has got "*a new way of talking*," and the nurse wonders "[w]hat makes [her] so venturesome and hardy?" (Brontë, 1992:41 – emphasis added). With this experience, Jane can set off on further attempts at creating and appropriating a story of her own, a story that is not based on exclusion and absolute power but one that can accommodate other perspectives and other stories, one that is not based on the hierarchy of power and on the politics of voice, that is, on domination over others. Yet the end of the story reveals a Jane Eyre who can be a teller of a story of her own, who can be both the subject and the object of the autobiographical narrative, because the narrated 'I' gradually gains a voice that empowers the autobiographical subject to articulate and tell her story even against other storytellers' conflicting, coercive and counteracting stories.

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WHO GETS ERASED AND WHY?

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I have written this paper because I want to consider the interrelations between violence perpetrated by men against women and the repression of their speech, the way patriarchs' ascendancy over women is sustained by the permanent attempt to silence women's speech.

People often talk in this context about the 'Cassandra syndrome', about women's foresight and vision going unheeded in a man's world despite the disastrous effects that are often suffered in the process. The situation is ubiquitous in the Western world and has a classical history. Cassandra the prophetess whom no one believed is carried prisoner by Agamemnon to Mycenae. There she is put to death – ironically, as a symbol of the same male power which has seized her as its prize. Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife who killed them both, (who is referred to by one of Christa Wolf's interlocutors as being the first feminist in history) is unable to see this irony. She is herself blinded by her hatred of the patriarchal power structure which had first claimed the life of her daughter Iphigenia (at a time when human sacrifice was increasingly becoming a taboo), had placed her for ten years in the vulnerable position of royal wife without a husband (which, however, gave her freedom, self-determination and autonomy), and finally had returned her husband to her in the form of an estranged man who brought with him a barbarian princess as war booty. Clytemnestra falls prey to gynophobia, often encountered among women, a form of self-denial, turning her against Cassandra, leading her to reject the alternative of female solidarity.[1]

Cassandra is finally silenced in Mycenae, but it is not because of what she says, which anyway the Achaeans do not believe, let alone understand. It is exactly this complete absence of understanding and response that becomes the final point in the process of silencing to which she has been subjected all along. The silencing of speech in her case is made to overlap with the destruction of the language of her body, which signals the same message as her speech: mutilation and silencing by male violence. In the Mycenaean context Cassandra's body is objectified and alienated, it is devoid of subjectivity. Her body has simply become a sign of Agamemnon's phallic power.

Yet this is only part of the story. In addition to the tragedy there is the satirical version. It is well known that mockery follows close on the heels of affliction, not least in the case of women. Diminution, derogation and pejoration are inherent patriarchal strategies. The Sicilian vase-painter Assteas who lived in the fourth century BC, could not resist the opportunity to replace Cassandra's expropriated voice with the equivalent of a male speech-bubble. A clay fragment found in Buccino parodies the famous scene in which Ajax rapes the Trojan princess and priestess of Athena in the goddess's shrine. To do this Ajax must first tear Cassandra away from the statue of Athena to which she is clinging in search of protection. Her being Athena's priestess is itself a moot issue as later commentators accept that the evidence shows her to be Apollo's priestess. Anyway her clinging to Athena's statue is bitterly ironic in itself as Athena, an important female figure in a malestreamed pantheon, is nothing but the man-made woman, a robofem, who reigns over heroes in the battlefield, never congregates with women and is actually given birth to by Zeus who had previously cannibalised her mother Métis, cleverness and good advice, who very contritely and humbly continues to advise Zeus from within (see Daly, 1995:8-42)[2]. The very body and function of Athena are bastardised signs because they represent, on the one hand, the superiority of female knowledge and speech that reigned formerly and was rooted in women's power of reproduction and, on the other hand, the violent appropriation of that knowledge by man. But in Assteas's version it is Ajax who seeks protection from the goddess and Cassandra who is trying to seize and pull him away. The parody attests to male fantasy, namely that a woman would like nothing better than to be raped. In other words what the Sicilian artist does is that he supplements sex scenario number one – overpowering the woman without further ado – with the much more flattering sex scenario number two, in which the woman declares that to be overpowered by the man is her deepest and most immanent desire. This lethal strategy is very well documented in the works of the Divine Marquis, Havelock Ellis, D.H. Lawrence or Henry Miller and equally in the stance of the devout advocates of the First Amendment, the producers and consumers of pornography (see Dworkin, 1993, especially "Whose Press? Whose Freedom?"; "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography and Equality"). The silencing of Cassandra which might be otherwise interpreted as the stigma of the violence she has suffered is translated into the humorous discourse of the macho male. These two scenarios are the most basic contexts for the expropriation of female speech and

the Cassandra figure is the archetypal illustration of it in that the silencing of women is bound up with the mutilation of their bodies. Cassandra is not the only one, however.

The destruction of female speech on various levels of communication by the physical and symbolic violence of men is represented as well by Philomela, Medea, Echo or Xanthippe. It is such images and the perception of them - attributable to a male canon deeply embedded in our culture - that underlie the way we understand the allocations of power and gender agency, body and voice. It is only when we deconstruct these allocations and dismantle their logic of violence that we are able to bring the dead voices back to life. There is a proverb which says “Speech is silver, but silence is golden” and this is the very essence of logocentrism. For if we are silent, the purity of out thoughts is unsullied by the swarms of floating signifiers. But this is also the essence of phallocentrism. For if we are consciously silent we still have the power to speak and at the same time the power to control access to speech through the ethics of silence. Observances of silence are power strategies. When Bakhtin describes speech as always “in an alien mouth in alien contexts in the service of alien intentions” and recommends that “it must be taken from there and made one’s own” (1981:294) or when Lyotard says “to speak is to fight … and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics” (1984:10) or again when Catherine of Pisan says that through a process of subversion women should turn the tables on their oppressors and fashion their subjecthood while apparently complying with the male norm (Bella Mirabella, 1999:9-17), what they are all saying is that women must win back the speech which has been systematically expelled or exorcised from their bodies since antiquity.

A very good example of the castration of female speech and the enforced impotence of women is Philomela. She is the sister-in-law of the king of Thrace, Tereus, the husband of the Athenian princess Procne. Obsessed with Philomela and in particular with her beautiful voice (sic!) he abducts her and rapes her, moreover to ensure her silence he cuts out her tongue. But she weaves (see the parallel between ‘text’ and ‘textere’, both derived from the same root, but ‘text’ appropriated by men and ‘textiles’ and weaving becoming a prevalently womanly occupation) and in this context *the weaving* is actually *a text*, as she weaves a message into a robe for her sister. Procne sets her sister free but vents her rage on Philomela’s son by Tereus, who bears a striking resemblance to his father. She cooks the boy and serves him up to Tereus to eat. The German psychoanalyst Flügel emphasises the interconnections between power - sexual power - and speech and, on the other hand, castration, impotence and dumbness. In fact, in many traditional societies the custom of

cutting the tongue, which can be seen as a symbolical substitute for the phallus, is obviously a form of punishment (1925:210). Other castration displacements are the blinding, cutting off of hands or, strictly in gynocidal terms, foot binding, Indian widow burning, the witchcraze, genital mutilation etc, the latter being castration itself.

It is especially the right form of punishment for the hubris committed by those in whom the greatest of all virtues is silence and who by speaking usurp a male prerogative. Proverbs as well as the thoughts of illustrious men such as Aristotle, Pericles (whose famous dictum was that the best woman is she who not only does not speak but does not get herself spoken about), St.Paul (especially *Epistle to Timothy*), Juvenal (in his famous *Sixth Satire*) speak volumes about this tradition of enforced silence: "A woman's greatest virtue is silence", "Nothing is as unnatural as a woman who likes to talk", says a Scottish old saw. "Only silence makes women truly charming" writes Sophocles in *Ajax*; according to a German old saying "Women who whistle and hens that crow should have their necks wrung without further ado."

So Philomela is truly castrated in the process of mutilation but then castration is repeated upon Tereus because the symbol of his phallic power - his son is slain, especially as the physical resemblance between the two is underscored time and again. Variations on the same theme of castration, rape plus expropriation of speech and sheer impotence are presented in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* where Lavinia, after being raped, has her tongue cut out and her hands chopped off. And again, the dismembered bodies of her sons - and it is important to note that fantasies of dismemberment are fantasies of castration and of the patriarchal dream of rendering all women impotent (an abundance of visual evidence provided by *Hustler*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy*) - are served up to the queen of the Goths, Tamora (Shakespeare, 1991: Act III, scenes 1 and Act V, scene 3), the gruesome banquet reminding one of Peter Greenway's famous *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and her Lover*. It is also redolent of the *damnatio memoriae*, that is, the public defiling of the memory of a powerful person or ruler; the defacement of statues of leaders is a castration ritual, divesting those persons of power rather than actually wiping them out from the collective memory (Geyer-Ryan, 1994:72).

Ovid also tells the story of Philomela in his sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* where he gives us an extremely, graphic description of the violence committed against women, adding that Tereus raped Philomela several more times and with particular pleasure after cutting out her tongue: "Limba cade jos si tremurând, parcă murmură pe pamântul negru,

asemenea cozii unui şarpe, care, retezată, sare, palpită şi, murind, caută urmele stapânului din care a fost ruptă" […] Se spune că şi după această crimă … Tereus adesea s-a apropiat cu poftele sale de trupul rănit". "The tongue falls to the ground, throbbing, slithering like a snake's tail, which, severed from the body, twitches, writhing in agony, groping for the body it had once belonged to […] It is said that even after his heinous crime […] Tereus repeatedly raped the injured body" (1972:189; my translation).

So, we are told that the assertion of male power and sexual excitement are enhanced by the consolidated and enhanced asymmetry between power and helplessness. The Philomela story is one more variation on a fundamental conflict - the clash of female and male power in a patriarchy and the preferred setting of the conflict - often called the 'battle' or 'war of the sexes' which takes place in the realm of the points of intersection between psyche and soma, language and sexuality, tongue and gender.

Yet, Philomela is not entirely powerless; the castration of her speech through the mutilation of her speech organs only makes her resort to a different set of signifiers to tell what has happened to her. So she manages to outwit the logocentrist Tereus by using a system of notation which itself is markedly female: her weaving or 'text'. Subversion is again seen as a female weapon against violence and discretionary power aiming to control woman's speech. So Tereus who thinks he managed to reduce Philomela to a weak sign, a sign of his sexuality, becomes herself a creator of signs, an author.

Xanthippe's speech is handed down by tradition in a fragmented form. We find no record of her body. The pictorial tradition only covers sexualised bodies, hence not those of wives and mothers. It is only this sexualised body that challenges the male lust of power and gives a narcissistic boost to the male ego in the act of appropriation/expropriation. What comes down to us is the male tradition of the written body of Xanthippe and her voice, her shrill voice. "Shrill" is a term that men use to disparage any female act of rebellion.[3] The acoustic difference here is conflated with the dignity and substance of utterance, the expressive tends to circumscribe the expressed.[4] Socrates is the great maieutic philosopher and she 'the dragon', the over-opinionated bitch, the shrew, the cantankerous hysteric so here we have again a negative evaluation of feminine argumentation. Again hubris, because in a hierarchy of powers, the lower ranks are not meant to contradict, but to comply with and applaud the means by which this woman is silenced, the woman who dared contradict one of the greatest thinkers in history. The violence used against her is by far more subtle: Xanthippe's speech is shifted away from

the dignity of rationality, polemic, exchange of ideas - the sphere controlled by men, the administrators of public speech into the sphere of psychological pathology. Phyllis Chesler says that the ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture and women are seen as obviously prone to mental imbalance.[5]

The usurpation of male prerogatives is the main theme in the tragedy of Cassandra; she tries to establish her linguistic sphere in the public realm (anathema as Virginia Woolf memorably puts it in the opening pages of *A Room of One's Own*).[6] An earlier version of the myth tells us that both she and Helenos, her twin brother - while unguarded on the precinct of Apollo's temple, at the age of two, had their ears licked by Apollo's sacred snakes and were thus endowed with the gift of prophecy. As Christa Wolf remarks in her book, the later version is obviously a recantation of the patriarchs - it would be all right for Helenos to get this gift freely but it would not be the same for a woman. So high-class prostitution is required of her in order to earn that extraordinary and gender-marked gift of a soothsayer. Soliciting sexual favours for professional advancement is no news.

The punishment of the refused god is very subtle, she will never be able to convince others, she will see the truth but she will for ever be torn between subjective and objective reality. Again symptoms of mental insanity, of hysteria[7] and autism, there is a gap between her world and that of social sanctioning. Women are not supposed to overstep their bounds, they do not only belong to the private sphere, they are the defining terms of the private, they are the private sphere in the same way as the absence of women defines the public realm. Cassandra is sinister because she deals with public affairs and therefore she is nonsensical.

With Cassandra we also have another interesting instance of the blurring of demarcation lines between the private and the public, as she brings domestic values to this public code of war- mongering aggressiveness, investing heroism with private motives of peace, fear of violence, solidarity, actually transforming it altogether into anti-heroism.[8]

The irony lies in Cassandra's being defined as the prophetess of evil and disaster, but the point about her is that had she been believed by the Trojans, they might have been able to avert disaster (Mills, 1992:40). Her tragic guilt lies in her undermining the male discourse of power with a woman's voice and with her irenic, life-saving philosophy which points such an indicting finger at the deadly narcissism that lies behind the ideology of heroism, fame and glory.

Cassandra is robbed of the most important aspect or component of speech as a communicative act: its performative force. By being deprived of this force she is for ever left in a kind of nerve-racking limbo. This linguistic deprivation and depersonalisation is accompanied by the control and domination of her body, she is raped and subjected by Ajax, Apollo and Agamemnon. Her body is separated from her voice. It is hidden from view in a dark cave or in a kind of tholos-like circular structure, isolated; in solitary confinement, only her voice soars above her dungeon (Wolf, 1990:107-108). Cultural tradition has never tired to reproduce the split between voice and body, wisdom and madness. In her ancient pictorial representations her sexualised body is defined in male terms, her sexuality is appealing to the senses, her voice of no import. Whilst in the textual tradition she is more voice than body.[9] Yet in the pictorial register Cassandra is shown more often than not in the proto-pornographic scene in which she is raped by Ajax in the temple of Athena. The number of the rape representations by far outweighs those depicting her prophesying, confrontation with Paris or her killing by Clytemnestra: 105 to 8, 23 or 4, respectively (Geyer-Ryan, 1994:78).[10]

So why have women for so many years, claimed Cassandra for themselves? I think that by identifying with Cassandra women, on the one hand, expose the practices of subordination, their oppressed and disadvantaged situation, but, on the other hand, they bring about this historical revelation by making the silenced bodies and mouths speak again. In 1852 Florence Nightingale, a famous victim of misogynist propaganda, 'the angel in the house' and 'the lady with the lamp', a ground-breaker in a field controlled by men, wrote a manifesto against the Victorian treatment of women as infantile. She entitled it *Cassandra*. She showed it for appraisal to her friends John Stuart Mill, a man of great liberal convictions and an advocate of rights for women, and to Benjamin Jowett, an Oxford professor, but they both advised against publication and it remained unpublished. Cassandra unheeded again.

In the twentieth century women's revolt against the millennia-long process of enforcing silence upon them led to calls for a war against androcentric superstitions. The woman's movement also contributed immensely to bringing to life the voice of all those silenced women creators, to retrieving all the female genealogy that for centuries had been the sunken continent. This is also the purport of Christa Wolf's extraordinary novel *Cassandra*, reconstructing from fragments of body and discourse The Whole Woman.

The two women – Cassandra and Clytemnestra - acknowledge and even admire each other in Wolf's novel, awakening some hope for women. Clytemnestra is the woman who taught herself freedom and free arbiter; she is the woman who seized the reins of her destiny and she has only one choice when Agamemnon returns: to kill her husband or renounce herself (1990:262). Cassandra realizes that nothing could have stood in the path of their friendship in different times and she deeply regrets the fact that destiny has placed them on opposite sides. Cassandra hopes that her story will survive her, she begs Clytemnestra to throw her into the deepest dungeon but let her stay alive and give her a scribe to record her story, or a woman slave with a good memory to be able to convey by word of mouth her story - some feeble story to parallel the glorious epics of men (1990:313), the beginnings of feminine tradition, of female genealogy.

Notes

[1] Cassandra is considered to be the first career woman in history and Clytemnestra is the first feminist, Christa Wolf notes in her metanarrative *Cassandra.* Clytemnestra ruled over Mycenae for 10 years by herself, she took a lover of her own choice (1990:50-51). She is not a hypocrite, she only acts as she thinks is just. In killing their daughter Iphigenia, Agamemnon flouted a fundamental commandment of the times. Aeschylus's view of the two women is heavily indebted to patriarchy; they are gynophobic towards each other in the extreme, letting all their resentment and frustrations bred by submission and subordination surface. Sophocles' heroines are far more complex although mostly marred by the same gender bias. Gynophobia is manifest in a patriarchal world where it is encouraged as an androcratic ruse to keep women submissive and powerless. Ismena and Antigone or Crisotemys and Electra are two among many examples of failed female solidarity. Clytemnestra, *un esprit fort*, as Pascal calls her, cannot be understood by her daughter, the pragmatism of the former being opposed to the blind belief in transcendental justice in the latter. Wolf also tells us that with the events narrated we find ourselves just after the demise of the Cretan civilisation (Mynos came to an end towards the 12th century BC) and the archaeological evidence in Crete attests to a *matriarchal civilisation*, the ceramics and iconographic motifs illustrating a plethora of mother-goddess symbols or substitutes: the double edged sickle - *labrys* - used by female deities to fell trees, a woman's job in traditional societies, the sacred tree, bull's horns etc attesting also to a hierarchy from which men were excluded, with women fulfilling the religious functions, being the participants in religious games, some of which required a high degree of physical prowess, such as the leap over bulls, another feature of matriarchal times (Wolf, 1990:74-77).

[2] In her famous *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary Daly discusses the four methods which are essential to the games of the fathers, of the patriarchs repressing feminine creativity. First there is the erasure of women, the physical and psychological war against women: Adam gives birth to Eve, Zeus to Athena; next comes erasure of women's creativeness in patriarchal scholarship; third, there is false polarisation: male-defined feminists set up against male-defined sexism in the patriarchal media and fourth, there is 'divide and conquer': token women are trained to kill off feminism in patriarchal professions. Matrophobia and the sharp spirit of division and polarisation amongst women prevent them from seeing the figure in the carpet (1995:8).

[3] In her book *Thinking about Women* Mary Ellman describes a rhetorical trick of male criticism of texts by women: whatever these men do not like about the texts they describe as "shrill", especially when they sense signs of rebellion behind it (1968:149-150).

[4] As Helga Geyer Ryan says, "up to our days the process of restricting a referential utterance to the expressive dimension has remained the most effective way of silencing women, of castrating female speech" (1994:74).

[5] "It is clear that for a woman to be healthy she must adjust to and accept the behavioural norms for her sex, even though these kinds of behaviour are generally regarded as less socially desirable … The ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture" (Chesler, 1973:68-69).

[6] Cassandra claims access to a profession that is stereotyped as masculine, because prophecy is endowed with a unique power of vision and control that verges on the divine so it cannot collocate with one so unworthy as a female. None of Aeschylus's female contemporaries, debarred as they were of any function of public representation, could have even identified with Cassandra's discourse. The belief in prophecy means to an important extent trust in the power of the word, which means belief in the structuring and organisational power of the logos, it means almost fetishising the power of the word - possibly one of the most deeply rooted superstitions of the Western world: "Losing one's speech is the worst form of exile, you don't feel at home in this world any longer, you feel alienated, isolated, the whole social fabric crumbles around you. Even if your life is saved through exile, you lose all your points of reference, all possibilities of making sense of the world." (Wolf, 1990:34, my translation).

[7] In her *Female Malady* Elaine Showalter examines the social causes for the massive manifestations of female hysteria in Victorian England. She draws a subtle comparison between female and male hysteria – the latter a consequence of the 'shell-shock' experienced in the Great War: the syndrome of hysteria is expressed in the breakdown of the masquerade of male narcissism, such as honour, duty, bravery, fame and toughness, all of which result from a grotesque overdevelopment of autonomy at the expense of the capacity for relationship: "We can see now that shell shock was related to social expectations of the masculine role in war. The Great War was a crisis in masculinity and a trial for the Victorian masculine ideal. In a sense the long-term repression of signs of fear that led to shell-shock in war was only an exaggeration of the male

sex-role expectations, the self-control and disguise of civilian life … Both men and officers had internalized these expectations as thoroughly as any Victorian woman had internalized her lesson about feminine nature. When all signs of physical fear were judged as weakness and where alternatives to combat – pacifism, conscientious objection, desertion, even suicide – were viewed as unmanly, men were silenced and immobilized and forced, like women, to express their conflicts through the body" (Showalter, 1987:171).

[8] Helene Foley writes in *Sex and State in Ancient Greece:* "left to himself the male will destroy his domestic life in the name of military glory" (1975: 36).

[9] Male politicians and journalists do very often assume this pseudonym, as foretellers of unpleasant truths and it is a bitter irony again that after her death Cassandra was worshipped as the goddess Alexandra, whose name means… 'helper of men' (Mills: 1992:40).

[10] Christa Wolf cites from *The Dictionary of Mythology* by Dr Wollmer (1874) which details the forms of violence perpetrated against Cassandra: as Apollo's priestess she is pulled out of the temple by her hair and Ajax has to use a lot of force in the process; she is Priamus's chattel, property; when she is married against her wishes to Euripil, as somebody who can add some fighters to the king's diminished army, she gives birth to twins that are taken into exile with her and slaughtered. Wolf says that her father actually uses three typical forms of erasure against her: marrying her against her will, calling her mad and locking her up (Wolf, 1990:115; 309).

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Gender, Difference and Trauma

LITTLE GIRLS AND AFFECTIVE SHOCK

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The work presented below focuses on the little girl's relationship with her mother. In order to reach to a valid conclusion, I have compared little girls with boys, and reviewed the views of those who have written about their similarities and differences from the sexual point of view according of psychoanalysis and have given some explanations of girls' detachment from the mother and their turning towards the male character of the family.

Hearing the word *shock* makes people think of a trauma that leads to a perturbation in the organism. *Affective shock* is the result of a brutal and unexpected new element in the life of an individual. Emotional shock causes visible changes in the life of a person, thus he/she cannot adjust himself/herself to its outcome. A shock, though it can be the consequence of a successful event, is most probably a sort of frustration.

As my paper focuses mainly on the relationship between mother and daughter, the shock I will discuss refers mainly to the little girl's feelings - pleasurable or hostile - towards the person who gave her birth and was the first to protect her. I will attempt to compare little girls to boys of the same age in order to lay a foundation for understanding the lines in life that each gender follows in order to develop into normal and balanced humans.

It is important to mention that for both sexes, despite their physical differences, the mother is the first person of attachment with the outer world and is also responsible for the first tender gestures. Affective shock results in little girls from the discovery of their lack of a penis, but has its inverse for little boys: the castration anxiety.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, introduced some new concepts related to sexuality, completely renewing its conventional understanding. Freud's perception of sexuality transcends the simple idea of genital sexuality. He sees it not simply as an animal instinct, but as something specific to both human culture and the form of conscious and unconscious life we live within it. Freud also proposed the revolutionary idea of infantile sexuality, arguing that children are sexual almost from the moment of birth. By "sexual",

Freud means only that the baby, small child and later adult gains pleasure from its own body. He describes the development of sexuality in terms of four broad stages.

The first vital need is for feeding and Freud describes it as the oral phase. At this time the baby seeks and obtains pleasure through its lips – through sucking. The erotogenic zone is the lips and the favourite object is the mother's breast or its own thumb or fingers. This phase gives way to the anal phase and the beginning of muscular co-ordination and control. The "holding on" and "letting go" of faeces is found to be a source of pleasure over which the child has more control than the breast.

The third phase described by Freud is the phallic one. It is represented by the penis as the source of satisfaction for the small boy, and by its counterpart for girls; the clitoris, which is physiologically structured in the same way as the penis. It is during this phase that both sexes discover sexual difference and gender. And this is also the phase when both sexes fall in love with the mother and want to be desired exclusively by her; this should also be the setting for our script.

The final stage in infantile sexuality is the stage of genital sexuality. It is usually achieved later, at puberty, after the onset of menstruation in girls, when they discover that they have a vagina as well as a clitoris. Genital sexuality is defined by Freud as heterosexuality. He also describes "early childhood sexuality as fundamentally and normally *polymorphously perverse*, that is, entirely promiscuous in the choice of object in order to achieve its aim of pleasure or satisfaction" (Minsky, 1996:35).

Concerning babies' reactions to the first three sexual stages, both genders react in the same manner to oral, anal and phallic movements. In the oral phase, babies' fears are represented by the anxiety of being killed, poisoned or devoured by the mother; all these fears find their roots in the mother's withdrawal of the breast. In the anal phase, the pleasure linked to various manifestations of the erotic zone is considered aggressive, ready to turn to anxiety. As children enter the phallic phase, the identity of boys' and girls' evolution takes on, in Freud's opinion, the most original and surprising psychosexual significance. "With their entry into the phallic phase, the differences between the sexes are completely eclipsed by their agreements. We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man. In boys, as we know, this phase is marked by the fact that they have learnt how to derive pleasurable sensations from their small penis and connect its excited state with their ideas of sexual intercourse. Little girls do the same thing with their smaller clitoris" (Minsky, 1996:219-220).

The analogy between penis – clitoris is no doubt the same type as the relationship between mouth and anus, but the difference between the two can be neglected because of their similar response to excitement. All the masturbation acts of the little girl take place on the equivalent of the penis. The truly feminine vagina will have to wait until puberty in order to be discovered.

Freud stresses that sexuality develops along a course beset with obstacles. We repress our infantile oral, anal and phallic instincts as we become involved in genital pleasure, but they never disappear completely.

At a general level, every woman must perform two tasks in the course of her development, whereas the more fortunate man has only to continue at the time of his sexual maturity the activity that he has previously carried out at the period of the early efflorescence of his sexuality. The first task for women takes place during puberty and consists of the switch from clitoris to vagina, as in early childhood all masturbatory acts take place on the clitoris, the penis equivalent. The second major task focuses on the object of love. A boy's mother is the first object of his love, and she remains so during the formation of his Oedipus complex, and in essence, all through his life. For a girl too, her first object is her mother. The object of love and the Oedipus complex are strongly related, the latter representing feelings derived from the child's erotic attachment for the opposite gender parent. But "in the Oedipus situation the girl's father has become her love-object, and we expect that in the normal course of development she will find her way from this paternal object to her final choice of an object" (Minsky, 1996:220).

So, in the course of time, a girl has to change her erotogenic zone and her object – both of which a boy retains. How does the little girl pass from her masculine phase to the feminine one for which she is biologically destined?

The simplest solution would be the elementary influence of the mutual attraction between the sexes beginning at a particular age. We might suppose in addition that children follow the general pointer given them by the sexual preference of their parents. The turning away from the mother is a hatred of that kind and may become very striking and last all through life; it may be carefully overcompensated later on. A strong and deep attachment to their father is common to a great number of women, who express their dependency for the paternal object until a late age. These women with an intense attachment of long duration to their father pass through a preliminary stage of attachment to the mother. During this time, the girl's father is only a troublesome rival; Freud states

that in some cases the attachment to the mother lasts beyond the fourth year of life. “Almost everything that we find later in her relation to her father was already present in this earlier attachment and has been transferred subsequently on to her father. In short, we get an impression that we cannot understand women unless we appreciate this phase of their pre-Oedipus attachment to their mother” (Minsky, 1996:221).

The reasons that bring girls’ powerful attachment to their mothers to an end are numerous and are supposed to justify their hostile feelings. The reproach which goes furthest back in time is that mother gave the child too little milk, this being seen as a lack of love. It seems that the child’s avidity for its early nourishment is insatiable, that it never gets over the pain of losing its mother’s breast. In strong relation with insufficient breastfeeding, babies suffer from the fear of being poisoned. Poison is nourishment that makes one ill.

The next accusation against the child’s mother appears when she gives her child a sister/brother. Here, the connection with breastfeeding is preserved. The mother does not give the child any more milk, because she needs the nourishment for the newborn baby.

The third source of hostility to the mother occurs in the phallic phase when the one who first introduced the child to the excitability of the clitoris through her caring actions forbids further manipulation. Mother’s behaviour – the same mother who gave hugs and kisses from birth, sponged the baby’s genitals, patted them dry and powdered them repeatedly, bans the very gestures and movement induced by her. This is seen as a clear example of tyranny.

One would think these were reasons enough to account for a girl’s turning away from her mother. But, the specific factor lies in the castration complex. A girl holds her mother responsible for her lack of a penis and does not forgive her. The castration complex of girls is started by the sight of the genitals of the other sex. The little girl notices the male organ in a shocking manner because of its dimensions and she recognizes it on the spot as being the superior correspondent of her small and hidden organ. From that moment on she succumbs to the penis envy. She sees the penis and wants to have it. Studies have shown that the boys’ most preoccupying question relates to the origin of children, while the enigma of sex difference is the greatest obscure point for little girls. The wound which woman resents in comparison with man can come to constitute a source of eternal disdain towards the dominating gender. The little girl starts rejecting mother for not giving her a penis, and turns to her father for consolation, phantasising him as a new source of

identification and later as a love–object. This is motivated by the wild hope that she may perhaps obtain a penis from him. The single possible consolation is that one day she will be able to get someone like her father who will be willing to give her the desired penis/baby. All this experience takes place in the oedipal phase, when the girl angrily rejects the mother for not giving her a penis, gives up her clitoral activity and moves to the father.

By contrast with girls, the small boy, passionately in love with his mother, is suddenly overtaken by the castration complex, a consuming anxiety that he will lose his penis. “This phantasy of castration is triggered by two factors: his recognition of sexual difference - his mother now appears to be castrated - and his guilt and murderous feelings towards his father whom he now sees as a rival. The small boy, becoming aware of what his mother lacks, is suddenly beset by the terror of losing his own penis, significantly his primary source of sexual phantasy and pleasure at this time and, importantly, also his source of narcissistic identity” (Minsky, 1996:41).

The concept of castration implies a threat to the child’s fragile sense of identity and also his ability to connect and establish relationships. In order to protect himself, the small boy needs to give up his sexual ambitions towards his mother and to acknowledge the idea of symbolic castration by his father. Psychoanalysts define symbolic castration as the moment of truth, the acceptance of reality rather than phantasy. The only way out of the oedipal crisis is through a combination between the giving up of both his desire for his mother and identification with her, and his new kind of identification with the father as an authority figure. These factors lead the child out of the crisis in the unconscious knowledge that, if he allies himself with the father and becomes like him, a man, he will eventually be able to have a substitute for his mother – a woman of his own. So, for the boy, the oedipal crisis is a sort of trampoline that projects him into “masculinity”.

Returning to the feminine side of castration problems, Karl Abraham’s studies of 1921 brought to light some results of women’s envy of the penis that are still very fresh and clinically functional. One aspect of the complex can be found in the woman’s *enuresis* (meaning the female’s desire to urinate as men do), as well as in the pleasure experienced by some women when watering the garden, thus fulfilling a childish whim, declares Abraham. As for the castration tendency, it can be translated into the choice of passive and effeminate men, or it could be dissimulated to frigidity: always disappoint the man, show him the incapacity to satisfy. The identical image is to be found under a negative form in

the woman who feigns orgasm: spare your partner what could be perceived as a castration, the inability to satisfy. The mother and her affinity for men can be transmitted, that is why some girls' affective life bears the mark of heredity from a mother who, subconsciously or not, transmitted her rejection of men.

Psychoanalysts have concluded that young women who maintain a grudge towards the male organ reach a state in which woman is sufficient to herself; that indemnifies her from the freedom of choice refused by society, and implicitly by the phallus. In the lack of the phallus she herself becomes one. Such women are not able of loving others, they can only love themselves, they want to be loved, and so, they will always prefer men who fulfil this dream. They possess the inaccessible charm of cats and predatory animals. First of all fascinated, man will eventually doubt the love of the woman who remains "cold" for him. When a woman's life is governed by the laws of phallic logic, she will be frigid and self-absorbed.

Freud, in his theory about femininity, declares that the girl is less oriented positively towards the father than she is trying to get farther from her mother. She is running away from the mother and is falling into her father's arms. This rest is the oedipal stage of the little girl. Freud's conviction is that woman in general is a pre-oedipal being. As for this danger, the father of psychoanalysis can see two ways out: one says that the little girl enters the oedipal phase through its reversed, homosexual form – love for the mother and hostility for the father. The other possible outcome consists of the Oedipus's complex extension to all the child's relations with the two parents.

The little girl's discovery of being castrated represents a turning-point in the main character of this work's growth. Three possible lines of development start from it: "one leads to sexual inhibition or neurosis, the second to change of character in the sense of a masculinity complex, the third, finally, to normal femininity" (Minsky, 1996:227).

The direction related to inhibition and neurosis leads to an estrangement from sexuality. The little girl who, so far, has lived in a masculine way, can achieve pleasure through the excitement of the clitoris. If many women give us the impression that their adult life is full of fights with their husbands, this is probably not the continuation of the relationship with the father, but of a hostile attitude towards the mother.

The second orientation conveys to a masculinity complex. In such an inner fight, she will constantly exaggerate her virile signs (way of dressing, haircut, etc). The identification with the father is just a secondary identification which hides the one with the phallic

mother. The way from this over-exhibited masculinity until the choice of the subsequent homosexual object seems clear enough.

The third line is a very narrow one. It is the femininity way in itself which goes from the father, as love object, to the choice of the heterosexual object. This direction returns to the matter of castration, in Freud's opinion, straight femininity is being governed by primary virility. The girl is expecting to get from the father what she was refused by the mother, that is why she turns to the father. *The feminine situation* can finally be solved when the desire of having a baby is substituted for the desire of having a penis. Psychoanalysts agree that the birth of a boy gives the mother the penis so much desired!

Between the two genders' sexuality, there can be found also many language and behaviour differences. In casual speech the female is described as having breasts, legs, buttocks and so on. A mother can consider herself satisfied at the birth of a baby-son. She herself tries to abolish the imperfections by using fetish objects, such as: very high thin heels, suspender belts etc. For the boy, the depth of the conflict between the love for the mother and the hate for the father measures the anxiety of castration, the fear of losing his penis. The girl has a different attitude; she has always been castrated, so she has got nothing to lose. The oedipal love for the father can still be prolonged for an undetermined period of time and be partially abolished later. Lacking castration anxiety, for women, parental interdictions will not take such an imperative form as for men; laws for women are never as strict as for men.

Psychoanalysts who have studied sexuality, wanting to solve the riddle of femininity or discover new and unexplored territories about men and women, have often had different points of view. Because Adler understood the insufficiency of a system explaining the development of human life through sexuality, he chose to follow his own way. Whereas for Freud all gestures and behaviours are guided by pleasure, the human being appears to Adler as a person with very precise objectives. His predominant element is intelligence, so the sexual side came to occupy just a very symbolic place for him. According to his theories, the drama of humanity might be broken down into three stages: any individual has a will power accompanied by an inferiority complex, and he establishes as a consequence a distance between him and society, which he is afraid of. Neuroses can have their roots here. As for women, Adler's opinion is that their inferiority complex takes the form of an ashamed refusal of their own femininity: it is not the lack of a penis that is the source of this complex, but the whole ensemble of her situation: the little girl envies the

phallus as being the symbol of the privilege granted to men, the dominant place of a father in the family, education, everything seems to confirm the idea of masculine superiority.

Theories about sexuality and mankind centre obsessively around the patriarchal idea and phallocentrism. Scientists have noticed many similarities and differences between the two adult sexes, but most of them seem to emphasize the superiority of the male genital organ, symbol of power, and thus the supremacy of male empire. The opponents of these theories are mostly feminist writers, and one of them, Luce Irigaray seems to be aware of the real order of things. She has stated that if we - women - aimed to reverse the order of things, even supposing that to be possible, history would repeat itself in the long run, would revert to sameness, to phallocratism. But our society's patriarchal side has been dimmed a little when talking about women, but especially mothers. Even if psychoanalytic theories seem to revolve exclusively around phallocentrism, at a second look we might notice that mother is not completely neglected, as she is and continues to be at least as important and potent in the formation of the child's identity as the father. "In men's and women's unconscious imagination, men are superior to women because they represent both what the mother wants and sexual difference" (Minsky, 1996:66).

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FEATURES OF GENDER DISCOURSE

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In Malraux's *Antimemoirs* we come across a troubling passage: a priest is asked what confession has taught him about people. He answers that it has not taught him anything, that when he confesses he becomes another person, it's divine grace. And yet…first of all, people are much unhappier than they are believed to be; and then, the reality is that there are no adults. It is suggested that we are permanently at the beginning stage of existence and that we constantly try – in spite of the time passing – to find again the connection with what marked us essentially right from the start. Play is one of the essential aspects of man's beginnings. It may be viewed as both the starting point and the point of return, where we reorganize or permanently invent the rules of the game or discover new games.

Language is such a game – as Saussure suggested and as the spokesmen of the post-modern concept concur – perhaps one of the subtlest invented by man, and at its border an essential existential act takes place: the relationship with the other. We have in ourselves this ancestral need to enter into relations with somebody else. We are never satisfied only with our experience, it is one-sided and narrow, and we need take on other experiences to assume and on account of them to act as efficiently as possible. As Heidegger expressed it "Language, discourse and thinking stand for man's way of being, in which he points out for himself and for others the world and his own human existence".

According to the theory of cerebral predominance, each of the two hemispheres – the right and the left – tends to become specialized and to control different functions, to process different types of information and to solve problems The left hemisphere is essentially different - more verbal and logical - while the right one is more intuitive and creative. The left one works with words, with analyses (that means dissociation), thinks sequentially, and is connected with time. The right hemisphere works with images, with ensembles, with syntheses, thinks simultaneously and holistically, without relation to time.

Although people use both hemispheres, one of them is usually predominant. We live in a world with a clear predominance of the left hemisphere, mastered by the *word*, together with counting and logic, and in which the "creative" aspects of our nature:

intuition, stability, and artistic sense do not receive enough attention (being often marginalized). This presentation of the human brain functions is, certainly, very schematic, but it is meant to highlight the fact that the more we improve our ability to use the right hemisphere's faculties, the more we shall be able to visualize, synthesize, transcend time and the present conditions of our existence and to project a holistic image of what we want to be or do in our lives. Psychopathology and psychoanalysis show that thinking – which is best illustrated in human discourse – serves in understanding reality, to which it is strongly linked, even being accompanied by the desire to act upon this reality.

According to the stimulus-response theory we are conditioned to answer a given stimulus in a certain way. Between what happens (the stimulus) and our response - in this interstice - our freedom to make a choice is to be found. And the way we react determines our "mapping" in a certain category - of gender, professional, ethnical etc.

A progressive consideration of the personal and interpersonal relations reflected in gender discourse tends to witness to a maturation continuum - from dependence to independence, and from independence to interdependence. Thus gender discourse may be characterized in accordance with the different stages of its maturation process.

The first of the three stages is marked by the inferior position of women in language and society, by male domination. Women generally seem to accept their position in a patriarchal society. During the Victorian era, there was a model of womanhood founded on ideals of domesticity. Women, particularly white middle-class women, often lived at least partially conforming to True Womanhood. They generally stayed in the home to devote themselves to their family, allowing their husbands to fulfil the male role of breadwinner. An important part of living out this ideal was not interfering with men's public affairs - remaining untainted by public life.

Despite the rigidity of True Womanhood in regard to staying in the home the ideal contained the preconditions for uniting women's rights struggles. As historian Nancy Cott has argued, when women begin to imagine themselves as a unified group it is possible for them to take that notion to the next level: imagining themselves as a group that can shape its own destiny. This process is precisely what happened in the late nineteenth century.

The second one, namely the independence stage, has to do with the feminine/ masculine dichotomy, characterized by women's reaction to the limitation of their value in a patriarchal society. Gender difference is not naturally given but is an effect of relations of knowledge and power that permeate all areas of life. The assumption that women are

different from men is fundamental to the history of Western civilization. From biblical accounts of the creation, to Darwinism and modern science, stress has been laid on women's intrinsic difference from men. Studies are concerned with the position in language of the two elements of the dichotomy, and gender-based ideologies, or sexism in language, where attitudes toward men and women have become attitudes toward language. These include the ways in which women have been negatively positioned by dominant naming and representation practices in language and of the ways in which speakers (and writers) demonstrate their different cultural attitudes toward men and women. An alternative to sexist practices is gender-based language planning, whose aim is to challenge hegemonic discursive practices that disadvantage women, by creating new forms or selecting alternative forms, for example, in vocabulary and grammar. Another aspect concerning gender and language regards possible differences in the actual way of speaking, or interactional style of men and women. It has been postulated that women's speech is more polite, and makes use of a variety of "powerless" linguistic strategies such as "empty" adjectives, hedges, tag questions, and a question intonation in statements. Some researchers, focusing on male dominance in interaction, have added different kinds of features to this list: for instance, that men interrupt women more than women interrupt men, that men raise new topics more often, talk more in public than women do, while, on the other hand, they also make use of silence as a form of control. More recently, it has been suggested that what had been called "women's language" should, more appropriately, be called "powerless language", and that in fact both men and women used these features in certain situations. The difference approach highlights the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures, and the differences in women and men's speech are interpreted as reflecting and maintaining gender-specific subcultures. As boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, talk between women and men can be considered a form of cross-cultural communication. Also connected with the independence stage is the dominance approach of gender discourse viewing women as an oppressed group and interpreting linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination. Researchers using this model are concerned to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practice.

Taking as role models such marginalized figures as witches, mystics, goddesses, Amazons, wise women and healers, radical feminists have created a discourse of strong and resistant women throughout history. Theses are women who refused to submit to the

power relations of an all-pervasive patriarchy. These inspirational figures that elude patriarchal control are seen to embody strength, wildness and self-determination, together with traits more usually ascribed to women such as intuition, emotion and fertility. In radical feminist discourse, traditional female traits and values are given a new and positive status which challenges the supremacy of traditional male traits such as reason and objectivity. The devalued qualities that are central to traditional ideas of femininity are seen as necessary to the wholeness of both women and men. To reinstate their importance is a first step towards radically transforming the patriarchal understanding of reason and emotion.

Radical feminism does not only reclaim positive, traditionally female qualities, but also patriarchal terms of abuse such as “hags”, “crones”, “harpies”, “furies”, and “spinsters”. Mary Daly in her *Gyn/Ecology* looks at how the status of women in language, myth and religion shifted with the consolidation of patriarchy in Ancient Greece and subsequently with the growing hegemony of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the West. In this process, the realm of goddesses is increasingly taken over by male gods until the female presence is totally eradicated – as in Christianity – and replaced by what Daly calls “male femininity”.

Poststructuralist theory has challenged all theories of sexual and gender differences which appeal to the fixed meanings of bodies. The basis for this challenge is the assumption that there is no such thing as natural or given meaning in the world. Language does not reflect reality but gives it meaning. Meaning is an effect of language and, as such, always historically and culturally specific. Moreover meaning can never be fixed once and for all. It is the effect of what Jacques Derrida calls *différance*, a process of difference and deferral which ensures that any fixing is a temporary retrospective effect.

The third dimension of our gender discourse analysis is represented by the interdependence stage. The reality of our fast-changing world requires a new paradigm of social policy, transcending all “identity politics” – women, blacks, gays, the disabled etc. There has to be some new vision of community. The Women’s Movement is not going to fade away, but become part of a mosaic, bridging the polarization. This stage should contain every possible item of women’s unfinished business of equality, the elimination of all forms of violence against women, from wife beating and the dowry system to genital mutilation and leading to measurement of women’s unpaid work and to new arrangements of work that will permit more of a partnership of men and women in nurturing children. It

includes affirmative action for women in employment and in their representation in political leadership, giving women a new control of their life and health. Therefore this stage should no longer have to do with repression and domination, but be characterized by a superior way of conceiving gender relations. The discourse of human rights works by arguing for a fundamental sameness in the face of difference, for example, that women should have the same rights as men because they, too, are rational human beings. The importance of discourses of human rights and equality remains compelling even in the face of poststructuralist critiques of sameness and identity, yet any adequate discourse must remain vigilant about its own partiality and limitations.

The features attributed to each of the three stages are not fixed (they may belong to different stages according to the point of view we want to adopt). This is a tentative systematisation of the historical evolution of the features characterizing gender discourse – understood in its broadest meaning as both verbal expression of thinking and diction. The three stages in the maturation process of gender discourse may be interpreted in terms of three different paradigms (centred in turn on the ideas of dependence, on independence and interdependence):

- YOU – you are the one I depend on; you speak for me; I have to accept your domination;
- I – I am strong; I can fight; I am able to assume the responsibility of being different;
- WE – we can; we cooperate; together we are more powerful.

The last formula is open to whichever combination we are open to accept (“we” as man and woman, “we” as women etc).

The conclusion we can draw after having systematised these aspects concerning human discourse is that no matter where we choose to place our reality, we live in a world characterized by self-awareness as far as gender identities are concerned. To recognize gender as a social pattern requires us to see it as a product of history, and also as a producer of history. It is the modality of human life, precisely what defines us as human. To recognize masculinity and femininity as historical is not to suggest they are flimsy or trivial. It is to locate them firmly in the world of social agency. No other species produces and lives in history, replacing organic evolution with radically new determinants of change. The interdependence stage may be understood as representing the “ideal”; human beings shall be able to confront their real identities only after having transgressed

everything that means violence, domination, and oppression and reached a new understanding of their gender identities. Scientific studies point to the fact that human beings use in fact only a small part of their minds' potential. It is assumed that if we were fully aware of our variety of capacities we would be able to use them deliberately, approaching more efficiently the various challenges of life. It seems that we have reasons to be optimistic, since we still have to go up in order to reach new meanings and valences of our own identities.

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GENDER DIFFERENTIATION AS AN ASPECT OF SOCIAL DIVISION OF LANGUAGE

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In the last few decades linguistic scholarship has been taking special interest in the role of social factors in the evolution of discourse which has resulted in large-scale research into the interconnection between language, culture and society. Such a correlation manifests itself at best by means of social differentiation of language through a number of parameters, such as education, profession, race, class, age and the gender of the speakers. The latter, although functionally significant, is not yet sufficiently studied. Existing researches of this aspect of the phenomenon of language are more fragmentary than systematic and often lack experimental background. At the same time, the gender of speakers is a universal component of speech interaction, an integral part of any communicative situation. In order to obtain reliable and objective information on the nature and character of gender divergences in speech communication it is imperative to provide a consistent, conceptual approach to the issue by means of experimental research which will open a perspective on the all-round, comprehensive description of the mechanics of "doing gender" at all the levels of language structure. The following tasks are indispensable to achieve this purpose:

1) to trace the genesis of gender dichotomy in language as a social construct;
2) to categorize the opposition "female speech vs. male speech" (FS vs. MS) and to identify its linguistic status;
3) to outline possible models of gender divergences in different languages;
4) to define universal linguistic gender-typed qualities which serve to differentiate female and male speech at all the levels of language structure.

1. Genesis of Gender Distinction of Language

Gender differentiation of language came into being at the earliest stages of social development and was brought about by psychological sex differences, historic division of labour, religious regulation of gendered behaviour and the disparity of social statuses of

men and women. It follows from this that a truly scientific approach to language gender differentiation demands integral combination of four levels of analysis: biological, psychological, sociological and linguistic, which will give opportunity to trace the evolution of the phenomenon and explain its nature.

Biological causes of gender differences have a genetic background and determine not only morphological differences of sexes, but particularly their functional divergence. The latter brings about the so-called "psychological gender dimorphism" (Geodakyan, 1983) resulting in a gender-different character of mental processes, degrees of emotionality, types of perception and disposition to different kinds of activities. Apparently these specificities of *psychological* organization of the sexes directly influence their speech. In particular, females are reported to have more developed verbal skills (better speech habits, perceptiveness to oral and written speech, grammatical correctness) while males are more advanced in space and time orientation. Researches show that females' mental sensitivity and responsiveness is higher than that of males, but flexibility is lower which may explain the abundance of verbal clichés and standardized phrases in FS. Besides, females' verbal messages are reported as marked by higher degree of cohesion, but lower structuredness with frequent deviations from the narrative's plot-line, repetitions and detailed descriptions. Women's speech is described as more expressive and emphatic than men's as a result of females' high emotionality and impulsiveness.

The psychological gender gap has considerably influenced historic gendered labour differentiation which has in its turn played a major role in the evolution of the so-called "tribal language" into the "male vs. female language" dichotomy. Gendered labour differentiation, as a major *socio-historical* determinant has also led, through regulatory means (behavioural standards, cultural traditions, etiquette) to specialization of gender roles in society and caused social differentiation of females and males in all domains of life. Gender role, i.e. the social role determined by gender performance, is defined as existing in society stereotypes of feminine and masculine behaviour together with respective standards and expectations which a person has to meet to be identified in terms of gender (Kon, 1967). Therefore, the gender role of an individual implies a particular communication stereotype. Researchers of gender-role stereotyping point out that female and male behavioural models in western societies are juxtaposed in terms of their qualities. While a typical male stereotype is a set of qualities matching a socially unrestricted style of behaviour – competence, aggressiveness, successfulness and domination, a typical

female behavioural model incorporates communication skills, softness, attention to people, non-assertiveness and conformism (Ageyev, 1987:152; Batstone and Tuomi, 1996:121). Conventional female communication style is defined as other-oriented, creative, synthetic, contextual and interdependent while a traditional male one is described as self-oriented, assertive, analytical, independent and instrumental (Barron, 1971: 26; Wood, 1966).

It goes without saying that specificities of gendered behavioural stereotypes are manifested in the verbal activity of individuals. They bring about and shape corresponding stereotypes of speech behaviour of females and males. Sociologists consider that men and women may be regarded on the whole as social groups which not only perform different roles in society, but are characterized by different social status. Social status, as a complex of socio-demographic markers of an individual, makes a great impact on the verbal behaviour of a speaker. Historically structured incongruence of social statuses of females and males causes incongruence in their speech interaction. This results in the fact that traditional etiquette prescribes women to use the so-called "submissive verbal code" when addressing men and employ language means similar to members of a lower class (Preisler, 1986).

Conclusion: gender role is a result of biological, psychological and social determinants, manifested in their close correlation. However, social parameters, though caused by psycho-biological ones, are still relatively self-sufficient and even dominate the latter. On the one hand, social conventions mirror and reinforce the evolution of innate gender qualities. On the other hand, having their functional sovereignty, they significantly influence the character of cross-gender differences both in society and in language.

Therefore, we consider that the gender of speakers should be treated neither as a *purely social*, nor as a *purely psychobiological* factor. Taking into account that gender distinction of language is brought about by a complex of parameters of different nature with social aspect dominating them all, we propose to qualify the gender identity of speech individuals as a *quasi-social construct.*

2. Manifestation of verbal gender gap in different language communities

Linguistic researches show that gender divergences manifest themselves in different ways and degrees depending on the level of a language community's development – the higher the social order of society, the less transparent is the language gender gap

(Trubetzkoy, 1960:26). The widest range of linguistic sex differences is traceable in the ethnic groups where females and males practically *speak different languages*. A classical example of this kind is a language community of Caraib Indians, where women speak Arowak and men speak Caraib (Jespersen, 1964). This kind of female/male language opposition is reported from some regions of Paraguay (Guarani vs. Spanish), some tribes of New Guinea (Gimmy vs. Pidgeon) and among Arabic-speaking Jews of the Sahara (Arabic vs. Hindu). In such language communities one gender (usually males) is bilingual. Besides, there exist the so-called "secret" female and male languages inaccessible to the other sex. For instance, in Cameron young men when they undergo initiation use a secret language unknown to women. From the functional perspective special female and male languages are close to argot languages and may be regarded as *social dialects*.

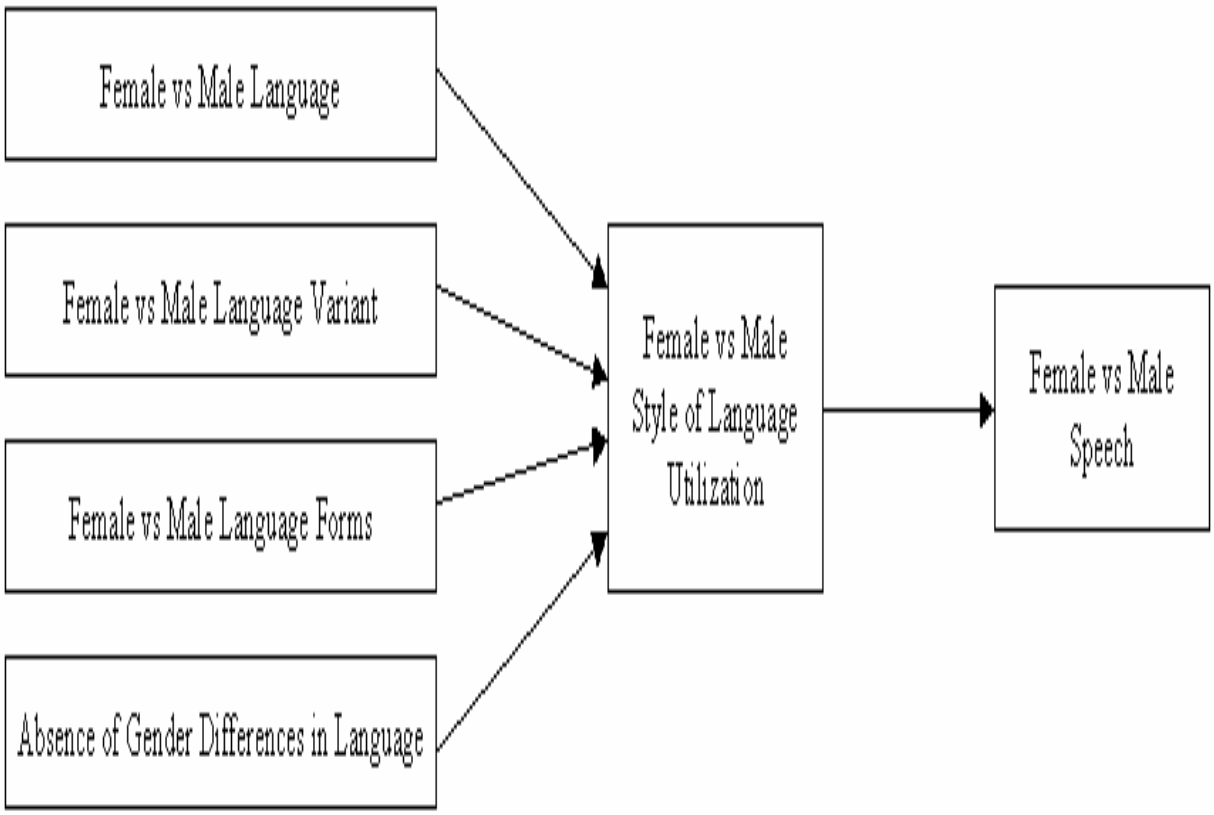
Some ethnic languages have special female and male *variants*, with nature and functions different from those mentioned above. They differ either only in vocabulary (often unknown to the other sex), or only in pronunciation, or both in vocabulary and in grammar. Such differences can be traced in languages of some tribes of American Indians and native population of Africa and in many small ethnic groups of non-European origin. Existence of two distinctly opposed gender-type subsystems are reported in the Japanese language (both in Japan and in Java) before WWII (Alpatov, 1983; Jespersen, 1964:240). Considerable divergences between female and male variants in these languages grant an opportunity to claim the existence in them of two self-sufficient, binary opposed gender subsystems, each with its own inventory and structure.

However, in most languages gender differences are not so considerable as to make autonomous subsystems. They are either not fixed by language systems (as in English) or have a marginal character and are manifested through a restricted number of special phonetic and/or grammatical *forms* (as in some Slavic and Romance languages). Gender distinction in such cases is caused by different ways in which a language system is used by females and males. In other words it is conditioned by differences in gender-typed verbal behaviour. At the same time it is well known that a particular manner of speech activity defines the fact that its product - utterances and texts - is also marked by certain semantic and structural peculiarities. This means that differences in the verbal behaviour of females and males result in their speech differences, which allows us to claim the existence of the *"Female speech vs. male speech" (FS vs. MS) dichotomy*.

Conclusion:

1. Opposition FS/MS comes from gender-different realization of a language system, which may contain both common and gender specific units.

2. Possible models of gender differentiation in speech may be represented in the following scheme:



3. The Linguistic Status of the Opposition “Female Speech vs. Male Speech”

In order to be able to identify the linguistic status of the dichotomy FS vs. MS it is reasonable to refer to such fundamental linguistic categories, as a “language standard (norm)” and a “language variation”. There exist two possible approaches to the notion of a language standard. In its broad meaning it signifies “a combination of habits and rules of the generally accepted use of a language” (Stepanov, 1966:99). In a narrow sense this concept implies a literary standard in its written and oral forms of existence. A language norm is primarily a sociolinguistic category. Its complexity and ambiguity results from the social variability of language existing in two main forms: situational (horizontal division) and stratificational (vertical division). The former reflects conditions of the communication

situation and the latter is determined by the social structure of a society (Shveytzer, 1976: 158). These two aspects of language variability affect a linguistic standard as well. One aspect brings about norms of official and unofficial communication. Another allows us to single out speech standards within different social communities grouped by gender, age, social position, the educational level of speakers etc., i.e. standards of speech of males and females, youth and the elderly, workers and intelligentsia.

Conclusion: FS and MS represent binary opposed variants of the language standard in its stratificational (vertical) division. Therefore it is wrong to treat MS as a correct type, a model, a standard and FS as a deviation from it, a negatively marked variant of MS. It is more appropriate to regard FS and MS as equivalent members of a binary gender opposition. They have similar nature and equal status of variants of one and the same language standard. Neither of them is marked in reference to the other. There is no "male or female English", but there are two different ways of realization of a language by different genders.

4. Universal gender-distinctive speech markers

Analysis of sociolinguistic researches in different languages has allowed us to discover a complex of universal distinctive markers of FS and MS, relevant for gender differentiation of speech at all the levels of the language system. A summary of existing opinions on this issue gives an opportunity to state that FS and MS are globally opposed by such parameters:

- social and linguistic correctness (sometimes hypercorrectness)
- conservativeness
- prestigeousness
- politeness
- expressiveness

In most language communities the presence of these qualities in speech (positive realization) is a marker of a female speech stereotype, and their absence (negative realization) is characteristic of male verbal behaviour. Such differences of FS and MS are a natural outcome of the psychobiological and social gender gap. In particular, the more standard language behaviour of women may be explained by such psychological qualities as their higher adaptability to the conditions and norms of their cultural milieu, by better receptiveness and responsiveness to teaching and upbringing and by disposition to social correctness (Bagrunov, 1981:15-16). Female verbal conservativeness in terms of biological

approach may be connected with the fact that all new qualities in a biological community are fixed first in the male of the species and then transmitted to females - which is the reason why all new biological qualities are more frequent among males and rudimentary - among females (Geodakyan, 1965). The higher expressiveness and emotionality of female verbal interaction as compared to that of males may be explained by higher sensitivity of the female nervous system. The tendency to use prestige forms in speech may be explained by high perception women have of communicative standards in different social settings. On the other hand there exists an opinion that this linguistic quality may be explained by a necessity to compensate for male dominance and the lack of a "strong position" in society by means of such external markers as behaviour, dress, speech etc. (Trudgill, 1972:182-185; Yagello, 1987: 57). This fact may also explain a higher politeness and tactfulness of FS, which at the same time results from the women's softer communication stereotype.

However, cross-cultural research demonstrates that the aforementioned gender distinctions of speech qualities are not followed in all language communities. In particular, a tendency to follow a prestige speech standard in some societies is more characteristic of males than of females (Le Page, 1977:12.). In some social and ethnic communities it is females who are agents of innovations in speech due to their higher perceptiveness to language changes and standards (Gal, 1978; Aleksejev, 1972). And finally, in some cultures emotionality and expressiveness are considered to be more appropriate for a male communicative stereotype, than for a female one (Malmstrom, 1975:181-182).

It is the specific character of social processes within a culture that explains the fact that there are times when a particular quality, typical for a female speech stereotype in one language community characterizes a male model of language behaviour in another one, even in case of one and the same ethnic language (Smith-Hefner, 1988). The dynamics of correlation between language and society gives rise to cases when a particular distinctive gender marker manifests itself in the speech of the same gender group, now positively now negatively, depending on the extralinguistic context of the communication situation. It is also possible that within a language community the same speech markers pertain sometimes to men, sometimes to women, as the case may be (Gal, 1978; Labov, 1972: 301).

Conclusion: it is reasonable to regard the complex of universal gender-distinctive speech qualities as a sort of *matrix common to most language communities*. However, this matrix *may be filled in differently depending on specific tendencies in the linguistic life of*

a society and corrected as necessary. Each local culture has its own unique system of gender identity markers that is why universal gender distinctive qualities are manifested differently in different language communities.

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Gender, Culture, Society

THE MOBILIZATION OF RIGHT-WING AMERICAN WOMEN

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Although the feminist movement in the 1920s in America ultimately led to women being granted the right to vote, it was not until the late 1960s that women began to be integrated into the mainstream of political life. Yet, if one of the achievements of the feminist movement was the increase of female participation in politics, this very success created a counter-force of women opposed to core feminist goals and values. In the late 1970s thousands of conservative women, including Phyllis Schlafly, Anita Bryant, Judie Brown, Beverly LaHaye and Connie Marshner, joined the "New Right" with a view to restore moral absolutes. For them, the United States has always been a special nation with a special covenant with God. As this covenant was believed to have been violated by the liberals, there ensued a severe moral crisis. Phyllis Schlafly and her followers moved into a life of political activism, convinced that the time to react had come.

This paper seeks to explore the internal logic and the ideological underpinnings of the mobilization of American women on behalf of conservative causes in the late 1970s and early 1980s. First, I shall argue that the right-wing women's offensive is a reaction against the feminist movement and its impact on American society, culture, and consciousness. I shall then show that women of the right do not form a monolithic group sharing a single set of beliefs and values. Finally, I shall consider the question of whether or not conservative women's activism conflicts with the traditional values that they champion.

What is the New Right?

To put all this in perspective, it is helpful to start with a clarification of the term "New Right." Although the origins of the New Right may be traced to the 1964 campaign of Barry Goldwater - a Westerner who, many assumed, would free the Republican Party from Eastern liberal control - it was only after Watergate in 1974 that it became a new entity. Three right-wing activists (Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich, and Howard Phillips) all experienced in Washington politics and disenchanted with both Nixon and Ford, laid

the foundation of the New Right movement. Loosely structured - albeit well-financed and relatively well-organized - the New Right at that time encompassed think-tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute; general-purpose organizations such as the Conservative Caucus and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress; a host of "single issue" groups that focus on specific issues such as abortion, gay rights and gun control; and the Christian Right, set up by fundamentalist preachers such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson.

No political phenomenon in the past few decades, except perhaps the "Wallace movement", has attracted so much media attention as the New Right. Still more, argues Burton Yale Pine, "the New Right has become the single most dynamic and feared force in American politics" (Burton, 1982:274). Indeed, it was during the presidential election campaign of 1980 that it appeared to be at the height of its influence: it helped elect at least half a dozen conservative U.S. senators and a good number of representatives. It also boosted Ronald Reagan's election victory margin, particularly in the South.

The New Right emerged at a time of moral and cultural disorientation, hence its reliance on social and moral issues. As clearly evidenced by the movement's social agenda, New Rightists oppose abortion, gay rights, pornography, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), bussing for racial integration, and sex education in public schools. On the other hand, they support a strong national defence, the capitalist system, prayer in public schools, limited federal power, balanced budgets, the teaching of creationism alongside Darwin's theory of evolution, and capital punishment. By presenting these issues in emotional terms, New Rightists seek to arouse anxieties and call forth strong commitments, mobilizing large numbers of supporters in a short time. The ethical orientation of the New Right's agenda also provides a vital link between the "secular" political activists and the newly-politicized Evangelicals and Fundamentalists. One consequence of this approach is that it enhances the internal cohesiveness of the movement because the existence of external "enemies" sustains the unity and solidarity of the group. The commitment and appeal of the New Right to ethical and moral values - what Michael Lienesch calls "the moralistic politics" (Lienesch, 1993: 12) - was, at least at the beginning, strategic.

Female conservatism: an anti-feminist backlash

While admitting that traditional morality played an all-important role in the rise of the

New Right to power, sociologist Rebecca E. Klatch argues that “what is unique about the New Right is the new activism of women” (Klatch, 1987: 8).

The political involvement of the main female figures of the New Right originated in their opposition to the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA, ratified by the Senate in 1972 but finally defeated in 1982), the legalization of abortion (Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade,* 1973), and gay rights initiatives. Each in its own right, and as part of a package, raised questions about the proper roles and responsibilities of men and women, parents and children. Also, the national conference for International Women’s Year (IWY) held in Houston in 1977 confirmed the perception of feminism as an anti-family force, and accounted for the formation of a host of right-wing organizations. Who are the female operatives of the New Right? How did they organize?

Phyllis Schlafly, a former speech writer for Republican Senator Barry Goldwater from Arizona, laid the groundwork for an anti-Equal Rights Amendment movement, Eagle Forum, as early as 1967. In 1973, one year after the Senate had overwhelmingly passed the ERA, she created a national network called Stop-ERA whose main goal was to block ratification of the amendment at the state level. Schlafly began an incessant barrage of criticism in her public speeches and newsletter, the *Phyllis Schlafly Report.* But her most extreme criticism is *Power of the Christian Woman,* which is a relentless attack on what she calls “the disease called women’s liberation.” To her, feminism is synonymous with sin, and feminists are the cause of all the world’s woes. She describes them as psychologically unstable, “a handful of female chauvinists” who “get their psychological kicks” by opposing “an alleged oppression that exists only in distorted minds” (Schlafly, 1981:65;117;76).

Together with other ERA opponents Phyllis Schlafly charged, among other things, that the ratification of the amendment would imply that private schools would have to be co-ed, tax money would be used to pay for abortions, rape would be decriminalized, homosexuals could become schoolteachers and men could refuse to support their wives. The end result of the anti-ERA campaign was that the ERA ratification fell three states short of the thirty-eight required to amend the Constitution. As Flora Davis suggested, “if antifeminists hadn’t organized, the ERA would have passed in 1973 or 1974” (Davis, 1991: 388).

In 1977, popular singer Anita Bryant became a national symbol of conservative resistance to homosexual emancipation when she campaigned successfully against a “gay rights” ordinance - for inclusion of homosexuals in the local anti-discrimination law - in Dade County, Florida. The following year, she set up a national organization called “Save Our Children”, which worked for the passage of a California state initiative to ban self-declared homosexuals from teaching in public schools. California’s Proposition 6, sponsored by State Representative John Briggs, was finally defeated by voters, but the campaign there and in Florida consolidated an activist network opposed to gay rights.

In 1979, Beverly LaHaye - the wife of Rev. Tim LaHaye, a prominent figure of the Religious Right - launched “Concerned Women for America” expressly to combat “the stereotype of women brought by the National Organization of Women” (Quoted in Moen, 1992:52). According to the CWA recruitment brochure, Beverly LaHaye became politicized because of televised comments of Betty Friedan, founder of NOW, who purported to speak for all women while staking out a feminist position. Beverly LaHaye organized a small circle of friends to discuss opposition to the feminist agenda, particularly the Equal Rights Amendment. CWA was primarily a California-based composite of women’s prayer groups. In September 1987, Beverly LaHaye was chosen as a representative women’s leader to testify at a Senate hearing on the nomination of Judge Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. During the mid- and late 1980s, CWA devoted considerable resources to propaganda and material aid for Contra forces in Costa Rica. At the same time, CWA provided attorneys to parents’ groups in litigation to remove “secular humanist” books from public schools. As Sarah Diamond put it, “with its hand in virtually every issue, CWA remained one of the Christian Right’s cornerstone organizations, capable of shifting its focus as political opportunities changed” (Diamond, 1995:243).

Another leading female figure is Connie Marshner, executive vice-president of the Free Congress Foundation and executive editor of the *Family Protection Report.* In her speeches and writing, she calls for the restoration of heterosexual patriarchy and the control of men over their wives and children. Teenage sexuality, homosexuality, the freely determined sexuality of women, abortion, and contraception, all constitute a direct threat to male authority. With Marshner’s assistance the Republican Senator Paul Laxalt from Nevada drafted the “Family Protection Act” (FPA or Laxalt Bill), which was debated in Congress in 1981 but never voted on. The FPA would have eliminated federal laws supporting equal education, forbidden “intermingling of the sexes in any sport or other

school-related activities", denied federal funding to any school using textbooks portraying women in non-traditional roles, repealed all federal laws protecting battered wives from their husbands and banned federally funded legal aid for any woman seeking abortion counselling or a divorce. The "Family Protection Act" was probably the most important piece of proposed right-wing legislation designed to defend "family privacy" and patriarchal authority against federal intervention.

The mobilization of right-wing women represents a backlash movement, an attempt to take back the handful of gains that the feminist movement did manage to obtain for women in the 1960s and the 1970s. This backlash was aimed primarily at the organizations (NOW, Planned Parenthood), legislation (Equal Pay Act, Civil Rights Act) and ideas (liberalism, feminism, "secular humanism") that have most directly confronted patriarchal traditions regarding the place of women in society and the dominant norms of heterosexual love and marriage. Women's activism was directed at the dramatic changes in family life that have occurred most sharply during the past twenty years or so: the decline in both fertility and birth rates, the increase in the number of female-headed families, the sharp rise in the divorce rate, and the increased participation of women in the labour force. In the words of Flora Davis, "the heart of the anti-feminist argument was a defence of traditional sex roles" (Davis, 1991:389).

An analysis of the changing economic and demographic position of women in American society in the 1970s helps explain both the explosive appeal of modern feminism and the fierce opposition it aroused. Labour force participation became normative for women in the 1970s. Despite its ideological power, the notion that women belong to the home had lost much of its material basis. After the intensely family-oriented 1950s, the 1960s witnessed the re-emergence of the single woman. The numbers of unmarried women have also grown as a result of a burgeoning divorce rate which doubled between the early 1960s and mid-1970s (Evans, 1997:302). Higher divorce rates may reflect in part women's increased ability to support themselves and a consequent unwillingness to remain in unsatisfactory marriages. Single women have included growing numbers of never-married mothers of young children. While birth rates among married women fell, the proportion of births to unmarried teenagers grew. But women's most significant legal victory in that period was the legalization of abortion in 1973.

One of the earliest manifestations of the backlash against women's rights was the passage in 1976 of the Hyde Amendment cutting off Medicaid funding for abortions for

poor women (except when the mother's life is at stake, in the original version). Court challenges delayed the implementation of the Hyde Amendment, but Jimmy Carter nominated Joseph A. Califano, Jr., who halted federal funding of abortion by administrative order, as Secretary of Education and Welfare, The Hyde Amendment and the Supreme Court's decision in *Harris v. McRae*, which upheld that amendment, contained the anti-feminist and the anti-social welfare components of New Right politics in a nutshell.

Bolstered by the New Right, the Republican candidate Ronald Reagan was avowedly against abortion. During the 1980 presidential campaign, he made a pledge to only appoint to the federal courts judges who supported strong family values and who opposed abortion. By October of 1983, 30 percent of all United States district court judges and 27 percent of all United States court of appeals judges were Reagan appointees. If social conservatives were angered by the appointment to the Supreme Court of Sandra Day O'Connor - because of her mixed voting record on abortion -, they were highly satisfied with the appointment of Judge Antonia Scalia and the promotion of Justice William H. Rehnquist to chief justice. The Meese Commission on Pornography (1986) even suggested that women's professional advancement might be responsible for rising rape rates. With more women in college and at work now, the commission members reasoned in their report, women just have more opportunities to be raped.

When George Bush assumed the presidency in 1989, he urged "adoption not abortion" as a solution to unwanted pregnancies and resurrected the call for passage of a constitutional amendment to ban abortions. Also adding fuel to the fire was the formation in 1988 of "Operation Rescue," a national group, based in Atlanta, Georgia, that used aggressive methods to stop abortions, including blockading and even bombing clinics and birth control centres. In 1990, President Bush appointed David Souter to the Court to replace Lewis Powell. On the last day of the 1990-1991 term of the Court, the pro-choice Justice Thurgood Marshall resigned and George Bush nominated the conservative African American federal judge Clarence Thomas to replace him.

The continued onslaught of government attacks on women's programs and policies, when coupled with the Senate's treatment of Anita Hill during the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, seemed to energize the movement and produced considerable results in the 1992 elections. Feminists were united on two fronts - the need to keep abortion safe and legal, and the clear need for more women in elected positions. The result

was the election of Bill Clinton and a large number of new female pro-choice national and state legislators. Immediately after taking office in 1993, President Clinton lifted bans on foetal tissue research and on abortions on military bases, and ordered his administration to "promote the testing, licensing, and manufacturing" of RU-486, a pill which induces abortions without surgery. Although many states continue to add restrictions concerning abortions to their law books, RU-486 has become available following approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). More significant is the fact that Bill Clinton nominated Dr. Joycelyn Elders, a strong proponent of *Roe v. Wade*, as U.S. Surgeon General. Perhaps the most important signal concerning his support for abortion rights, however, was his appointment of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a women's rights pioneer, to the Supreme Court.

These 1992-1993 successes, however, appeared to lull some women into thinking that the fight was over. Women stayed home from the polls in 1994, and the most antifeminist Congress ever was elected. The 104th Congress (1994-1996) reversed the pro-choice 103rd Congress's liberalization of the Hyde Amendment, which for the first time had eased the restrictions on federal funding of abortions to include instances of rape and incest. The 104th Congress also enacted a ban on abortion coverage for federal employees and refused to remove a ban on abortions in overseas military hospitals. Not only does the Republican Congress continue to find ways to restrict abortion rights, but also nearly all of the states have enacted restrictions on abortion.

It is important to observe that female activists are well considered by their male counterparts because they are able to manipulate ideological symbols on behalf of the right-wing agenda. Their expertise in grass-roots mobilization is a key factor in broadening the New Right's cross-class appeal. As Robert B. Fowler et al., have noted, "Women are the soul of conservative religious struggles at the local level. […] It is there that conservative women are both the generals and foot soldiers in religio-political battles" (Fowler, Hertzke and Olson, 1999:179).

A split on the right

Contrary to widespread assumptions, right-wing women are not a homogeneous entity that can be measured by a single dimension. According to sociologist Rebecca E. Klatch, there are two worlds among women of the New Right, two worlds rooted in different realities: the "social conservatives" and the "*laissez-faire* conservatives" (also

known as free-marketeers). The fundamental values, the basic assumptions regarding human nature, and the hopes and fears at the heart of each world are distinct (Klatch, 1987:4).

In stark contrast to social conservatives who view the world through a religious lens, *laissez-faire* conservatives look at the world through the lens of liberty. Religious values colour all perceptions within the social conservative world; *laissez-faire* conservatives, on the other hand, view the world in terms of the political and economic liberty of the individual. In the *laissez-faire* conservative world-view, economic issues take precedence over social issues. Rather than viewing humans as creatures of unlimited passions that require moral restraint, *laissez-faire* conservatives view humans as endowed with free will. "While social conservatives consider the family to be the sacred unit of society," comments Rebecca E. Klatch, "*laissez-faire* conservatives believe the primary element of society is the rational, self-interested individual" (ibid.). Given these different vantage points, social and *laissez-faire* conservatives evaluate contemporary America in different terms. Both decry the current state of the country, believing America has moved away from her founding principles, but each assesses America's problems in essentially different ways. One laments the fact that America has departed from her religious traditions; the other deplores America's departure from the principles of *laissez-faire* and classical liberalism.

The preservation of traditional gender roles is at the very core of the social conservative woman's activism. Social conservatives envisage gender as a divinely ordained hierarchical ordering in which men have natural authority over women. Women's roles are essentially defined in terms of support for men and a general orientation toward others. In line with traditional notions of gender, women are characterized by their roles within the family - as wives and mothers. Men are the breadwinners; women are the nurturers, the caretakers. The social conservative woman fears that a gender-free society will mean a world dominated by self-interest, devoid of qualities as nurturance, altruism, and self-sacrifice associated with the female role. She resists the new role of the working woman which has altered marital decision making, sex-role attitudes, and expectations about childbearing, which have in turn led to the breakdown of the family. As Andrea Dworkin argues, "the Right offers women a simple fixed, predetermined social, biological, and sexual order" (Dworkin: 1988:22).

Notions of male authority, female submission, and women's "natural" orientation toward others are, understandably, antithetical to the *laissez-faire* conservative worldview. Like many feminists, laissez-faire conservative women believe there are few natural differences between the sexes. Extending their view of human nature also to men they envisage both sexes as rational, self-interested, and autonomous actors. Like men, women must be able to climb to the height of their talent in a marketplace free from outside interference. The *laissez-faire* conservative acts in defence of her self-interest in the marketplace, rather than protecting her interest as a woman within the family.

A further line of differentiation concerns each sub-group's perception of feminism. Social conservatives view feminism as an anti-family force, as a symbol of the narcissism associated with the "Me Decade" of the 1970s, and as an attack on the status of the homemaker. Day-care, abortion, and gay rights are all viewed as detrimental to the family and to the preservation of traditional values. *Laissez-faire* women, on the contrary, do not consider feminism to be a threat. What is more, they are pro-choice and support day-care, as long as it remains in private hands; they firmly reject any government legislation related to moral matters as an intrusion on individual liberty.

This schism within the New Right is historically based. Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab's classic study of the American right from 1790 to 1970 finds a continuous marriage of interests between two groups: those based in the less-educated lower economic strata, highly religious, intolerant of religious and ethnic minorities, and drawn to the non-economic issues of right-wing movements; and those rooted in the highly educated, high-income strata, less religious, tolerant of minorities, and committed above all to economic conservatism (Lipset and Raab, 1970).

Yet despite the different beliefs that separate these two worlds, a common symbolism - a "myth of common meaning" as it is called by Charles Elder and Roger Cobb in *The Political Uses of Symbols* - sustains the unity of the New Right. It is actually the potency of political symbols that allows the disparate perspectives of social and *laissez-faire* conservative women to come together in forming the New Right. In locating who or what is responsible for America's "drift," the two sub-groups are able to unite into a single cause.

The New Right is unified in its virulent opposition to two particular symbols: Communism and Big Government. For both sub-groups "Communism evokes images of the feared society, the inversion of those beliefs most cherished by each world view"

(Klatch, 1987:5). Although there is a shared emotional response to Communism, in reality there is little agreement on its substantive meaning. Essentially, for social conservatives Communism represents atheism and an attack on the family, while for *laissez-faire* conservatives Communism poses a threat to the economic and political liberty of the individual.

Similarly, Big Government is a potent unifying symbol of the New Right that mobilizes people of varying interests and backgrounds. “Get government off our backs” is a rallying cry of the new conservative movement. Yet again, beneath the surface of this common symbol rest substantively distinct meanings. While both groups consider Big Government a symbol of America on the road of decline, for social conservatives Big Government signifies the promotion of immorality, the endorsement of secular humanism, and the usurpation of traditional authority. *Laissez-faire* conservatives, on the other hand, view Big Government as an impediment to the individual’s economic liberty and as an intrusion on the individual’s political liberty.

Are New Right women coherent?

Being politically involved puts New Right activist women in a terrible dilemma: what can it mean to be active as a woman in a political movement that advocates women’s passivity and subordination? How does the social conservative woman justify her activism, given her adherence to conventional gender roles? To get a full sense of this dilemma, it is important to realize that women on both sides of the sides of the gender debate often have more in common with each other than many think. They frequently share a certain suspicion of men and a sense that women must ultimately rely on themselves. Besides, New Right women are anything but the ideal models of passive and sequestered womanhood that they are supposedly saluting. Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter elaborate: “women who espouse the most conservative views about women’s ‘place’ are often the most active speakers, agitators, demonstrators” (Gordon and Hunter, 1977-1978:17). In their campaigns against the progress of feminist views, women of the New Right embrace far more of the feminist platform than either they or their male leaders realize. They take advantage of feminism while publicly deploring its influence; their organizations are often modelled more on women’s rights organizations than on political organizations of the Right. And they borrow political rhetoric and tactics, too, from feminist events, speeches and literature.

Yet, social conservative women publicly declare that there are no tensions between their political activism and the traditional female role. For them, when women are altruistically working for the benefit of a larger cause, the seeming paradox disappears. The time and energy devoted to political activism is interpreted as part of the self-sacrifice and altruism essential to the female role. Being a housewife includes "cleaning up" the political world as well. For, through such action, the social conservative woman hopes to bring moral purity to a world filled with sin. For Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter, the connection is self-evident: "women are active, of course, because these campaigns represent a natural political extension of woman's work: family, children, church and morality" (ibid.). In a similar vein, Connie Marshner writes:

> A woman's nature is, simply, other-oriented … To the traditional woman self-centeredness remains as ugly and sinful as ever. The less time women spend thinking about themselves, the happier they are [...] Women are ordained by their nature to spend themselves in meeting the needs of others. And women, far more than men, will transmit culture and values to the next generation. There is nothing demeaning about this nature: it is ennobling" (Marshner, 1982:12).

The social conservative ideology expands to incorporate New Right women's "new roles," thus giving their actions and outlook both coherence and legitimacy.

What about the activism of *laissez-faire* conservative women? Unlike their social conservative counterparts, *laissez-faire* conservative women are not motivated by religious beliefs. Because they do not see themselves as bound to traditional roles, there is no seeming contradiction between their beliefs and their own roles as political leaders. *Laissez-faire* activists act out of a desire to defend their interest in the marketplace and not as members of a particular gender; they do not act in the collective interest of women. Contrary to the social conservatives who deny the existence of discrimination, *laissez-faire* activists deeply believe that sexual discrimination exists. In her *Political Woman*, Jeanne Kirkpatrick states that: "the men who control access to the inner citadels of legislative power resist the inclusion of women" (Kirkpatrick, 1974:127). If *laissez-faire* conservatives are in accord with feminists in their recognition of sexual discrimination, they depart from feminists in envisaging the solutions to women's problems. Unlike most feminists who look toward collective solutions to put an end to sexual inequality, laissez-faire activists tend to look toward individual solutions as a way to end discrimination.

Conclusion

It seems clear that the New Right is fraught with contradictions and tensions which may be detrimental to the movement in the long run. A closer look reveals that the various components of the New Right have different and even conflicting, priorities and perspectives. Ironically, the fears expressed by each of the two female sub-groups of the New Right are actually realized through the actions of the other. The world so much decried by the social conservatives is, in fact, the world promoted by *laissez-faire* conservatives, a world without altruism and void of any notion of responsibility and care for others. Conversely, the *laissez-faire* conservatives' fear of a world in which the individual is constrained by external authority is the very world promoted by social conservatives, a world in which there is one interpretation of the Bible, one cultural tradition, and one correct way of life. Not surprisingly, social conservatives often find *laissez-faire* conservatives too materialistic, and the latter are usually uncomfortable with the Puritanism of the former.

Now, during a time of increased divorce and the feminization of poverty, women seek to assuage their anxiety, to secure their place in the social structure. Nonetheless, the New Right's determination to bring women back into the home represents a basic misunderstanding of current economic realities, including the long-range interests of the capitalist class as a whole, which continues to rely heavily on a (sex-segregated) female labour force.

Today, the New Right is a social and political movement controlled almost totally by men. In both local and national conflicts, conservative women lack elite access compared to that of more liberal religious women. "This is perhaps," comment Robert B. Fowler et al., "the single most important problem conservative women have in politics. They are the insurgents, whereas feminist voices, including religious ones dominate" (Fowler et al., 1999:180). Moreover, the views promoted by right-wing women are not representative of most women in the United States; a tremendous diversity characterizes the many organizations that connect women to politics.

If the New Right movement has failed to enact many of the specific legislative measures on its agenda, it is basically because of the dissensions between its factions. It is, however, undeniable that it has made great strides in the wider realm of public relations. The "pro-family" campaign staged by the New Right cannot easily be written off as either religious fanaticism or mere opportunism. It has achieved a mass following because it is, in fact, a response to real material conditions and deep lying fears, a response that is

utterly reactionary, but nevertheless relevant. In addressing these cultural dislocations, the New Right answers with the reassurance of moral absolutism: the solution to the problems of abortion, teenage sexuality, and conflicts in female-male relations is to simply abolish them. There are no hard choices, no ambiguities.

Because the debate raises issues concerning the family, sexual freedom, and reproductive rights, women will continue to have a central stake in this battle. Indeed, right-wing women are increasingly willing to seek power in order to achieve their goals and protect their interests. The quest for power requires them to be away from home and less and less dependent on their husbands. The future of the New Right depends to some extent on the response by those who fall outside its borders. For those who are concerned about America's shift to the Right, it is essential to understand that the New Right speaks to real social problems. Only to the extent that the issues raised by the Right are recognized and addressed is it likely that the rightward tide will be turned.

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STANLEY SPENCER: "WHY MUST A MAN HAVE ONLY ONE WOMAN?" - THE ENTANGLEMENT OF AN ARTIST IN A TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP

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Stanley - premiered at the Royal National Theatre at the Cottesloe on 1 February 1996 - is one of the latest in an impressive series of biographical plays by Pam Gems, - born in rural England in 1925 - which include *My Name is Rosa Luxembourg* (1975), *Queen Christina* (1977), *Piaf* (1978), *Camille* (1984), *Pasionaria* (1985), *The Blue Angel* (1991) and *Marlene* (1996). Most of the plays preceding *Stanley* analyze the lives of women heroines and their painful struggle and inner conflict to maintain their individuality and to achieve their independence, especially when faced with dual roles such as public duties and private desires. Pam Gems's play *Stanley* breaks the tradition of writing women's biographies to centre on the life of a genius of modern painting, the distinctively English artist Stanley Spencer.

Stanley Spencer was born in 1891 in Cookham-on-Thames, Berkshire, where he lived for most of his life and where he died in 1959. He attended the Slade School of Art London from 1908-1912. During this period he lived in this village situated on the river Thames, while other art students used to rent rooms in fashionable Bloomsbury. His fellow students at the Slade School gave him the nickname "Cookham" due to his deep attachment to his native village. Stanley stood out from his contemporaries at the School (many of whom were to become leading artists of their generation, as for instance David Bomberg, Paul Nash, Dora Carrington ...) because of his "most original mind". This opinion was expressed by his painting tutor Henry Tonks and is cited by the Curator of the Modern Collections at the Tate Gallery, Judith Collins (1996). Spencer's originality of mind resided partly in his steady, profound attachment to his small village, which was for him his heaven on earth. As a student he began to use this local place - its houses, streets and gardens and its local people - as settings for his imaginative painting. Many depict Jesus Christ enacting the events of His life in Cookham. He placed a rapt *Nativity* in

blossoming meadows near a neighbour's estate, and asked one of the local butcher's daughters, Dorothy Wooster, to pose with the milkmaid Peggy Hatch in the old Cookham schoolroom for a re-enactment of *The Visitation*. (For further information cf. Richard Cork (1996), Art Critic of *The Times*).

Young Spencer's biblical scene of ecstatic rapture was disrupted during the First World War; from 1916-1918 he served as a hospital orderly with the Field Ambulance Services in Macedonia. He became a daily witness to carnage and human suffering. The memory of the atrocities of the war haunted Spencer for his entire life. In the play he recalls the cruel events, his face expressionless, followed by a rictus of a grimace. In a frightening voice he utters his failure to help:

> STANLEY. I ... wasn't able to ... just one lorry after another. Bodies. People - pieces of people. Arms ... legs ... all lovingly made. ... (Pam Gems, 1996:3).

Spencer was prepared to repair some of the damage inflicted upon his fellow soldiers, to alleviate their pain. This notion of redemption was one that remained with him all his life. Several of his paintings proclaim the message of the inspirational and redeeming power of Christ's love. Two patrons of the artist built him the Sandham Memorial Chapel at Burghclere in Berkshire, finished in 1926, so that he could paint his memories of his war service on murals. The east wall of this chapel bears one of Spencer's most unusual compositions showing the biblical subject of the Resurrection from the Book of Revelation, when on the final Day of Judgement everyone is called up from the grave to have the moral probity of their lives assessed. In contrast to the Italian Renaissance painter Giotto, whom Spencer admired, who shows Christ as a stern Judge, dividing the souls into the redeemed and the damned, Spencer's painting is unique because he sends everyone to Heaven. *His* Christ accepts a grave cross from each resurrected soldier killed in the war. Instead of judging them, Christ acts as their compassionate and loving companion. This interpretation bears witness to the inimitable nature of Spencer's imaginative world.

On entering the Cottesloe theatre, the spectator was immediately drawn in with the pleasure of recognition and wonder, as the whole space had been transformed into a symbol of divine and earthly love, covered with reproductions of Spencer's paintings. At the back of the dark stage, the impressive *Cookham Resurrection* was glowing conspicuously, and along both sides of the theatre, huge panels from his later murals *Shipbuilding on the Clyde-Burners* enclosed the space high above the audience.

As the spectator came into the theatre, Spencer (brilliantly played by Anthony Sher) was already painting high up on the wall, his back to us, his face invisible, completing the *Cookham Resurrection*. By nature short in stature, his black figure appeared even more dwarfed at the bottom of his monumental mural, which represents the dead rising up from their graves in the green churchyard. Spencer was quite obsessed with the Resurrection theme; he painted numerous versions of this biblical subject throughout his career. He finished the very large oil on canvas *The Resurrection* in 1926. Stanley himself appears twice in the painting, as does his wife Hilda Carline, whom he married in 1925 during the execution of the picture.

Pam Gems, a convinced feminist playwright, not only shows Spencer's essential artistic perception and sensitivity in her play, she also portrays his extravagant, selfish attitude to women, in particular to Hilda Carline, his devoted wife. Hilda Carline was herself a considerable painter; her paintings are exhibited in the Tate Gallery, London. She was his perfect muse, his passionate sexual partner and his understanding soul-mate. Nevertheless, the spiritual and physical fervour of his wife was not enough for Stanley. He believed in the possibility of naïvely commuting between her and other women. In the play Gems draws on the erotic triangle between Spencer and his two wives, Hilda Carline and Patricia Preece. Spencer's village Cookham attracted two lesbian painters: Patricia Preece and Dorothy Hepworth. They lived in the neighbourhood, in a cottage (Moor Thatch) by the meadow. Patricia, a failed society painter, sold Dorothy's paintings under her name, and lived at the expense of her lesbian lover. Hepworth was herself a more talented, more prolific, more serious and successful painter. Spencer meets "the posh pair" (1996:13) at a party and is besotted by Patricia's *aristocratic hauteur*. He is excited by her four inch high-heels, black stockings, and tantalizing manner. Patricia craved elegant clothes, silk lingerie, expensive gloves, shoes and hats, to indulge in her accentuated Narcissism. She was convincingly portrayed by Anna Chancellor, who glides around the stage venomously plotting how to snare Stanley. For her, Stanley's social and economical position are seen as a unique opportunity to solve her own economic needs and social ambitions. She is anxious to be introduced to famous people and to get an exhibition organized through Stanley's agent Dudley. Patricia exploits his naïve and true devotion to her, titillating him sexually, stripping for him and sitting for him, but never satisfying him. She turns out to be an erotic blackmailer, sneering at Stanley's blind and passionate infatuation. She first steals his money, buying expensive clothes and perfumes; then she steals him away from

Hilda, robbing him of his wife and home. In the following speech, Patricia Preece maliciously observes, kissing Stanley lightly:

> PATRICIA. ... I know you don't like painting landscapes, but they sell. Let me take over your affairs, Stanley ... Neither you nor Hilda is good at money. I am. For a start, with Hilda away all the time now, you don't need that big house, you might as well sell it. Better still, put it in my name. STANLEY *looks up.*
> After all, it'll belong to both of us in the end. After the divorce.
> STANLEY *puts down his sketching block.*
> My dear, you can't possibly spend the rest of your life paying out hard-earned money to keep Hilda - who gives you nothing - and the two girls. Hilda has a very well situated family of her own. Let them look after her. You - are an artist. Your loyalty must - must be to the work And to me of course. Do you like my red nails? (1996:40-41)

After securing her marriage with Spencer, Patricia continues to deny him her body. Immediately after the wedding she travels with Dorothy to St. Ives, leaving Stanley behind. Her pores exude a cold meanness and cruelty, when she assures him that, as an artist, he must have whatever he needs. If what he needs for happiness is women, women, women, then she, Patricia, will get them for him. Whispering in his ear she promises: "...you shall have women, as many women as you want" (1996:44). Though these words ironically recall Stanley's wish to be able to have many women, or wives, at this moment his mind is only fixed on *one*, Patricia, who has just pushed him off her, after trying "to mount" her.

At one moment in the play, Stanley childishly and guilelessly asks one of his friends, the painter Augustus John: "What I want to know is, why must a man have only one woman?" (1996:55) His naïve proposal of a triangular relationship, himself, Hilda and Patricia, seems to him the most natural thing for a wife to accept. For Stanley, sexual freedom is a condition of artistic activity and creativity. He does not understand why 'polygamy' should be a derogatory term. For him, it is a "sign of intelligence"; it helps him to "reach the most intense state of being and awareness ..." (1996:55). He can feel, as he says, "total fusion and ecstasy with Hilda [...] and with Patricia" (1996:55). Not so Hilda, unable to share him with another woman. Deborah Findlay portrays a tender and finally heart-broken Hilda, utterly destroyed in the end by her selfish husband and the second Mrs Spencer, Patricia.

Sexuality played a major part in Spencer's painting. Though he can be considered a peculiarly English artist because of the enchanted attraction he felt for his native Cookham, he was exceptionally un-English in his attitude to physical love. Rather than repressing his desires and feelings, he used to talk endlessly about them. He was convinced that the erotic

was the essence of religion, and his naked portraits of both women have a shocking, fleshy immediacy. At one moment in Gems's play, Spencer asks Hilda to squat down, because he wants to paint the inside of her thighs. As he sketches her inner thighs, he has an erection (1996:37). Sex, art - and God, merge into one thing for Spencer: universal Love. In this sense he remarks to Hilda: "... when you're there I'm with you and I'm with God and it's all one - and everything is All Right" (1996:74). The play is in fact constructed around the central pun on "do", which for Spencer means to paint, to make love, to establish a union with God. Spencer had a good knowledge of oriental religions. He fervently admired Indian temple sculpture which represents couples indulging in sexual intercourse in very acrobatic positions. These sculptures were based on the premise that the couplings were contemplated as a metaphor for divine intercourse, that is, for the most intimate communion between the worshipper and the beloved.

As Stanley is unable to consummate this sexual union with Patricia, not understanding what is wrong with her, he wants Hilda to come back to him. He selfishly tells her that, as an artist, he must have whatever he needs: "Why can't I have two wives if that's what I need?" He needs Hilda, ... and Patricia. He wants his divorced wife to accept an arrangement, thus repeating the proposal which was sarcastically made by Patricia:

> STANLEY. That I can be married to both of you. She says when you and I are ... together again, she'll ... she and I can ... we can do it too. I can have her as well. This is what I want, it's what I need. She understands that. She's not conventional, she's an upper class woman. (1996:53)

Undoubtedly, this is one of the play's most comic, but, at the same time, most tragic moments. The childish Stanley does not understand why Patricia agrees so easily to handing over Stanley to Hilda, to "do" it with his first wife, rather than with her, who feels repulsion at the "bulging great lump" (1996:79) between his legs. Hilda is bewildered at the suggestion that she should be Stanley's *mistress*, after the divorce. She was a devout and high-principled Christian Scientist, and considered marriage a perfect, sacred communion. At the beginning of the play, she fervently declares:

> HILDA. We're one. We're married. One flesh. Us. You and me. It's sacred, and we're sacred and you're adorable and I love every part of you and it's wonderful ... (1996: 13)

To "do it" outside marriage, is adultery and sin for her. This belief and her desired "wholeness" with her former husband, a wholeness consisting of one man and one woman,

makes it absolutely impossible for her to accept her husband's desired *ménage à trois*. She feels deeply bewildered at Stanley's queer relationship with Patricia, wondering whether they sleep together. This direct question is answered by Stanley with "Not as such ... She can't manage it. There's something wrong with her" (1996:52-53). Hilda rejects being reduced to the simple role of "a fill in", only because Patricia "doesn't want to or can't" (1996:61) sleep with Stanley. With dawning awareness, she guesses what is wrong with Patricia and recommends Stanley to "tell her to see a doctor" (1996:61)! Later on, it is Patricia who selfishly asks Hilda to come back, because "it would clear the atmosphere ... solve everything ... Dorothy and I could get on with our lives" (1996:69). Hilda, bravely, does not accept Patricia's offer based as it is on pure self-interest. She gathers her final strength to hurl at her rival her recognition of the true situation of her relationship with Stanley:

> HILDA. You say you are his wife. But you don't live with him. He says there is nothing ... that you and he ... I've always known that you and Dorothy ... that you ... you live a more sophisticated life ... but if that's the case and you don't want him .. don't want your closeness to Miss Hepworth to be invaded ... then what is Stanley to you but a means of paying your debts! (1996:69)

There is a very fine balance between comedy and tragedy in the play, which is achieved especially by the stage technique of juxtaposition. The play slides in a cinematic way from scene to scene (there are 9 scenes in Act I and 14 in Act II). We are presented with complex stage pictures, where Dorothy and/or Patricia, as well as Stanley and/or Hilda are present on stage simultaneously. This heightens the dramatic impact of the play, as the audience perceives visually the cruelty shown towards Hilda by witnessing Stanley's pathetic infatuation with Patricia, by observing Dorothy and Patricia as a loving couple, Dorothy's jealousy - "I can't bear to think of his hands on you" (1996:50) - and Patricia's wicked justification of her relationship for both their benefits. We literally see Stanley fulfilling his wish, or need, to commute between Patricia and Hilda, jumping out of bed with Hilda, getting dressed and crossing to the two lesbians' cottage, where Patricia begins to strip off for him, while Dorothy watches them as a puzzled witness. Hilda's physical degeneration and mental illness, the latter caused by her terrible pain of having been robbed of her home and Stanley - missing his face so much, adds pathos to her fate. In one scene, Stanley complains about his recent economic difficulties, asking Hilda to live on two pounds a week, while we watch him buying jewels for Patricia. Hilda remains on stage

when Patricia takes out the engagement ring and puts it on her finger. She is faint, and then, in a timid voice, she wonders how Stanley can be happy knowing that she is in such a plight. And she exclaims in despair: “What you are doing is murder” (1996:43).

When Stanley realizes that he has committed a great error, he tries helplessly to convince himself that his infatuation with Patricia is partly Hilda’s fault for being so unselfish, for being so negligent with her physical appearance (Hilda was a rather heavy, odd-looking woman), not making herself more attractive to him - “you’re all dropped” (1996:24), paying all her attention to the babies and neglecting him, for being absent from home too often. His initial enthrallment with Patricia turns to despair, disdain, even hatred. In his decisive confrontation with Patricia, demanding an annulment of their marriage which she viciously refuses, he recalls Hilda’s accusation of murder:

> STANLEY.You’ve had every penny off me, my house - Hilda’s house, the house I bought for Hilda and my children - ... I wasn’t allowed in here. I married you because you wanted it, and the minute the ring was on your finger you wouldn’t let me through the door. I’ve looked a complete fool to the whole world. I don’t know how I’ve kept my sanity, and what it did to Hilda is enough to put me in mind of murder. (1996:78)

Patricia’s total invasion and destruction of their lives causes Hilda’s mental illness. We find her in a mental home, and later in a hospital, where Stanley visits her daily. At her bedside he recollects why he married Patricia, out of pure social vanity, because he was so proud of the way she wore clothes, the way she could talk to people, walk into a room like a princess (See 1996:75). After Hilda’s death from cancer Stanley, the polygamist, realizes too late that she was “the absolute essence of joy” (1996:74) to him, that she was “a marvellous present” to him (1996:73). He is anxious to paint an altar-piece of her with all the things they loved together.

Spencer spent the rest of his life writing thousands of love-letters to Hilda, and talking ceaselessly to his beloved dead first wife, to someone who understood everything, because of their holy bond and spiritual relationship. The play ends as Stanley sits painting in the village street of his dear Cookham. “Sir Stanley” now, greeted by ordinary country people and gentry alike. Patricia watches indignantly the “common little man” (1996:83), “the dreadful little oik” (1996:23) *her husband*, and insists, *grasping* to the very end, on being called Lady Spencer, thus exploiting Stanley’s title, the only thing left for her to take from him.

Stanley is a beautiful, moving play about human vanity and selfishness, about human suffering; but also about profound, lasting fidelity in art and love.

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THE *"BLUES"* OF VIRGINITY

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> "The blue ribbons - blue is the colour of the Virgin [...] - signified that the wearer was a child of Mary, and had dedicated herself to the Virgin and promised to emulate her in thought, word and deed: her chastity, her humility, her gentleness. She was the culmination of womanhood. As my agnostic father maintained, *it was a good religion for a girl."*
>
> (Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: the myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary)*

The importance of myths in our life as fundamental criteria in the ordering of society is usually minimalised. It is only with difficulty that we come to realize how significant their influence upon our culture is. Myths are myths because they consider themselves to be the only orders possible, and they do not stand back to question themselves; they keep us within their framework and prevent us from "getting out" and asking questions.

The "virgin" attribute for Mary may very well have been a translation error. It seems that the Hebrew term indicating the socio-legal status of a young unmarried woman was substituted by the Greek term *parthenos,* which rather specified the physiological and psychological condition of virginity (Kristeva, 1986:163). Many Gnostic sources such as for instance *The Gospel of Philip,* drastically ridicule the idea of referring the virgin birth to Mary, as though she conceived apart from Joseph - the argument being that the virgin birth refers instead to "the mysterious union of the two divine powers, the Father of All and the Holy Spirit"- (Pagels, 1990:75).

These did not however prevent the myth of the Virgin Mary from becoming one of the most powerful imaginary constructs in the history of civilization.

My essay will address the myth of the Virgin Mary, focusing on the circumstances that made such a symbol satisfying and will try to explore the following questions: Why does the only powerful female figure in Christianity (and Western civilization) encompass

such a schizophrenic paradox: be a mother yet a virgin? Why did there arise a situation in which Mary came to be celebrated for her virginity rather than for being the mother of Jesus? (After all we do call her the Virgin Mary and not Mother Mary!) What exactly in the portrayal of the *maternal as virginal* functions to gratify the male? And what exactly in this portrayal does also serves to satisfy women so that both sexes find a common ground?

As we follow the story we quickly notice a tendency to break any connections between the ordinary, common woman and the Virgin Mary. The humanity of the Virgin Mary is not always obvious. In being cleared of sin - for instance, Mary distinguishes herself from mankind. Until her encounter with the Holy Spirit the human nature of Virgin Mary is the common nature every human being is born with, i.e. a carrier of the old sin. After her contact with the Spirit, Virgin Mary acquires a dimension that we lack. Her human nature does not retain the sin that limits our nature because God does not leave room for the sin. No sin equates to no death. Therefore, the Virgin Mary becomes superior to us, a *Godded* nature, notwithstanding one that it is still human, a nature familiar to us but a human nature in which sin is dead.

Whence the absence of the masculine element in the conception and the birth of Jesus? Christian doctrine presents the human nature Jesus inherited from Mary as a nature in which the action of the Holy Spirit substituted for “masculinity”. As male as he is, Jesus’ human nature is a product of anything but masculinity if I may say so. He doesn’t have a father on earth, just one in Heavens. The masculine element in Jesus’ human nature is nil. The only earthly parent of Jesus is the woman, the Virgin that alone offers the human material from which God takes the blood to create the body. Jesus should have definitely had Mary’s blood group, as there was no other blood mixed in the body of the Christ. A woman’s blood is therefore the only component of the mass of cells from which He will form His body. Generically speaking Jesus is feminine yet masculine by historical representation.

But “why be a virgin?” to quote the question-title of one of the chapters in Karen Armstrong’s book, *The Gospel according to Woman*. Interestingly enough, after stating the idea that virginity was what men suggested to women as a solution to their problems – a solution that couldn’t possibly work for women as it was not genuine for them but rather a projection of the male’s neurosis about sexuality, the author brings us to virginity conceived as a means of escaping men’s domination, a means of claiming equality with men, and in that sense she compares the virgin with the feminist. The feminist is definitely

striving for sexual liberation. However, like the virgin, the feminist tries to gain independence from men, and even autonomy (Armstrong, 1986:121).

The Immaculate Conception is only discreetly suggested in the Gospels: "*Mary said to the angel, <But how can this come about since I do not know man*? >", Luke 1.34 and "*The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, <Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what it is in her by the Holy Spirit*>", Matthew 1.20. According to this scenario of impregnation without sexual union a woman denies the other sex (man), thus being preserved from masculine intervention, and conceives with a third "term", non-person, the Spirit (I am aware of how highly excentric to the Christian tradition this might sound).

By becoming the mother of Jesus, a parallel between Mother and Son becomes necessary. Consequently, Mary is deprived of sin, and thus deprived of death (she leaves the world by Dormition or Assumption). Then she needs to be given power: she is proclaimed queen and declared Mother of Church - the divine institution on earth. Neither Christ – as king, nor his father, is pictured as Mary the queen is: wearing crowns, diadems and other costly paraphernalia. And finally, the relationship with Mary becomes the prototype of love relationships "following" - as Kristeva mentions – "two fundamental aspects of Western love: courtly love and child love, thus fitting the entire range that goes from sublimation to asceticism and masochism" (Kristeva, 1986:165).

How did Western Christianity organize this powerful imaginary construct represented by the Virgin Mary? Four dogmas were defined and became articles of faith. Mary's *divine motherhood* and her *virginity* were both declared by councils of the early Church and have therefore continued to be accepted by most of the reformed Christian groups. The *immaculate conception* washing her of all the stains of original sin was proclaimed in 1854, and her *Assumption*, body and soul, into heaven, which Pope Pius XII defined in 1950. Whether the Virgin Mary experienced death at all is still an issue today at the Vatican together with the traditional and widespread faith in her perpetual virginity - her unbroken hymen - *post partum* ('after birth') as well as *in partu* ('during'). She is entitled to a special worship of her own - *hyperdulia*. God is owed *latria* (adoration) and the saints' *dulia* (veneration), but Mary occupies the principal mediating position, as a creature belonging both to earth and heaven (Warner, 1976:123).

The basic argument behind the doctrine of the Assumption is provided by means of the Christian equivalence between spiritual impurity and bodily decay, which declares that

the all pure Virgin was spared the dissolution of the grave. Within such patterns we can to some extent decipher the sacred and the profane as well as human desires and fears.

Asceticism, on the other hand, as developed by the Fathers of the Church, was a way of legitimizing the postulate of the Immaculate Conception. The relation was simple: sexuality is intertwined with death: they mutually implicate each other. John Chrysostom in *On Virginity* clearly expressed this idea: "*For where there is death there is also sexual copulation, and where there is no death there is no sexual copulation either*". Augustine and Aquinas opposed this view however; they strongly condemned concupiscence and considered Mary's virginity simply a logical precondition of Christ's sinlessness. The Orthodox Church has emphasized Mary's virginity even more ardently (a fact possibly explained by a more powerful legacy of matriarchy in Eastern European societies). Mary was opposed to Eve: "*Death came through Eve but life came through Mary*" (Jerome, Letter 22).

The Christian virgin birth of Jesus represents the only image of a mother of God who bore a child without male assistance. In the case of pagan goddesses the sign of the virgin rarely endorses chastity as a virtue. Venus, Ishtar, Astarte, the love goddesses of the Near East and classical mythology are entitled virgins despite their lovers. In the case of Artemis, Athena, and Hippolyte, the Amazon queen, their sacred virginity symbolized their autonomy with little or no moral connotation at all. Their virginity signified that they had retained the freedom of choice: to take lovers or to reject them.

Such an image survived in some cases. Elizabeth I was entitled the Virgin Queen - not because she refused lovers, but as an indication she could not be subjugated or possessed. However, virginity only rarely preserved the notion of female independence in Christian times.

What Christianity did inherit from the classical world was the idea that virginity was a powerful magic and conferred strength and ritual purity. Hera, (Zeus' wife) for example, renewed her maidenhead annually when nymphs dipped her in the spring at Canathus. Celebrants of the sacred mysteries often prepared themselves by abstaining from food, drink and sexual intercourse in order to acquire the strength and purity appropriate to serving the gods. It was about a magic state of power rather than any ethical consideration concerning the immorality of sex itself. Elements of this survived in Christian asceticism, and the idea is probably connected with the prescribed celibacy of priesthood. But Christianity changed the concept of virginity and made it embrace a fully developed

ascetic philosophy. This shift from virgin birth to virginity, from religious sign to moral doctrine transformed a mother goddess like the Virgin Mary into an effective instrument of asceticism and female subjection.

The idea that virginity confers extraordinary strength and power operates on two different levels. On the one hand, Fathers of the Church proclaimed that virginal life reduced the special penalties of the fall in women, and was therefore holy. And on the other hand the virgin body represented the supreme image of wholeness, created by God, and wholeness was equated with holiness. The virgin body is the sign of the natural and the integral, the foremost image of purity. Therefore, virginity and self-inflicted hardship (such as, for example, fasting) were prescribed as possible ways of correcting the faults of female nature.

Fasting, like chastity, was prescribed for both sexes, but like virginity, fasting had a special meaning for women. Amenorrhea, the absence of menstruation, developed rapidly and its significance was the elimination of the curse of Eve.

Because it could secure a degree of independence and autonomy, the ascetic life exercised a tremendous attraction for women. As an answer to the problem of equality and autonomy the nun's vocation is similar to the lesbian's. By detaching themselves from the traditional roles of women, by abjuring all relations with men, female virgins established a certain freedom and autonomy and led lives totally distinct from that of married women. Obviously, satisfaction in such conditions would vary from one case to another, but at a general level the solution is inadequate as long as the foundation of an ethic of sexual abstinence is laid in fear and loathing of the female's body functions, in the identification of the evil with the flesh and the flesh with woman.

Thus, paradoxically, the very conditions that make the Virgin sublime are beyond the powers of a woman to fulfil unless she denies her own sexuality. To accept virginity as the ideal of purity implicitly demands to accept the ordinary female condition as impure. Virginity as an ideal implies contempt for sex and consequently for motherhood, with the result that far from remaining a privileged state undertaken by a few women of vocation, it invokes and reinforces a sense and construction of sin applicable to both the married and the unmarried. The limited hard-won independence of nuns was gained at great cost for women – it strengthens the belief in the inferiority of their state. Today the attitude towards motherhood is either one of rejection (avant-garde feminist groups who have aimed particularly to desanctify the family and to demystify motherhood) or one of a conscious or

unconscious acceptance of its traditional representation (by the majority of people, women and men). All the feminist work in the field – in favour or against – has not managed to provide us with a new understanding of women's continued desire to have children, a new understanding of the mother's body, of the physical and psychological suffering of childbirth, etc. The need for a post-virginal discourse on motherhood is being felt. What the myth of the Virgin Mother does offer us is the image of a unique woman - a feminine ideal, an inaccessible goal for any real concrete woman. Kristeva suggests that the virginal maternal is a way of dealing with feminine paranoia. When coming to establish what are the particular "aspects of the feminine psyche for which that representation of motherhood [as virginal] does not provide solutions or provides one that is felt as too coercive by the twentieth-century woman" (1986:182) what Kristeva mentions first of all is the silence in regards to the maternal body. "For men we have to be their bodies" says Irigaray (1991:48). The world they built removed them further and further from their relation to the corporeal. Motherhood means first of all the body - the body men need to distance themselves from. It may be that the virgin mother - as the impossible model for motherhood - was successful as it limited the power of "common" motherhood – a power men feared.

Why is the Virgin Mary "a good religion for a girl"? It promised something it could not provide – a certain degree of independence and autonomy for women, but only at the cost of admitting their inferiority as such, their *wicked* nature. The assumption was wrong from the very beginning and thus it could not give women their much deserved and sought-after liberation.

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Speaking and Writing Her Own Self

PERFORMANCE AND THE SUBVERSION OF "FEMININITY"
in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*

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Sylvia Plath has long been hailed as a feminist writer of great significance, her suicide at the age of thirty being interpreted as a direct consequence of male dominance in a society that was preventing women from asserting their own identity, from making their voice heard. However, readings of Plath's works that are set out to find there political sustenance are, in my opinion, doomed to failure. In her diary we see her oscillating between total acceptance and total refusal of traditional representations of the status of the woman. She does not produce a coherent feminist discourse. On the contrary, everything she writes is discontinuous and very often contradictory. Framing her as a feminist writer can also mean different things according to what we consider 'feminism' to be.

What I will try to discuss in this paper is the ambivalent positions that Plath takes towards 'femininity' as both a social construct as well as what is considered to be a 'natural' state of the being, necessary for anchoring identity. I will also use the term 'femininity' also for what other writers call 'femaleness' because I believe that there is no such thing as the 'natural' state of women eluding any form of social inscription. As I will stress further on, I support the idea that even our bodies and our perceptions of our bodies are socially codified, so it is not appropriate to use two terms to designate the same reality: the social construction of the female sex.

The approach I will use in analyzing the way Plath performs and subverts femininity, as a trace of identity, will draw on the rhetoric of post-structuralist theories of gender and feminists appropriations of them. In the view of these theories, neither sex nor gender is a pre-discursive entity. The sexed body as well as the sexed mind is constructed within culture, by the different discourses of different institutions. Through all these discourses a relation of power is envisaged.

"You are not born a woman, you become one" (de Beauvoir, 1998:8). Feminist thought, beginning with the liberal, humanist feminists of the 19th century and continuing through the 20th century, through the political and ideological action of the second-wave feminists, set out, basically, to bridge the gap between the gender (social) constructions of the two sexes in order to make equality possible. Most feminists who advocated the equality of the sexes tried to elude the body, as biological destiny, from their conceptualizations, as de Beauvoir does through this statement.

This happened because the body was seen as a hindrance in reaching the transcendence of Man. For centuries women have been defined only as body, as sensibility, as nature, while the man allotted for himself the realm of the mind, of transcendence, of the seraphic spaces above materiality. In the story that man tells to himself, the woman, as the Other through which He can define himself, is, through her body, the sinner, tempting the man into corporeality. Valorizing woman's body in this context meant accepting the drawbacks that the very use of the word 'body' brings to the dichotomy body-mind.

Such an account of the process of 'becoming a woman' would be challenged by theorists of the female body as the site of difference, who were to support the idea that becoming man's equal would in fact obscure the specificity of woman's body. Among those theorists, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva have tried to reinstate the female body as a source of positive difference.

This original body that women must discover beyond Symbolic representation within the phallocentric language, is the body before the Law, the pre-Oedipal continuous, floating, multiple, fluid entity that was symbiotically linked to the maternal body. All these three theorists have insisted on the remarkable subversive power that a writing that inscribed this maternal symbiosis, could have against the established hierarchies. Kristeva sees this insurgence, in poetic language, Cixous in the *écriture femme.*

However, developing a discourse about positive difference within a language that in itself places woman in the position of the degraded other, as the body that is defined by a double lack can turn to be another phallocentric approach. Idealizing a 'natural' woman's body proved to be alienating for those who declared themselves lesbians or for those who have seen that the experience of their bodies does not match the positive description given by these white, European, women theorists.

The idea that there is an original pre-discursive, natural, sexed body would be challenged by male philosophers, especially by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, but also by post-structuralist feminists like Elisabeth Grosz, Judith Butler and Monica Wittig. In their opinion, the distinction that had been made by previous feminists between sex and gender has no validity because even the category of sex, even the 'natural' is inscribed culturally by the discourses around the individual.

"It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (as a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed' nature or a 'natural sex' is produced and established as pre-discursive', prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts (Butler, 2000:21).

This radical refusal of the dichotomy between gender and sex is part of a total discarding of the binary system of oppositions that cannot function without ascribing a certain power relationship between the two terms. Another binary pair that it is envisaged should be discussed in completely other terms, once applying this parity of gender and sex, is the body-mind dichotomy.

We have seen ways in which this dichotomy has functioned for feminist thought, in its devaluation and revaluation of the female body. The main step made by the post-structuralist thought is a complete erasure of the concept of opposition. There is no mind or subjectivity without body and no body without mind. Instead of the traditional opposition mind and body, Elisabeth Grosz, uses two terms: *embodied subjectivity* and *psychical corporeality* to emphasize the interweaving between the two.

Although written long before these theoretical developments, Plath's *Journals* can be analyzed from the point of view of the post-structuralist postulates. The writer's discourse oscillates between sticking to gender representations, both in the social and in the private sphere, and subverting them by trying to find an exterior position outside representation, a position that, as she will soon realize, is impossible. "Frustrated? Yes. Why? Because it is impossible for me to be God - or the universal woman and man - or anything as such" (*The Journals*, 1982: 23). Her discourse verges at times on transsexual fantasies in a challenge of both body and subjectivity as bearers of the social, cultural, discursive mark of woman's

subjection. At times, though, both the body and the subjectivity represented as particular for women are accepted as such, in a need to acquire the gender-marked identity as the only form of coherence available.

It has been argued that acquiring a gendered subjectivity is not a natural effect of the body being sexed in one way or the other. It is rather an effect of the discourses that the subject is confronted with and slowly internalizes as her own. The next step is the individual's own verbalizing of the discourse as if he/she were at its origins. This process is theorized by Judith Butler under the rubric of *performativity*. Butler argues that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender … Identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 2000: 34-35) and "this performativity must be understood not as a singular, deliberate "act" but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects it names" (Butler, 2000: 43). From this perspective, the diary seems the perfect site for this reiterative gender discourse, and in Sylvia Plath's case it is often so.

Plath's self-account of her sexed and gendered subjectivity is interesting in its fragmentation and discontinuity. The variety of discourses that she seems to employ range from the ones inhabited by traditional images of woman and her gender roles and the emancipatory feminist discourse. Why can't Plath, though, decide to be consistent with only one discourse, why can't she make a definitive choice of how to regard her femininity?

Plath's discourse is thus not only a discourse of the mind, of subjectivity untainted by any corporeality. Plath's sexual appetite and the expression of her desires in *The Journals* was a 'hot' subject on the agenda of the reviewers, especially when the unabridged journals appeared in 2000. As we will see further on, the concepts proposed by Grosz that blend mind and body can apply to Plath's discourse, a discourse in which the body is again and again represented, constructed, "worked-on".

Having acknowledged the important role the body acquires, the choice between the two main discourses (performing and subverting 'femininity') is even more difficult. Since the sexed body becomes a constant referent of Plath's discourse about her gendered subjectivity, we find ourselves asking what it is that she really performs or subverts: the gender roles, the eternal feminine or the female body and its significance within the patriarchal norms and conventions?

"The body becomes visible as a body and as a female body, only under some particular gaze" (Riley, 88:106). Such a statement can account, just partially, for a certain attitude towards the body that, at times, is taken up by Plath too. Partially because Plath is also aware, from an inner perspective, of her body and of her body being sexed. This perspective has as its focal point the sensations which seemingly have the female body as source.

The body becomes the exterior image of the self, and thus has to be shaped so as to rise to the expectations of the looker's gaze. The primary characteristic of the 'feminine' masquerade, as both Luce Irigaray and Jaques Lacan have suggested, is that woman attempts to approximate to a male defined fantasy of what 'woman' should be. The idea of 'womanliness' as a masquerade was first advanced by Joan Riviere.

"Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask … The reader may ask how I define womanliness and 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference, whether radical or superficial they are the same thing" (Riviere, 1986:34-35).

Self-awareness about her image in the Other's eyes is constantly expressed in *The Journals*. On the other hand, Plath not infrequently goes so far as observing her body's performance and sensing it as a masquerade designed for a certain purpose: finding and keeping the perfect mate.

The performance of femininity is thus enacted by the body going through the rituals of shaping, covering or uncovering, necessary for approximating to the standard of sex-appeal as it was defined in the period. "This is how it was. I dressed slowly, smoothing, perfuming, powdering… This is I, I thought, the American virgin, dressed to seduce. I know I am in for an evening of sexual pleasure" (*The Journals*, 1982: 9). This fragment is interesting as a proof of how writing in the first person can split the 'I' and dissociate it into a contemplative 'I' and a performative 'I'. The 'I' that is equated to the American virgin is different from the 'I' in "I thought". Accepting the mask of the "feminine" body is not though entirely unpleasant since, having her body function as a pre-packaged commodity assures a kind of security, the security that this commodity will be bought since it is up to the standards. Identifying herself and her body to the position of object of the male gaze can endow with a kind of identity and coherence. The selflessness and incoherence that Plath discovers when taking up the subject position and trying to forge an identity beyond conventional representations of the woman are suddenly acquiring a name,

thus a solidity, once under the gaze of the male. She is the American virgin. However soothing and pleasure-producing this position can be, Plath cannot stick to it for too long. The woman who tries to find a voice for herself cannot just speak from an object position. So she finds herself trapped between these two poles, oscillating from one to another, trying to match sexual pleasure to the intellectual pleasure produced by writing, by speaking as a subject.

The strife for security and for acquiring sexual pleasures according to heterosexual norms thus means viewing the body as capital, investing meaning in it and drawing profit later, when the masquerade isn't possible any more since the body, once old, cannot conform to the standards.

"Still, being a woman, I must be clever and obtain as full a measure of security for those approaching ineligible and aging years wherein I will not have the chance to capture a new mate - in all probability. So, resolved: I shall proceed to obtain a mate through the customary procedure, namely marriage" (*The Journals*, 1982:36).

What is shocking about this fragment is the detachment with which Plath envisages her future. She is like the merchant who weighs the advantages and disadvantages and resolves on the next step to be taken in order to make the business secure and profitable. Being a woman means in this context having to take a certain path that has already been established through social convention, having to perform a prescribed role that has the advantage of being the road to security.

But even this pre-packaged happiness that is merchandised under the name of 'security' can never be ensured. The sexual marketplace, as any other market, evolves. All the time, new products replace the old ones, commodities enter competition and only the ones that are closer to the standard are sure to have success. Irigaray asserts that women can view other women only as potential rivals because the value of a woman is determined with reference to a third, male defined term: "Commodities can only enter into relationship under the watchful eyes of their 'guardians'… And the interests of businessmen require that the commodities relate to each other as rivals" (Irigaray, 1985:196). Plath enters the sexual marketplace with the same fear of being dethroned by her competitors.

What can be inferred so far is that the body is often lived by Plath as the object of a male gaze. Striving for acquiring validation from that gazer means struggling for a perfection that has nothing to do with the genuine ideals of the woman as subject, as owner of her own desires. The diaries, but also poems like *Mirror* or *The Munich Mannequins*,

operationalise the split in the discourse as well as in the self between the performer of male's desires and of traditional gender ideology and the woman that tries to posit herself outside this objectified image and exterior discourse. Self-definition beyond the male mark is quasi impossible in *The Journals*. An alternative to saying 'I am woman' and accepting all the connotations coming with this word could be to confidently say 'I am a writer'. But such confidence is soon effaced by the lack of validation from the exterior. The only alternative to accepting being the mirror of male's desires thus remains acknowledging her selflessness, incoherence, decentredness.

"The rejection of the false, insulting "truth" of woman's identity is effected in a language that undermines the very possibility of definable identity and truth. Woman achieves freedom from male definitions at the price of all definition, freedom from the name with which the masculine text identifies her in the affirmation of unnameability (Freedman, 1993: 160).

In poetry, however, the unnameable entity behind the woman-mirror can more easily see its image in the poem-mirror. And this image cannot be anything else but that of the monster and of destruction.

What Plath seems to oppose to the acknowledged masquerade of the body as the object of male desire is a genuine female body as the centre of genuine sensations. The conflict between sexual hunger and the reduced possibilities of deploying it is regarded as a major source of frustration: "If I didn't have any sex organs, I wouldn't waver on the brink of nervous breakdown and tears all the time." Her becoming a glittering surface on which the man can project his desires seems excusable as long as it serves a well-defined purpose: to be whole, to escape from the soggy, unfulfilled desire.

Even if the body's sensations are regarded as the genuine aspect of womanhood, this doesn't make accepting womanhood easier. The emphasis on the body has none of the positive connotations that Cixous or Kristeva will discover. Caught within the web of determinations, being marked as a lack, this female, incomplete body is never accepted as such. In Plath's revolts against her being caught in this woman's body we can read the early feminist discourse that prompted women to enter competition with men, looking at them as standard for success and striving to achieve equality. Instead of liberating women, this type of discourse, in my opinion, offered but more frustration. Masquerading to become a perfect woman was painful, masquerading to become a man can be even more so.

"Being born a woman is my awful tragedy. From the moment I was conceived I was doomed to sprout breasts and ovaries rather than penis and scrotum; to have my whole circle of action circumscribed by my inescapable femininity" (*The Journals*, 1982:30). The body, and more particularly the sex of the body, thus becomes the scapegoat for Plath's misery, the determining force that drives her life independently of her. But is it really her female body that she rejects or the inscriptions that culture has already made on it, the connotations that it has applied to it before it even appeared in the world? Is there such a thing as a genuine body that the society hasn't imprinted yet?

'Femininity' becomes in Plath's discourse not only the gender category that fixes a person in a certain position in society and in culture but also an attribute of the female body, a way of living this sexed body and its desires. And since the desires of the female body are thought to be fulfilled by communion with a male body, we see Plath striving to achieve the perfect union - to find the perfect mate. Accepting this sort of femininity means accepting the desire that sprouts from the female body, rejecting the model of the un-sexed yet strong woman. Such a model is Val Gendron, Plath's 'First author', the independent but lonely woman, who though in Plath's view is incomplete.

Being true to one's desires can be a way of asserting a genuine self, of acting as a subject. The only problem is, however, to make sure that those desires are really genuine, that they haven't already been imprinted by the mark of ideology. As Plath is picturing the perfect sexual act, we see how her fears about the intrusion of gender norms into sexual desires makes her return on her words, correcting them when it is the case.

"What is it but destruction? Some mystic desire to beat to sensual annihilation - to snuff out one's identity on the identity of the other - a mingling or mangling of identities? A death of one? Or both? A devouring and subordination? No, no. A polarization rather - a balance of two integrities, charging, electrically, one with the other, yet with centres of coolness, like stars" (*The Journals*, 1982: 42).

Initially this fantasy is meant to describe what both partners are meant to feel. However, involuntarily, Plath hints at the power relations that inevitably appear, and dethrone one of the lovers from the equal position. Plath operates here with mere questions that are not meant to be answered. However, her hesitations, her doubts, her contradictions testify to her lack of confidence about her ability to capture in her fantasy the genuine desires of both male and female bodies. The close relationship between the roles in the sexual play and the gender roles in the relationship is even more obvious when we see that

what follows this fragment is an attempt to portray perfect love not as mere sex but as sharing a lifetime with somebody. Fear about losing one's identity in the greatness of the other is again a fear of losing one's self in a field of opposing powers where the female is obviously the weaker part.

Plath's desiring "a strong mate", her not wanting "to subdue him like a streamroller", her need to "admire and respect him" are remnants of an identification with woman as the necessarily weaker part in the relationship. Lack of these attributes means having missed the perfect male, who had to be the very image of strength, vigour and health, an image that will be attained only by Hughes (a giant, in his turn, physically as well as intellectually).

Subversion is, though, a constant language effect. The play of different positions and masks for the self, of taking distance from the utterance of a self that is not completely acknowledged as such, is a manner of disturbing the fixed meanings, of leaving space for interpretation.

"'Oh, I would like to get in a car and be driven off into the mountains to a cabin on a wind-howling hill and be raped in a huge lust like a cave woman, fighting, screaming, biting in a ferocious ecstasy of orgasm.' That sounds nice, doesn't it? Really delicate and feminine…" (*The Journals*, 1982:73).

The play of positions is rendered obvious through the use of quotation marks. We might even believe that the fragment is a quote from another writer, if we haven't already noticed Plath's imprint. The comments after the quotation are simply too hilarious to be taken for real. They are obviously ironical observations, of a different 'I' who takes its distance from what she calls a 'feminine' fantasy. Woman's passivity and man's power, once the ingredients of the perfected relationship, are now derided.

Plath's interpretation of her own body and of its desires is in part a naturalistic one. The body, as the natural centre of genuine desire is never contested as such. If she envies the male body, she does so from a position from which nothing can be changed. Being born in a woman's body, she is doomed, not only to act within already established social norms, that diminish the possibility of woman's self expression, but also to a sexuality that implies the continual search for the perfect male body that can make her a whole woman. A theorist like Judith Butler would say that Plath, unconsciously and without doubting it, enacts the heterosexual norm, that supports the dualities of sexes, the idea that a body being sexed produces a genuine desire for the other sex.

We have seen in what ways living the body as sexed and as the centre of natural desire for the opposite sex, is an important part of Plath's performing natural 'femininity', i.e. an attribute of the body as an a-social element rather than a gender (cultural) category. She wants to experience this femininity to the utmost as a means of becoming a whole woman and reaching her original self. At no moment does she question her desire as a social, interpersonal construct, it is rather a part of her being, a trace of her identity. Besides the 'natural' desire for the opposite sex, another attribute of the female body is seen to be the capacity of bearing children.

Plath's discourse on 'motherhood' is both fragmentary and contradictory. On the one hand she internalizes, in part, the feminist discourse of the period, a discourse that has tried to challenge the traditional representations of woman as essentially the bearer of man's children. Before being a mother she feels that she has to become a writer. "I shall go better than she [Virginia Woolf] did. *No children until I have done it.*" (*The Journals*, 1982:165). Her fear of being trapped in fixed definitions, her desire to give birth to herself through writing, the confidence that writing will endow her with a genuine identity, that it will "make of the moment something of permanence" all prompt her to establish maternity as a second-rank priority. Another fear that makes Plath desire first to "speak my own self and then have children and speak even deeper" (*The Journals*, 1982:170) is that, as a daughter of her mother, she will reproduce her own begetter in the relationship to her children. It's the fear that she will lose the fragile self that she cherishes so much and that she so desperately tries to construct as separate from her own dependency on her mother. It's the same fear that Luce Irgaray voices in *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre*: "You look at yourself in the mirror. And your mother is already there. And soon your daughter [as] mother. Between the two what are you?… Just a scansion: the time when one becomes the other… Only this liquid that leaves one and arrives in the other, and which has no name (Irigaray, 1979:14-15). It's the fear of finding herself as a mere connection between mother and future child, as always other and never the same. The only warding off of the self-sacrificial devotion of the mother to her child, lies in making sure that the mother's own, genuine, self has some outlet through which it can express itself. And this outlet is writing.

At no time, though, does Plath reject the idea of bearing children. Motherhood is seen as part of 'femininity', as a positive valuation of the female body. It is seen as an experience that, if not undertaken, will prevent her from being whole. Thus, the news that

she cannot ovulate comes as the greatest tragedy of a life that is now seen as more of a Death.

"It is not *when* I have a baby but *that* I have one that is of supreme importance to me. I have always been extremely fond of the definition of Death which says: Inaccessibility to Experience, a Jamesian view, but so good. And for a woman to be deprived of the Great Experience her body is formed to partake of, to nourish, is a great and wasting Death. After all, a man need physically do no more than have the usual intercourse and become a father. A woman has nine months of becoming other than herself, of separating from this otherness, of feeding it and being a source of milk and honey to it. To be deprived of this is a death indeed" (*The Journals*, 1982:308).

If the female body was incessantly regarded as a mere lack compared to the male body, in this fragment, being female means having access to a revelatory experience that questions the very idea of separate, essential identity.

Although living in a period when motherhood was being seen rather as a threat to woman's approaching her ideals (i.e. being man's equal), Plath develops a discourse that anticipates the feminist revaluation of motherhood in the late 70s in the works of Cixous and Kristeva. The new insights brought by these writers and theorists about the particular way in which woman's identity is formed, and the importance of the experience of motherhood for women's identity are already hinted at in this fragment of a diary entry. A post-structuralist reading would deconstruct even this 'genuine' maternal feeling just as it would deconstruct the 'genuine' heterosexual desire. However, in this case, I would rather support Kristeva's point of view that argues that maternity is an experience that goes far beyond the discourse that is constructed around it, be it by religion, be it by other male institutions, an experience that goes even beyond the Law of language and thus cannot be confined within the Symbolic. In *Strabat Mater*, Kristeva's writing about the experience of giving birth comes close to Plath's approximation of what motherhood may mean.

Eventually Plath would be able to have children, experiencing three pregnancies (one lost) in quite a short period of time. And being a mother, discovering this new identity, did not prevent her from giving form to the novel and to the best poems of her life. On the contrary, when only a mother and a poet (no more a wife or daughter or anything else) she rises to the majesty of her most profound thoughts and most powerful language to create some of the most impressive poetry ever written by a woman.

What *The Journals*, and Plath's work in general, can offer to feminism is the image of the woman who tries desperately to reach the subject position, to say 'I' and not be afraid that the next word will be the exterior interpretation of her subjectivity. Her whole work is an attempt to be articulate in interpreting her own experience from her own point of view and not just as a mirroring of somebody else's perspective.

She accepts womanhood as long as she can poeticize it. And through poeticizing it, she tears it out of the social, common constructs that confine it to deprecatory meanings.

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THE FEMININE SIGNATURE

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The works of poststructuralist thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida have had challenging effects on feminist literary criticism. The death of the author, the critique of author function as a particular modality of restricting meaning, and the critique of logocentrism have undermined the theoretical foundations of gynocritics, the literary criticism that focuses on women's literary tradition. A good example among many would be Toril Moi's critique of Elaine Showalter's critical practice: "For if we are truly to reject the model of the author as God the Father of the text, it is surely not enough to reject the patriarchal ideology implied in the paternal metaphor. It is equally necessary to reject the critical practice it leads to, a critical practice that relies on the author as the transcendental signified of his or her text" (Moi, 1985:62).

It is worth mentioning the way such an approach is linked to an exacerbation of the subject crisis, as it appears in one of Kristeva's texts which has been appropriated by feminism, namely *Women's Time*: "What can 'identity', even 'sexual identity' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (Kristeva, 1986:33-34).

On the one hand, the poststructuralist paradigm of the text has allowed for theoretical frameworks that insist on the transgression of fixed gender categories, namely refusal of the approach on women authors as writing specifically on women's experience in order to resist generalization of "men's experience" as "human experience". On the other hand, the political effects of poststructuralist theories may seem disconcerting. Let us take the well-known example of Kristeva's feminine writing, a kind of writing which tends to favour the semiotic, and which can be subversive of the symbolic, and phallic, order. In such a paradigm, insisting on women as such becomes irrelevant; feminism as a political movement is explained as fighting for assuring women access to the symbolic order instead of subverting it. However, bearing in mind that in our culture women are discriminated against precisely *as women*, one might want to preserve the category of women, and this can be extended with regard to women's writing as well, as most often

women face exclusion from the canon precisely as the canon is constructed in "masculine" terms - canonical works bearing features such as unity, force, objectivity and coherence. I would not like to assume that such qualities were inaccessible to women's writing, and I would hope that a feminist endeavour would try to value the characteristic features of women's writing. I would rather suggest that various canons name as feminine whatever they exclude, and given essentialist assumptions about women's writing (a woman is "feminine" in whatever she does, therefore women authors write "feminine" texts) women, precisely because they are women, are excluded from the canon. To give an example, the beginnings of modernism (Baudelaire, to choose a name) rely on adopting a certain ironic tone "which is tacitly premised on the writer's assumption of a kind of superiority" (Nicholls, 1995:79). The relation between this irony and superiority is not only that a masterful style is chosen by the poet, but that the *other*, by which one can understand nature, challenges the poet to define himself over against and separate from nature, body and social life (which are all associated with femininity). As Peter Nicholls comments for Baudelaire irony and distance meant a certain "objectivity" and coldmindedness of tone (masculine traits). Later on, when symbolism ceased to be the fashion, Maurras, one of its major critics, argued against musicality, colour, and synaesthesia as "feminine". "Maurras thus drew a fundamental contrast between a 'womanly' preoccupation with the material (especially phonic) and a virile literature of action on the other" (Nicholls, 1995: 81).

Due to the fact that all praiseworthy qualities of literature are constructed as masculine and therefore forbidden to women, women's entry to the canon is precluded. This essay, while refusing the presupposition of an inherent specificity of women's writing, is however going to try to explore the possibility of maintaining a particular category of women's writing in a poststructuralist theoretical framework.

To begin with one of the main presuppositions of this essay is that in our culture all names are gendered. Individuals, no matter how transgressively they construct their identities, are labelled either as men or women. That things might be slightly more confusing is certified by the reinforcement of these categories by official forms, which ask, next to the name, the sex/gender of the person involved (so, for example, those names that can be read as either male or female are a particular case where order is needed to keep both men and women in their places). Things are similar when evaluating and analyzing a text: the reading process rarely functions outside various presuppositions regarding the

author's sex, race, class, or sexual orientation. Even the claim to aesthetic objectivity made by various modernist schools of literary criticism actually operates as a means of exclusion given the gendered (i.e. masculine) character of the qualities that are required in order to enter the canon, as we have argued above. The importance of presuppositions regarding the identity of the author is highlighted when the author is considered to be the unifying principle standing behind a corpus of literary texts, as in Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?*

The celebrated dismissal of the author function at the end of Foucault's influential essay *What is an Author?* looks rather like an unrealistic political project. One might want to have a closer look at the precise context in which the disappearance of the author function is presented: Foucault's conclusion is that "the author is not an indefinite source of signification that fills a work; the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and re-composition of fiction. … The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault, 1992:209). After this conclusion, Foucault sketches the (we would now say utopian) project in which the author function would not restrict the free circulation of meaning anymore: "All discourses, whatever their status, form, value, and whatever the treatment to which they will be subjected, would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur. We would no longer hear the question that has been rehashed so long: 'Who really spoke? Is it really he and someone else? With what audience and originality? And what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse?' Instead there will be other questions, like these: 'What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? How can we assume these various subject functions?' and behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of indifference: 'What difference does it make who is speaking?'" (Foucault, 1992:210).

This is a quite radical project, and one rather unlikely to be fulfilled during our lifetime. After all, a quite pointed objection would be that the essay quoted does bear Michel Foucault's name, that it is circulated in readers which are sold precisely because they bear Michel Foucault's name on the cover, and that academic work is done classifying

the early and late Foucault etc. Furthermore, it seems more politically rewarding to intensify rather than obscure women's ownership of texts, to highlight women's presence in cultural life, to analyze the means of marginalizing them and to focus on strategies to recanonize them instead of working to reduce them to anonymity, especially as this happens quite often enough against one's will. The same type of objection has been raised with regard to the postmodern critique of the canon: when women seemed at last to have found a way into the canon, one suddenly discovered that the canon does not exist anymore.

What would the empowering political effects of reading texts under certain assumptions regarding the sex of the author look like? It has been argued that women do not have a name, that they borrow it from their father in order to give it up and borrow their husband's name. This has been true for a long while, yet fortunately things have changed. To nuance the analysis, both boys and girls have a family name (a name that more often than not belongs to the father - though it can just as much belong to the mother, as in the case of single mothers) yet both can choose to keep it even if they enter marriage. The matrilineal descent, in the conditions of contemporary legislation, is not impossible, and quite often women choose to keep their "maiden" name and are therefore able to pass it on to their daughters. Even the husband's name can be subject to appropriation, by which I mean a phenomenon that allows certain women to be identified as proper owners of the name instead of ancillary borrowers. When one asks, "Who is Virginia Woolf?" the response is "A famous English writer". Would the question instead be "Who was Leonard Woolf?" one is very likely to get the answer "Virginia Woolf's husband". The positive conclusion of this argument is that, albeit through a process that is very often extremely difficult, women *can* become visible, and, I would add, I see this as one of the main tasks of feminist criticism: focusing on "women" writers as "women" can have empowering political effects. In the following I am going to try to preserve rather than criticize the achievements of gynocritics (women writers as legitimate object of study, the stress on women writers as "women") and see whether any changes might be needed in its theoretical foundations in order to synchronize it with poststructuralist thinking.

Another presupposition of my argument is that unlike men, who are the creators and signers of culture, women enter the cultural production process as deviants, a conclusion one reaches if one only takes into account that becoming an "author" means overstepping the traditional private public border. The sex of the author is rarely (and I will not deal

with the issue of whether it should or should not be so) an innocent matter. It can be used as means of discrimination, of degrading a text as minor, or it can become politically valorised in the fight of the marginalized group against oppression. Patriarchal literary criticism has designed a special set of qualifying adjectives to relegate texts signed by women to the margins: delicate, sensuous, musical, instinctive, etc. Of the many examples available I will choose a recent one from Romania, caused by the translation of the novel *The Adorable Romanian* by the French writer Isidore Isou. Assuming that the novel was written by a woman, the reviewer (also a woman) classified it as "pink" fiction, therefore minor. The next week, having been informed that the text is actually a "parody" written by a "great" male writer, who had borrowed the apparently female name, the magazine was full of excuses and rectifications, the novel finally gaining the place and importance it deserved (Deciu, 2000:27).

In order to clarify this starting point, in the following I am going to analyze Michel Foucault's famous essay *What is an author?* from a gendered perspective, trying to answer the following questions: Is the author function really gender blind? Do names of supposedly male or female authors have the same function or are there certain peculiarities when the name is considered to be that of a woman? For Michel Foucault, the author is rather a way of functioning of a certain name with regard to a certain body of texts it is attributed to. Foucault highlights four aspects of the author function, and I will present them accompanied by my comments from a gendered perspective. The first feature of this function deals with the legal appropriation of texts. Especially since the beginning of modern culture, the author acquires both the right to own the texts, with the benefits of regulations regarding publishing rights and relations between writer and publisher, and the disadvantage of responsibility over the text, even penal responsibility, to the extent that the text is transgressive. What would that mean in case the author was supposed to be a woman? Ownership was not characteristic of women's status in most Western societies till the end of the nineteenth century. To give just one example among many possible ones, before the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, British married women did not have the right to their own property (or to be more accurate, they had the 'right to' their own property - in the sense of access/entitlement, but the legal title of ownership was not vested in them, hence they did not have the right to own their own property). Even when women's authorship seems to encounter fewer difficulties with regard to their status as legal owners, their intellectual ownership seems to be marked by weakness in comparison with men's

authorship. In the case of great couples of writers such as de Beauvoir and Sartre, the pair is constructed in terms of body mind, the woman disciple being in a relationship of both subordination and love to her male master (Le Doueff, 1977:17).

The second feature of the author function is that it does not affect all discourses in a universal and constant way. For example, literariness has not always required attribution to a certain author: there have been times when stories have been circulated based on the assumption of their ancientness. Since the beginning of modern times, literary discourses have been accepted as such only when bearing the mark of a certain name. In the case of women, one might say that precisely due to the fact that a certain text is signed by a woman, it becomes more literary and not less so. For example, while stylistically most women writers in the 18th century were able to fulfil all the criteria of "literariness", they failed to enter the pedagogical canon as it became articulated gradually towards the end of the eighteenth century, a canon whose explicit purpose was to foster national feelings and virtues, eliminating women writers on the ground of their sensuousness and lack of vigour, which made their texts highly unlikely to educate the *citoyen*-to-be in the national virtues required by the construction of the nation state (Dejean, 1988:32).

The third feature is that the author function "… does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain rational being that we call 'author'… The author is also the principle of a certain unity of writing… The author also serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts…. Finally, the author is a particular source of expression that, in more or less completed forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in works, sketches, letters, fragments and so on" (Foucault, 1992:203). Now were the name functioning as author name a woman's name, then the rational being, with its unified self constantly manifest in all her writings would be harder to construct. Women are rather associated with scraps of identity, inconsistencies, features that in the best case can be considered "poetical" or subversive, but are still most often laden with negative connotations.

The fourth feature of the author function is that, far from being attached to a text used as passive material, it is in the text that one finds certain signs referring to the author. In the case of fiction these are various personal pronouns and adverbs of time and place linking it to the conditions of its production. In a novel narrated in the first person, the narrator is not the human being whose name signs it. "…the author function operates so as

to effect the dispersion of these… simultaneous selves" (Foucault, 1992:205). Again, were the text signed by a woman, such dispersion is not equally easy to establish. One of the main reproaches to women's literature is that it is autobiographical, that women lack the objectivity necessary to tell a story by detaching from their own experience. As Mary Jacobus puts it, there seems to be at work a certain "autobiographical phallacy, whereby male critics hold that women's writing is somehow closer to their objectivity than men's, that the female text *is* the author, or at any rate a dramatic extension of her unconscious" (Jacobus, 1985:520)

One can conclude therefore that the author function is particularly constructed in masculine terms, and that the author function in the case of women simply works differently. One could celebrate, on the one hand, the fact that women authors never carry out such limiting effects on the meaning of their texts; however, one can bear in mind that this particular way of functioning confines them to the margins of the canon. It seems that the options are not extremely enticing, as on the one hand, if they keep the author function, women are relegated to the margins; on the other hand, were they to accept and support Foucault's utopian project, they would be condemned to annihilation. However, maybe the fact that women's writing is 'anomalous' with regard to most discourses referring to authority/authorship, no matter how contesting of traditional categories they claim to be, might provide for other possible critical practices exploiting precisely that anomalousness. To clarify my point, let us have a look at Roland Barthes' influential essay *The Death of the Author*, and at Elisabeth Grosz's comments on it as they appear in her essay *Feminism after the Death of the Author*.

Starting from the observation that "The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us" Barthes suggests, in a way very much parallel to Foucault's, the elimination of "authority": "Once the author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing." Barthes' alternative model reveals that "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author… the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (Barthes, 1992:116).

What happens if the author is a woman? I can better illustrate this point by presenting Grosz' comments to Barthes' essay. In an attempt to untangle the presuppositions that lead current criticism to claim that one text is feminist while another is patriarchal, Grosz states that quite often the sex of the author is assumed to be indicative of the texts being feminist or patriarchal. To combat this view, she appeals to a quotation from Barthes. Let us examine/consider the quotation and the beginning of her own comment.

"The Author, when believed in, is always conceived as the past of his own book; book and author stand automatically on the same line divided into a before and after. The Author is thought *to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it*, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as *a father to his child*. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as its predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now. The author's intentions, emotions, psyche, and interiority are not only inaccessible to readers, they are likely to be inaccessible to the author *herself*. [emphasis mine]" (Grosz, 1995:13).

We can note, to begin with, the explicit masculine metaphor of creation in Barthes' text: the relation between author and work is like a father's to his child. Why not mother, one might ask? There are two possible answers to this question: one is to replace father with mother (after all, mothers are more likely to "nourish" than fathers) and keep the mother author alive (such an approach can be found in the works of gynocritics such as Elaine Showalter, Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar). The other is to accept this gendering and articulate the scriptor (and in Barthes's text the scriptor definitely bears positive connotations) as feminine. The "old" author, the "traditional" author as constructed by literary criticism, a mechanism for limiting meaning, would be masculine, given the obsessive search for unity and coherence. The new one, the modern scriptor born simultaneously with the text, whose intentions and emotions are inaccessible to *herself*, is feminine. The death of the author can be read as the death of the masculine search for unity and coherent meaning in favour of the feminine encouragement of plurality and fluidity. However, one might want to ask what the relationship between femininity and women is. There are two possible answers: to equate the feminine with women, which after all can be looked upon as having dubious strategic effects, or to stress that femininity can be a feature

both of actual women and actual men. Kristeva allows for this latter possibility. However, in simplistic terms, the conclusions she reaches lead to valorising the "feminine" rather than the woman, and, taking into consideration the fact that at best such a theory can say that women are more likely to be feminine than men, and therefore men can function in a "feminine" mode, the somehow disturbing strategic effect is that, at least in Kristeva's case, what results is a reinforcement of the central position within the canon of certain male avant-garde writers (Mallarme, Proust, Celine, Lautreamont) and less often the canonization of women. A quite unfortunate conclusion would be that male writers are better even at doing the feminine writing. One might want to add that the designation of a writing as "feminine" or "masculine" cannot function outside pre-established categories, categories whose roots can be found in the patriarchal culture, and that can prove, once again, oppressive for women. Yet what we can note in Kristeva's approach is a displacement of accent from speech to writing:

> "For Derrida, the text is not bearing the name of an author, but his or her, or rather *a*, signature, and the difference is significant, as we shall see later. There are three modalities in which a signature functions.
>
> 'The one that we call the signature is the proper name, articulated in a language and readable as such: the act of someone not content to write his proper name (as if he were filling out an identity card), but engaged in authenticating (if possible) the fact that it is indeed he who writes… The second modality, a banal and confused metaphor for the first, is a set of idiomatic marks that a signer might leave by accident or intention in his product. These marks would have no essential link with the form of the proper name as articulated or read 'in' a language… We sometimes call this the style, the inimitable idiom of a writer, sculptor, painter, or orator… Thirdly, and it is a more complicated here, we may designate as general signature, or signature of the signature, the fold of the placement in abyss where, after the manner of the signature in the current sense, the work of writing designates, describes and inscribes itself as act (action and archive), signs itself before the end by affording us the opportunity to read: I refer to myself, this is writing, I am writing, this is writing - which excludes nothing since, when the placement in abyss succeeds, and is thereby decomposed and produces an event, it is the other, the thing as other, that signs" (Derrida, 1991:53).

As Elisabeth Grosz comments, the first two modalities (or rather one) seem to parallel the author function as found in Foucault's discourse and the presence of the author

in Barthes. These two approaches seem to assign a name, the proper name, the designator of an individual, to a text, and, given the presupposed full presence of the respective individual, the solution they envisage is to annihilate the supposed unified coherence presence of the individual in order to free the meaning of the text. Derrida's third modality, however, introduces the signature between the text and the full presence of the author certified by the name, the signature as writing:

"By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be said, it also marks and retains his having been present in a past now, and therefore in a now in general, in the transcendental form of nowness (*maintenance*)… For the attachment to the source to occur, the absolute singularity of an event of the signature and of a form of the signature must be retained: the pure reproducibility of a pure event… In order to function, that is, in order to be legible, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable form; it must be able to detach itself from the present and singular intention of its production. It is its sameness which, in altering its identity and singularity, divides the seal" (Derrida, 1984:120).

As the signature is the citation, iteration of a name, and it functions in the absence of any intention, it means it is not the signature that restricts the meaning of a text. The signature is just as manipulable as the text is, and this becomes clear when thinking about processes of attribution that appears any time there is suspicion regarding the identity of the writer. Moreover, as Derrida argues, the signature cannot be detached from the text:

"The inscription of the signature plays strangely with the frame, with the border of the text, sometimes inside, sometimes outside, sometimes included, sometimes overthrown. But it is still included when thrown overboard and always eminent when drunk in by the surface of the text" (Derrida, 1984:133).

The relation between the name and the signature seems to resemble the one between speech and writing. In speaking about the name of the author, Foucault and Barthes criticize the construct of the author (or the author function) as fully present, as the ultimate signifier of the text, and their solutions envisage the annihilation of the respective presence. Insisting on the signature as *writing*, on its condition of functioning only in the absence of the signer and therefore of any intention of the text, does not mean to attach an ultimate signifier to the text. On the contrary, the signature opens the possibility of the play, and being at the border of the text, functions as another element in the chain of

signification, linking the text with others, bearing the same signature or simply attempting to capture the presence behind it, to authenticate it.

If that signature is the inscription of the name of a woman, it is likely that, as in the first and second modality of functioning outlined by Derrida, the signature authenticates the presence of the woman as woman, that it highlights rather than excludes the deviance implicit in the woman author's name. And, given that the "woman's" signature plays with the border of the text, that it opens the text to other texts one might describe a particular way of functioning of the texts signed with what is assumed to be a woman's name, and I will call that functioning the feminine signature. I use the term feminine and not female in order to insist on the constructed character of both the sexual identity of the author - whose presence is permanently deferred and relies therefore on other texts trying to capture that *sexed* presence - and of the assumptions about gender categories governing various readings engaged in authenticating the signature as a woman's. The feminine signature establishes a relationship between a certain text, signed with what is considered to be a woman's name, and a whole range of texts "regarding" femininity available within a certain culture. In this framework the feminine signature shifts the emphasis from the authorial presence to the modalities of functioning of the supposed presence: what it means for that particular text to have been written by a "woman", how it enters relations with other texts bearing the signature of the same name, how femininity is constructed by various readerships; if different readerships of texts bearing the signature of the same name attempt to cohere or not, and how the female authorial presence is constructed by them - whether it "limits meaning" or not, what assumptions regarding femininity are put into action to construct this presence, and what are the political implications of these readings; various processes of canonization and decanonization, and assumptions governing the mainstreaming or marginalizing of texts bearing the feminine signature at one time or another.

To conclude, the assumption about the female sex of the author, the operation by which a certain signature is authenticated as a woman's signature, means that certain texts are circulated within certain contexts, and one could see this as a limitation imposed on the free play of meaning. However, as the signature, as writing, can function outside any decidable meaning, as there is no secret behind it to be deciphered, or, indeed, as its secret is that it might not have a secret, then as Derrida puts it, "Its limit is not only stipulated by its structure but is in fact ultimately confused with it. … if the structural limit and the

remainder of the simulacrum which has been left in writing are going to be taken into account, the process of decoding, because this limit is not of the sort that circumscribes a certain knowledge even as it proclaims a beyond, must be carried to the furthest lengths possible. To where this limit runs through and divides a scientific work, whose very conditions, this limit, thus opens it up to itself" (Derrida, 1979:133).

Investigating the feminine signature can be seen therefore as intensifying the anomaly of "women's writing", as highlighting the blindspots of a great interpretive tradition constructed in the terms of self presence, of unified coherent (masculine) author behind the text, a tradition that rejects both writing and woman. It can preserve feminist criticism's propensity towards the discourse on woman, and, by trying to answer not the question "what is particular of women's texts (as opposed to men's)", but "what would it mean for our readings of the text that it was signed by a woman?" it explores the way the text bears the trace of the "woman" and how "woman" is marked or changed by that/those text(s).

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THE GENDERED OTHER OF METAPHYSICS

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In her much-quoted article "'The Blank Page' and the issues of female creativity", Susan Gubar lists numerous literary examples of traditional phallocentric metaphorics that associate the blank page with woman while conceptualising the pen writing on it as something masculine, a metaphorical penis. This sexual morphology of one's relationship to the text seems to have been a commonly held idea present from the time of the Church Fathers up until today's feminist and deconstructive criticism. Gilbert and Gubar write about these metaphors in detail in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and Derrida uses this imagery in the *hymenography* of *Dissemination*. As feminist criticism has stated many times, this age-old *corpomorphic* imagery that Gilbert and Gubar try to criticise, and that Derrida tries to rewrite, associates the hymen with the paper and the penis with the pen writing on it, defining man as the only active, productive and creative agent while establishing woman as some kind of object, the *other* of the male subject. The subject of writing, or understanding, or knowledge becomes masculine, while the object of his knowledge, the mystery he has to unveil, becomes feminine.

In stating this, we are already in the middle of the dilemmas and paradoxes of the gendered universe of the European metaphysical tradition. One dilemma is the epistemological question arising from the metaphorics mentioned above. If feminist critics are right and nothing is more characteristic of our philosophical tradition than taking woman as a silent other excluded from the discourse of philosophy, if the feminine in general is repressed, silent, not given, not accessible, the *other* on the other side of binaries, then how exactly can we know about her? To put it simply: if our discourse is founded on the repression of the feminine (or the maternal, as psychoanalysis would say) how can we know about this other, how can it find a place in discourse?

This question gains its full importance when we realise that the fact that the feminine is the repressed other of phallocentric discourse also means that it has to be its constant object of curiosity, the object of its epistemological desire. If it is the feminine that is on the other side of binaries, on the other side of this historical (or hysterical) repression, the masculine, phallocentric discourse on this side will be destined to see it as the *telos* of its

quest, the location of the ultimate knowledge it seeks. Following a Lacanian logic, the quest of metaphysics seems to be a truly paradoxical one: on the one hand, like all symbolic structures it could only be born out of a repression, it could only learn to speak, to articulate a discourse, after the repression of its other; and, on the other hand, this very repression makes the repressed, unreachable other its ultimate object, and therefore makes its quest for totality and wholeness impossible by definition. The quest of metaphysics is possible only in the absence of its grail, possible only at the price of the impossibility of its successful fulfilment.

It is not by sheer coincidence that woman has become a widely used metaphor of truth in our culture. It is not by chance that so many authors have used and still cannot do without the image of woman as truth, that the image of the beautiful veiled woman haunts the imagination of so many subjects of thinking. What connects woman with truth is their structural position in the discourse of metaphysics: being the missing, lost or repressed other. The absence that makes signs pointing towards it emerge; they are signs that can never reach any destination, they can only be signs of an absence.

Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* is one of the most detailed analyses of this historical or hysterical repression, when the *hystera* (the womb) becomes the other place to be left behind and never to be thought of again. In the rest of my paper I would like to give a very basic introduction to this text, from the specific perspective I have indicated so far.

The starting point of Irigaray's analysis (in the "Plato's *Hystera*" part of her *Speculum*) is Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic*. In this well-known piece Socrates makes us imagine a cave full of men sitting tied down, facing the back wall of the cave. Behind them there is an artificial wall with a fire behind it. There are people between the fire and the wall, who raise objects above the wall, the shadows of which are projected by the fire onto the back wall of the cave in front of the men sitting. For Socrates this situation of men whose only reality consists of the shadows they see is an allegory of people living in a false reality. Later one of these men is freed from the cave by the master-philosopher, who shows him the way out to the light, to the 'real world'. The meaning of the allegory is, of course, that we all live in the false reality of the material world, while – with the help of the philosopher – we should start our way up, towards the Sun and ideal reality.

Following Plato, Irigaray reads the Sun as the figure of the Father, the Father of *logos*. She describes the journey of the man from the cave towards the Sun as a journey from the *hystera* of the mother, from a material/maternal reality towards the idealism of the Father, during which all memories of this 'inferior' reality should be left behind. In other words, Irigaray accepts the basics of the allegory of Plato, but she goes on writing the other side of the allegory and showing the consequences of this kind of figuration, which has been the basis of the European metaphysical tradition.

According to her allegorization of the cave, the child is always someone who is first influenced by the material and maternal reality the cave stands for. Her text seems to suggest that we are all materialists and maternalists first, before a master philosopher, the agent of the Father, tears us out of our first home to force us to walk towards the divine light. According to Irigaray, these men who finally accept the paternal reality of the world outside the *uterus* (basically everybody who is successfully subjectivized in our culture) are twice mistaken. Their first mistake is that they think – just like Socrates – that the light is everything, it is the only True, and that everything else (like the other of the mother-cave) is just a projection of its ideas. In Plato there is only one origin, and that is in the Idea. Whatever exists comes from the Idea, is a manifestation of the idea. Rejecting this notion of one single ideal origin, Irigaray calls our attention to the first reality of the womb. Disregarding it, taking it as a projection, is a mistake that makes us blind to the maternal origin and the otherness it represents. The other mistake that these men in the sun make is that they fail to realize that their perception of things is always already pre-determined and formed by the images and morphology of the cave, the first reality that they have inhibited.

By this Irigaray subverts the Platonist theory of projection. She raises the possibility of an opposite sort of projection, according to which it is not the Idea that influences everything material, while projecting its forms into matter, but rather, it is the first reality, the maternal/material existence that determines our perception of the world, just like it determines the way we imagine abstract entities (like truth). While in Plato projection goes 'down' from the spiritual to the material, in Irigaray this process is reversed. Instead of the idealism and paternalism of Plato, Irigray poses the possibility of a materialist maternalism.

As the above example shows, one of Irigaray's methods is subversion, accepting the Platonic imagery, but turning it upside down. Her system is no less constructed of

dichotomies than Plato's: she still works with the dichotomy of the cave and the world above, in most cases only the preferences and the directions of movement change.

The metaphor of the separation between the two worlds of the maternal and the paternal, the dividing line of the above-mentioned historical repression, is the wall behind the "prisoners" of the cave, the wall that separates them from the world outside and the others doing the mime-show for them. This wall seems to be an impenetrable one that stands between inside and outside. If someone could freely cross this wall any time s/he wants, the binary system of thinking would immediately collapse. Following the logic of this imagery, the repression of the other behind the wall and the use of dichotomic categories become analogous. Both are results of a structural situation in which there is a dividing line (the wall in the cave), of which the one that speaks is on this side, and the silent other is on the other. Irigaray's analysis calls our attention to the connections between two inherited things: a historical repression and the characteristics of the language we use. According to her, the other as other is silent because we have forgotten the cave. We do not understand the feminine (and here by ’understanding’ I mean formulating in our discourse) because we have forgotten that other place where all stories begin. We have lost our connections with that other reality, therefore the other can be only a supplement of the self.

Because of forgetting of the path that leads from the cave we have forgotten the possibility of alterity, difference has become something impossible, a fantasy. The difference on which our language is based (according to Saussure) is a difference bought at the price of the loss of that other, radical difference that our signs would like to reach. Finding that path again would mean access to the other, the presence of difference, the loss of the kind of language we use, and the loss of the imaginary, one-dimensional ego-formation that we have. If one could travel between the worlds of the father and the mother, if one understood both languages, one could not imagine things like *woman as truth*, since all notions of one single truth, one single solution or principle would be impossible. The logic of oneness and the reign of the Same would be replaced by the double logic of twoness.

Irigaray writes this feminist utopia into the gaps in Plato's text. The way her text is woven into these gaps denies the possibility of posing a simple, oppositional (Platonic) relationship between her text and the one that she reads:

> "[Irigaray] practices a new kind of commentary and analysis of philosophical texts. She listens to what a philosopher says in his own words; she tries to capture the tone; she questions him, amplifying what is only hinted at, filling in blanks where he is reticent. She listens between the lines for what is not said, and spins out the consequences of what is said." (Nye, 47.)

Her analysis gains its convincing force not only by its textual-stylistic closeness to Plato, but also by the fact that in *The Republic* there exists an *other place*, just like the possibility of an *other language* spoken there. When Irigaray rewrites the Platonic dichotomy she still follows a dichotomic logic, but according to her argument what makes communication with the other impossible is not the existence of dichotomies, but the fact that the other of these dichotomies is never more than a supplement of the self. She imagines dichotomies in which the other can be a true other, a system of radical heterogenity, where the ontological difference that she posits at the place of Plato's single origin can be preserved.

In her analysis, Irigaray shows the points of Plato's text at which his allegory becomes problematic. She shows the possibility of a double origin, just like that of another language. She shows that Plato's discourse is founded on the repression of the maternal/material cave, one side of the existing world. She also convincingly shows how the human subjects who have to go through the wall of repression when leaving the cave must leave their corporeal existence behind and become ghosts in order to be subjects of the so called real world of the *logos*. The immediate presence of the body is left behind just like all memories of and knowledge about the mother. Irigaray shows how the artificial wall of the cave, the last membrane between inside and outside that becomes a figure of the *hymen* or the veil on woman in a *corpomorphic* metaphorics could become a projection screen in the phallocentric discourse of the one Truth of the Idea, a screen that shows only what is projected there, always the Same. Through this she also writes a figurative archaeology of woman as other, as well as of the main characteristics of the metaphysical tradition of philosophy. Writing the forgotten history of the gendered other of metaphysics she creates a figurative utopia for those trying to conceptualise another sort of discourse, while creating a critical distance from the dominant language of phallogocentrism at the same time.

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KRISTEVA AND THE POLITICS OF AGENCY

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One of the traditional objections to many contemporary critical and/or theoretical practices has been the apparent inability of such practices to do more than deconstruct or demystify without offering a basis for effective human action. Indeed, the argument can be made that the practices of demystification, deconstruction, or denaturalization cannot produce an agent, cannot lead to action, but must inevitably progress into the anarchy of absolute, ungrounded freedom, of escalating, inescapable play. Linda Hutcheon claims that while postmodern art is inevitably, inherently political, "the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political action" (Oliver, 1993:3). Moreover, the divided post-Freudian subject that grounds much of contemporary thought is problematic for any theory of agency. As Marilyn Edelstein notes, "the salient question" for anyone "committed to social and political change… [becomes] whether the postmodern deconstruction of truth, meta-narratives, identities can enable rather than hinder such change" (Edelstein, 1993:197).

Julia Kristeva, the French-Bulgarian critic and psychoanalyst, argues that an effective ethics and politics can grow from such a dynamic. She envisions the demystifying moment as part of a continuous analytical process that can serve a productive function, enabling the individual "to construct other possibilities for living" after "destroying the old defences" (Kristeva, 1980:42). Grounded in psychoanalysis and directed toward what she calls a "subject in process/on trial" (Kristeva, 1984:22), this process allows a creation of "a new and more complex psychic structure" (Oliver, 1997:222) with "a greater capacity for signification" (217). Moreover, Kristeva sees this process as able to expand from the individual to the social realm, serving as a basis for "a strong ethics, not normative but directed" (Kristeva, 1982:92) that promotes the possibility of a middle course between the dangers of a retreat into the tyranny of "a single, total, and totalitarian Meaning" and a drift into delirium (92).

One of the most consistent aspects of Kristeva's career has been her insistent rejection of a unified, transcendent ego in favour of a divided, provisional, "questionable subject-in-process" (Kristeva, 1980:135). For Kristeva, the subject is put on trial/into play by language, particularly the interaction of "the two modalities of signification: the

semiotic and the symbolic" (Kristeva, 1985:216). Indeed, the subject is constituted by "the necessary dialectic between the two… [and] is always both semiotic and symbolic" (Kristeva, 1984:24). Kristeva defines the symbolic as "the tributary signification of language, all the effects of meaning that appear from the moment linguistic signs are articulated into grammar" (Kristeva, 1996b:21), and the semiotic as "the effects of meaning that are not reducible to language or that can operate outside of language" (21).

The semiotic also marks the place where, as Kelly Oliver notes, Kristeva "brings the speaking body back to signification" (1993:3) by introducing, or returning, Freudian drives into the process of signification, it "break[s] down the unity of the transcendental ego…and give[s] free rein to what is heterogeneous in sense, that is to the drive" (Kristeva, 1985: 217). This destruction of unity is at least potentially productive in that it leads to an increase in the capacity for signification of the symbolic order. The semiotic, in addition to shattering the unity of the subject, transgresses or "remodels the symbolic order" (Kristeva, 1984:62), but cannot destroy it, for to do so would be to descend into madness, the loss of all signification, what Kristeva calls "the lie of unspeakable delirium" (84). Instead, the semiotic must be regarded "as part of a signifying practice that includes the agency of the symbolic" (81). A productive crisis in subjectivity, the irruption of the semiotic precedes the return of an expanded symbolic system, transforming the subject created by the interaction. Rather than being destroyed by the semiotic, the symbolic is renewed by it. The disruptive, unconscious energies of the semiotic must be contained by the symbolic for signification to be possible, but the symbolic is changed, reshaped, opened and revitalized by the effort of containing the semiotic. The subject is itself renewed, expanded by the influx of the semiotic and contained by the return of the symbolic, a new, if still provisional, consciousness or psychic structure informed by the revolutionary unconscious drives of the semiotic. For Kristeva, this productive flux of "the subject-in-process…gives us a vision of the human venture as a venture of innovation, of creation, of opening, of renewal" (Kristeva, 1996b:26).

This renewal comes from the subject's relationship to an 'other' that Kristeva presents as internal rather than external, a constitutive strangeness within the subject. Using the image of pregnancy, in which clear borders cannot be formed between mother and child, self and other, she outlines a process of abjection that serves both to differentiate the subject and to produce an interiorized other as already and inescapably part of the subject. The abject can be best understood as that which is not completely not-subject.

Abjection, as Kristeva describes it, is pre-Oedipal, pre-objectal, the subject's very early attempt at self-differentiation through separation from the maternal entity, a troubled, unstable rejection of what cannot be rejected, "a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (Kristeva, 1982:13). Abjection produces not subject and object but subject and abject in a dyad that both separates and denies separation. Kristeva presents the abject as "above all ambiguity. Because…it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it - on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it [the subject] to be in perpetual danger" (9). Abjection defines the subject as primal want, a place of loss, an interior alterity:

> The abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject… [and] is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it is none other than the abject. The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural *loss* that laid the foundations of its own being. (1982:5)

The subject-as-being is the abject, or at least contains the abject within itself, an essential foreignness, an Other-ness at and as the basis of being.

In short, the Kristevan subject is split not only by the interplay of the semiotic and the symbolic but also by a founding strangeness, an internalized alterity without which the subject cannot exist but which continually threatens to overwhelm the subject with its essential strangeness. The subject is in "a permanent crisis, [where] anarchy is the non-repressed state of subjectivity…a permanent state of functioning" (Kristeva, 1996b:37). This state of crisis offers two possible interpretations: crisis as "suffering" and "pathology" or crisis as "creation, renewal" (37). Kristeva accepts crisis as a positive force and argues that "a moment of crisis…when something has crumbled, something is rejected, but…also the moment when new sources appear" (41). As with the irruption of the semiotic into the symbolic, the interior alterity posited by abjection can extend the subject's capacity for signification.

Even thus expanded, the subject is always provisional, always in danger of submitting to either of the two extremes; the psychosis of an unregulated semiotic flow

exhibited as an impossible plurality of meaning or the tyranny of an unchallenged symbolic order producing a unified and unifying meta-meaning.

This embattled, unstable subject might seem an unlikely agency for productive social action. Indeed, a number of critics have argued that Kristeva's subject-in-process cannot serve as an effective agent of change. For example, Toril Moi sees Kristeva's "emphasis on the semiotic as an unconscious force" as problematic for "the conscious decision-making process that must be part of any collective revolutionary project" (Moi, 1985:170) and argues that Kristeva "slides over the question of revolutionary agency". Nancy Fraser goes further, denying the possibility of agency for Kristeva's subject, "her subject…is split into two halves, neither of which is a potential political agent" (Fraser, 1990:98).

Nevertheless, the essence of Kristeva's subject is *process*, a continuing, evolving movement from crisis to crisis with a temporary, provisional stability. For her, the reconstituted subject resulting from the return of the symbolic order in the wake of the irruption of the semiotic is not "itself as before" but is transformed, rejuvenated and also in a renewed state of crisis. However, Kristeva does argue that a provisional stability can be created through "an intermediary [serving as]…a fixed point of support and confidence," allowing "the individual to find his capacity for play and construction" (Kristeva, 1996b:37-8). Kristeva introduces psychoanalysis as a provisional mechanism that enables the subject-in-process, "faced with the erosion of meaning" to discover "the economy of his own speaking" (Kristeva, 1982:86).

For Kristeva, "psychoanalysis may be one of the few remaining endeavours that will allow change and surprise" (Oliver, 1997:224). It does so by serving as a means of approaching the other, allowing the subject access to/acceptance of its own otherness through the discourse between analyst and analysand, a discourse that reveals the presence of the other in the subject. Kristeva describes psychoanalysis as a process of interpretation with the power to change, defining the "analytic position" as recognizing "an unconscious psychic life…governed by determinants and restrictions that can be described and modified through an interpretation of the transference relation" (212). The analysand comes to the analyst seeking assistance, a relief of the "suffering from…the abolition of psychic space" (Kristeva, 1987:373) that Kristeva sees as afflicting our time. The analyst provides an interpretation, attempting to find/create/reveal a "connection between disparate terms of the patient's discourse…re-establishing the causes and effects of desire" (Kristeva, 1982:83). If the analysand accepts the interpretation, "a psychotherapeutic

moment occurs which consists in compensating for previous traumatic situations and allowing the analysand to construct another transference, another meaning of his relationship to the Other" (84).

For Kristeva, this transference can occur only in and through love, which "suggests a state of instability in which the individual is no longer indivisible and allows himself to become lost in the other, for the other" (Kristeva, 1987:4). Particularly important is the transference love that allows the analysand to "transfer" affects to the analyst, "the patient being literally unable to imagine another object" (9) than the analyst. Kristeva describes transference love as a creative, almost metaphorical interaction between the analyst and the analysand and an imaginary other:

> Transference love is a dynamic involving three people: the *subject* (the analysand), his imaginary or real *object* of love (the other with whom what is being played out is the whole intersubjective drama of neurosis…) and the *Third Party*, the stand-in for potential Ideal, possible *Power*. The analyst occupies that place of the Other…The Other, to the extent that the analyst takes his place, is, within the cure, a loved Other. (13)

This transference relationship functions as "a true process of self-organization" that uses "the accidents, aggressions, and errors" of a life discourse to "produce the libidinal self-organization" that makes the subject "more complex and autonomous". Kristeva argues that this "love relationship (imaginary as it might be)…is a model of optimum psychic functioning" (14) with the subject reconstructed not as a unified and solitary entity but as a "one open system connected to another" (15).

The idea of open systems connected to each other is vital as it points to the interdependency of the analyst/analysand relationship, a relationship that must be interactive. Meaning and identity are produced in the discourse between analyst and analysand. As the analysand is affected by transference love, the analyst is affected by countertransference love, producing "an interpreter who is no longer neutral but is entirely caught up in the attempt to some sort of momentary identification" (Kristeva, 1996b:20). The analyst is no more unitary than is the analysand, "constantly tracking his own desire… [the analyst] is not fixed in the position of the classical interpreter, who interprets by virtue of stable meanings derived from a solid system of morality" (Kristeva, 1982:84). The analyst knows the same crisis, and is produced by the same lack, as the analysand.

For Kristeva, the acceptance of the other that love entails is absolutely necessary for psychic well-being. A psyche that "is not in love," with love defined as a joining with the other, "is dead" (Kristeva, 1987:15). Estranged from itself, it is estranged from the world. As Kristeva notes, "If I fail to fuse the parts of my dismembered body into a whole, I cannot exist, speak, or enter into relationships with other people" (Kristeva, 1996b:64). Conversely, a psyche that is in love, that is open, expanding in its relationship to its interior other, is alive and able to enter into relationships, it can serve as an agent of change.

This subject reconstituted by love is able to achieve agency through speech. Kristeva sees the subject as free to speak autonomously, "in a different manner from…family and social determination" (Kristeva, 1996b:52). Marilyn Edelstein finds the capacity for "individual agency" in the subject's ability to "transgress or subvert the 'socio-symbolic system'…to speak differently" (Oliver, 1993:203). She extends this agency beyond speech, arguing that "since the Kristevan subject is created in and through language, at the place where the word and flesh meet, and since language is a social practice; the subject and the social cannot be separated" (204).

A reliance on the political agency of analysands would lead to a very restricted, limited movement unlikely to enable real social change, as the expense in time, effort, and money required for psychoanalysis would always restrict it to the few. However, Kristeva does not limit the efficiency of psychoanalysis to the individual analyst/analysand relationship. Instead, as Kelly Oliver notes, "Kristeva proposes…models of alterity that can inform a new way to conceive of the structure of the relation to others and thereby inform a new way to conceive of ethics" (Oliver, 1993:2). This involves what David Fisher calls "a rethinking of ethics as a signifying practice rather than as a foundational basis for morality" (Fisher, 1992:94). In "Strabat Mater" Kristeva argues for just such an ethical practice based on the heterogeneity of the subject, "for a heretical ethics separated from morality, an herethics,…perhaps no more than that which in life makes bonds, thought, and therefore the thought of death, bearable: herethics is undeath…love" (Oliver, 1997b:330). This love is the love involved in psychoanalysis, the love that accepts the interior stranger and, in so doing, opens the way for an acceptance of the exterior stranger.

The intersection of subject and social allows Kristeva's ethical agenda to extend beyond the agency of the psychoanalyzed individual into a broader realm of social change.

Kristeva does not draw a clear line between the subject and the social but, as Kelly Oliver notes, for Kristeva both are processes that can be productively analyzed:

> The logic of the psyche, which sets up the relation between conscious and unconscious, is analogous to the logic of the social, which sets up the relation between self and others. Analyzing the logic of the psyche can help us to understand the logic of the social relation. Renegotiating the psychic dynamic may suggest ways in which to renegotiate the social dynamics. (Oliver, 1993:8)

Kristeva sees subject and society as both produced by a formative exclusion, the abjection of what is not self; both are based on an interiorized other, and both can be enriched/renewed by an acceptance of that otherness. She presents "the violence beneath desire as an imperative of psychic life as well as an imperative of social life" (Kristeva, 1996b:25) and asks for a common ground for the understanding and communication of a certain type of order - social life or discourse - that is not "simply an order of restriction but instead an almost marginal individual unveiling" (25). For a society constructed like a subject-in-process, "dynamic…basically open and in constant need of reworking" (Kristeva, 1987:15) the dynamics of analytical discourse might prove beneficial. Kristeva sees analysis as introducing "a type of social relationship" and teaching "us to rely only on ourselves even as we try to form bonds with other people - temporarily and forever" (Kristeva, 1996b:72). Society seems another divided, provisional subject, driven by unconscious desires.

Kristeva does not call for a mass analysis, or for psychoanalysis as religion, a return to universal meaning. Instead, she calls for the diffusion of psychoanalytic insights, particularly in regard to otherness and difference, into society through a pragmatic focus on the individual. The level of the individual offers opportunities for productive change because of the societal pressure on the individual to conform, a pressure similar to the constraint of the symbolic order on the semiotic. As our societies tend to achieve harmony by "a levelling, the uniformization and elision of all differences" (Kristeva, 1996b:216) what is required is an oppositional practice that promotes difference in an effort to restructure the social, to preserve, even maximize. For Kristeva, the goal is to "find new forms of society that are not constraining" while remembering that "there are no societies that are not constraining that do not respect individuals" (44).

In addition to the individual approach, Kristeva discusses two opportunities for a more inclusive introduction of the dynamics of psychoanalysis into the social order. The first is an 'atomized' or microscopic level of psychoanalytic listening. Describing psychoanalysis as "a privileged listening post," she argues for the creation of new, "diversified listening posts…to compensate for the general deficiency of the symbolic markers" (Kristeva, 1996b:171-172). These listening posts, put into practice by "basic intellectuals, those who play their parts in educational centres, schools, mayors offices, and new microspaces that need to be opened, to be invented", could "give a concrete extension to the ethics of listening" (173). In short, she envisions a social structure informed by the insights of psychoanalysis, even a bureaucracy functionally aware of and, therefore, able to act on its own divided nature.

The second opportunity lies in the power of poetic language which has socially transformative power. In her discussion of Proust in *Time and Sense*, Kristeva presents the effects of writing as analogous to if not identified with the effects of psychoanalysis:

> Writing is memory regained from signs to flesh and from flesh to signs through an intense identification with (and dramatic separation from) an other who is loved, desired, hated, and rendered indifferent. Interpretation shares the same qualities, at least during those rare moments of grace when countertransference responds to the logic of transference and reshapes the psychic map of the analyst and the analysand. (1996a:245)

Kristeva seems to attribute at least some psychoanalytic effectiveness to a literature informed by a practice of psychoanalysis or by a similar aesthetic process. Fiction, she argues, "can aim for truth effects… [which] take charge of the death drive and its expressions" (Kristeva, 1996a:171). She describes art as a means of "therapy" in that it provides - through the sublimation inherent in the aesthetic process - "a certain harmony of the most violent drives, the life drives and the death drives" produced through an introduction into "signification that then brings about a sense of stability within (and with) the crisis" (214). While Kristeva sees this psychoanalysis through art as provisional and 'insufficient' she allows that, "it may lead to a truth of self and to knowledge, it may even be the only possible truth since for many people there is no question of going through analysis" (214).

Pragmatically, Kristeva wants the benefits of psychoanalysis extended as much as possible to the large majority who will never undergo psychoanalysis in any formal sense as she sees psychoanalysis as offering "the possibility of rebirth" (Kristeva, 1996a:267) to the social as well as to the individual. This rebirth, cast as and created through instability and movement, has been "the unconscious project" (266) of her career, an attempt to develop "a new humanity" through "a new subjectivity" - a genuine revolution in mentalities and in interpretive methods" (261).

In her essay, "The Ethics of Linguistics," Kristeva argued for a new ethics based on freedom rather than restraint, pointing toward the provisional status of her ethical agent:

> Ethics used to be a coercive, customary manner of ensuring the cohesiveness of a particular group through the repetition of a code…Now, however, the issue of ethics crops up wherever a code (mores, social contract) must be shattered in order to give way to the free play of negativity, need, desire, pleasure, and *jouissance*, before being put together again, although temporarily and with full knowledge of what is involved. (Kristeva, 1980:23)

The Kristevan ethics is one of love rather than law, or of love returning to law and her ethical agent is both provisional and aware of that provisionality. Love, with its power to dissolve and reform borders, to validate the other, provides the Kristevan ethicist with the temporary, troubled ground for productive action. The insights of psychoanalysis, with its recognition of the interior alien in all of us, can serve to create a new ethical base for the transformation of society.

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Women in a Changing World

DARK NUMBERS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE

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Modernization and patriarchy under communism

The advent of Communism in Romania signalled a change in politics as well as economic structures. Nationalization of industrial and financial institutions occurred and private landholdings were expropriated, a policy which encountered peasant resistance until the 1960s.

Like other countries with new Communist regimes, equality between the sexes was proclaimed in the 1948 Romanian constitution[1] and the Romanian Communist Party proclaimed a formal commitment to the demise of patriarchal society. In practice, however, equality did not mean that women's traditional roles were as important as male roles. Rather, women were to reject their traditional monetarily uncompensated roles as "bourgeois" and support the primacy in the new order accorded to wage labour for personal and societal development.

Romanian women were mobilized into wage labour and given access to education. Sectorial segregation continued to channel women in to occupations for which they were deemed to have special competence. Easy work was considered suitable for women; hard work, which also happened to be better paid and more prestigious was proper for men. Women's allegedly easier jobs allowed them to continue to function as traditional wives and mothers (Harsanyi-Pasca, 1995: 214-215). Elite women joined the labour market; working class women continued their labour force attachment; peasant women bore the brunt of changes seeking work in local factory co-operatives or on state farms in manual labour as their families were deprived of land and other properties (204). The feminization of the agricultural labour force was greater in Romania than other communist countries. However, leadership positions and decision making in the villages remained the province of men (Lobodzinska, 1995:208).

Marriage and the family were protected in the Family Code (Article 1) and formally were to be supported through economic and social measures as well as provisions for the

defence of the interests of mother and child (Kligman, 1995:236). The party claimed that the state would accept responsibility for home and children by providing childcare and food services, though these promises were never fulfilled.

Like other countries in the Soviet bloc, sex equality produced a particular form of 'emancipation'. "For most women, equality meant treating women like men. Unlike men, however, women were expected to bear a triple burden: productive work, childcare, and housework, plus hours of shopping for scarce goods" (Baban and David, 1994:16). Men were able to avoid these domestic responsibilities by commuting between two economies – the collective farm from which many of them originated with its private plot to grow one's own food and the wage labour factory (with its access to urban goods). In addition, wage labourers (often males) held a second job in the unofficial or underground economy (204).

Despite the appearance of the new political and economic structures associated with post-war communism in Romanian (the multiparty system disappeared completely - unlike other countries in the region where the old multiparty structure was maintained partially and as a matter of form -, methods of repression including labour camps were introduced, virulent atheistic propaganda reached Soviet levels, collectivization of land was almost total and heavy industry was consolidated on Soviet lines with an emphasis on massive economically transforming structures) in the cultural archaeology of domestic violence in these strata there were some continuities with the past. The most prominent is the development, especially in the post Stalin period under Ceauşescu, of an uninterrupted unity and, hence, a revisionist continuity with the past (Boia, 2001:138-143). Drawing upon the patriarchal cultural tradition, as Verdery notes, the Ceauşescu regime constructed a history of a "sequence of male heroes...producing the impression of the nation as a temporally deep lineage" (1996:70), men whose lives are rendered as ones of "heroism and triumph along with victimization and sacrifice - things they share as individuals with the nation that unites them" (73). There was little or no place for women as the creators and protectors of national tradition either as warriors or intellectuals, though as mothers, they were the source of continuity in national identity. In this context, however, reproduction is not necessarily a heroic act or an event of epic proportions in a nationalist litany. In the cultural archaeology of domestic violence for the communist strata there are pronounced discontinuities which emerge with consequences for domestic violence. The first is the massive relocation of populations from the land into agro-industrial complexes and the destruction of villages as part of Ceauşescu's policy of *sistematizare* ('systematization') in the late 60s and 70s. The stated aim of the policy was the

elimination of differences between town and countryside by a drastic halving of Romania's 13,000 villages.[2] *Sistematizare* emphasized the co-ordination of social and economic life to establish an optimum combination, the rubric for rural modernization which was said to reject the disorderliness and superstition of rural life whilst discouraging urban migration (Cartwright, 2001:98-100) by creating an agro-town, an intermediary periphery or slum zone between peasant and urban culture, with a disoriented population, cut off from tradition but not yet integrated in to modernity (Boia, 2001:151).

The profound social and political shifts produced by this policy had different consequences for men and women in the same household. For example, moving off the land allowed some women to take advantage of educational opportunities which were unavailable or considered unnecessary for them in rural life; moving into wage employment may have encouraged some women to have a different sense of themselves in relation to the traditional family unit. However, by and large, peasant norms and outlooks continued to flourish in provincial towns and in the working class cultures of the cities as the collectivization of agriculture and forced industrialization led to the ruralization of the town rather than the urbanization of the village (Baban and David, 1994:17). In practice, this meant that while men continued to enjoy and expect the entitlements of their patriarchal status and that male alcoholism and adultery were tolerated as long as a man fulfilled his obligation to provide for his family, women were exhorted to continue fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers (16). Consistent with patriarchal double standards and sexuality women who were discovered to have an adulterous relationship were charged with prostitution; women suppressed their sexuality or regarded sex as a necessary evil and hoped that men's access to the second economy would relieve some of women's family life marital obligations (Harsanyi-Pasca, 1995:206).

The second discontinuity with the pre-communist strata is the retention and expansion of Stalinist type state surveillance over the population under the rubric of "synchronization" of society (Gilberg, 1990, especially ch.7) as part of a systematization and modernization. A massive and feared secret police network (the *Securitate*) was used extensively to assist in Ceauşescu's drastic efforts to homogenize social and political life relying on a well developed system of informers. It was alleged to have a membership of 486,000 and to have produced an estimated 125 million files (*Constitution Watch*, 1998:28). In their work the *Securitate* was supported by a Romanian Communist Party whose membership in proportion to the population made it one of the largest in the world (Tismăneanu and Kligman, 2001:78).

The availability of a well established surveillance system allowed Ceauşescu to implement an extraordinarily destructive coercive pro-natalist policy with implications for domestic violence as a systemic practice. These policies (characterized as political demography) sought to control and regulate women's bodies, more specifically their reproductive capacities (Kligman, 1995:251).[3] The message was unambiguous: the state has enlisted your body in the societal transformation of building socialism. In 1966, abortion was delegalized and contraceptives and sex education became almost unavailable with no accompanying increase in healthcare or medical services. Legal abortion was limited to women forty years or older or those with at least four children. To prevent illegal abortion, the state forced women to undergo mandatory periodic gynaecological examinations (Lobodzinska, 1995:206), quarterly examinations were conducted on all women between twenty and thirty years old. Coercive taxation policies also were implemented. Unmarried persons and childless couples were required to pay additional taxes (207) - a tax of ten percent was levied on anyone who got married by age 25 and married couples who did not produce a child within 2 years of marriage had to pay 20 percent of their joint income unless they showed medical reasons.

In the 1980s women's reproductive roles assumed heightened significance as childbearing became officially obligatory while gender roles within the family (Lobodzinska, 1995:236-237) remained traditionally patriarchal. Slogans such as "Motherhood is itself the meaning of women's lives" combined women's mission with patriotic virtue (240). Despite official pronouncements regarding the need to reduce the stress in women's lives through childcare facilities, household appliances, and the sale of semi-prepared foods, as Kligman notes, "women experienced an inverse relationship between Ceauşescu's official statements about their lives and the demands of their everyday reality (238).

Despite the reliance of intrusive surveillance, compliance at the individual level with the state's pro-natalist policy could never be fully assured; there were unacknowledged strategies of resistance.[4] Women with unwanted pregnancies might seek an illegal abortion. In the privacy of their bedroom, spouses might arrive at a mutually agreed upon strategy of sexual practices in the absence of contraception to avoid pregnancy. Otherwise, resistance might be unilateral – a woman's avoidance of or resistance to demands for sex, based on her fear of pregnancy. Depending on her spouses' expectations or sense of entitlement through sexual access or cultural identification with male potency, this resistance could produce threats of violence or injury including marital rape (Harsanyi-

Pasca, 1995:206). There is a modest amount of qualitative evidence addressing this difficult issue which supports the contention that domestic violence was one of the consequences of harsh pro-natal policies which, themselves, were a form of institutionalized state violence by their targeting of women for forced childbearing.[5]

One judge recalled that judges and procurators, as representatives of a state and a party committed to the building and maintenance of healthy "socialist families," were required to go to schools and factories to discuss family life problems.[6] There was, she recalled, concern about the disruptive aspects of family violence and the need for women to fulfil their supportive family role. She and her colleagues were instructed to provide suggestions to women about managing quarrels and offer strategies for calming their men rather than explaining penal or family code procedures for prosecution or divorce. "At the end of these meetings, after we heard many stories about family quarrels," she sighed, "we realized how unhappy people were." She acknowledged however that this knowledge did not lead to changes in law, policy or practice.[7] The information the judge and her colleagues garnered simply remained accounts of personal pain and misery with no redress.

In a society with a formidable, security conscious, harsh and repressive state and party apparatus, it is not surprising that family problems were kept inside the family. Interviewees recalled that reliance on officials for assistance in a domestic violence case might backfire in any number of ways. The victim might bring unwanted attention or scrutiny to the entire family; her allegations might lead to the resurrection of old grudges best left alone; and endemic corruption had produced a deeply compromised judiciary, prosecutorial and law enforcement system in which good connections were a substitute for fairness in outcomes.

During the communist period, independent activism[8] in Romania was more important in its anomic forms than in the establishment of formal dissident bodies (as in Hungary and Poland). This difference is explained by the combination of the ruthlessness of the *Securitate*, the lower level of development in the country, and the tendency to "forgive" Ceauşescu in the earlier years because of his independence from the Soviet Union (Ramet, 1991:121). Party leaders relied on harsh measures against all dissenters, suppression of economic reform and private activity, and co-operation of intellectuals through a reliance on the manipulation of Romanian nationalism (Harsanyi-Pasca, 1995:210).

Beginning in the 70s, however, increasing discontent among workers, intellectuals, ethnic minorities, and religious groups surfaced. A housing crisis, low income, poor and over-crowded houses in rural areas, a lack of household conveniences, shortages of consumer goods and the lack of family oriented services contributed to a low standard of living (Lobodzinska, 1995:207). In 1985 signs of a faltering economy surfaced with a state of emergency in the electric power industry. Over the next four years, mounting internal unrest, increasing isolation from the international community, and a loss of self confidence within the elite itself led to a social malaise culminating in the dramatic events of 1989 (Ramet, 1991:123-124).

Post-Communism

Romania's transition from Communist rule, unlike many of its neighbours', did not include round table talks involving former leaders and dissidents, blanket bans on former officials serving in high office, or the opening of state files (especially ones maintained by the *Securitate*). Ceaușescu, himself, rather than the system was blamed for Romania's problems (Cartwright, 2001:106-107). Rather the party's anti-Ceaușescu wing regrouped as the National Salvation Front and became the successor to the old regime. Today's Romanian elite, with the exception of a few survivors, is the creation of communism (Boia, 2001:8).

A new constitution with guarantees of respect for human rights and a commitment to a free market economy was approved in a December 1991 popular referendum. Since the overthrow of the communist regime, Romania has been plagued by its forty year legacy of extreme social engineering, corruption scandals, economic decline, and ethnic unrest. The old political class remained in control of political changes and economic transformation through privatization. Their formal and informal networks have had a major impact on legal culture and practices (see Mungiu-Pippidi and Ioniţu, 2001) as well as on state accountability in the implementation of public policy. Public access to information depends on the will of the authorities and the lack of a legal culture committed to the "rule of law" strips the term of any meaning in the eyes of a hesitant distrusting public (Macovei, 1998:79). The deeply patriarchal Romanian Orthodox church, identified with the national ideals of the country and fearful of western dilution of its power, is now formally emancipated from the state (Mungiu-Pippidi, 1998:88).[9] It seeks to maintain a position as an adjunct of the state and uses its spiritual influence for political purposes.

In post communist Romania, groups committed to the development of civil society[10] and to women's rights have emerged. In the first post-Ceauşescu parliament of May 1990, very few women played prominent political roles and major parties ignored women's issues (Harsanyi-Pasca, 1995:211). In 1996, a Department of Women's Rights and Family Policy was established by the Ministry of Labour. As Bucur notes, the prior regime's "mixed program of emancipation in order to work, social assistance in order to reproduce, and voting rights so that the same cohort of party activists would get reelected has left Romanian women embittered toward "emancipatory" political rights that in reality mean oppression…most women have remained reluctant to change their gender defined roles" (Bucur:225) And, women who have become active in non-governmental organizations tend not focus on women's issues (Grünberg, 307).

The economic crises which have punctuated the post-communist decade have affected women more drastically than men. Before 1989, women tended to occupy positions of lower pay and responsibility than men in the same professions. Since privatization usually occurs at the highest levels of professions, men have been the main beneficiaries of economic changes – thereby, increasing the implicit bias against women in the labour market. In turn, income imbalance contributes to buttressing a patriarchal hierarchy in the home and reproducing the traditional division of labour. This power relationship is an undiscussed internalized attitude rather than a stated fact in open discussion (Grünberg, 226).

Romanian women's rights activists have participated in the international campaign against violence against women. But, in private, they confirm that the transformation of public awareness is a hard task. They point to examples such as a spring 2000 issue of the Romanian edition of Playboy magazine which contained an article on "How to Beat Your Wife Without Leaving Traces," defended as an April fool's joke.[11] The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights reports that:

> The State's slow and hesitant conduct in pursuing adequate and firm legal changes and in implementing affirmative actions regarding violence against women, and the lack of resources oriented to education programs both for the public and the official bodies which enact the legal provisions related to domestic violence, illustrate indifference towards the victims and perpetuate a discriminatory attitude regarding women's status in the family (*Women 2000*).

The Dimensions of Domestic Violence

1. A Discussion Without Statistics

Like other countries in the region, Romania has no official published statistics on the incidence of domestic violence. Collection of such information is difficult because, like the Penal Codes of Russia and Hungary, the Romanian code does not contain a separate provision for domestic violence. Since official statistics are kept by code section, there is no immediate way of determining whether injuries are committed by a family member or a stranger.[12]

According to the Helsinki Federation available official statistics do not capture the extent of the real dimension of violence against women and reports or surveys of various NGOs offer only a fragmented image on the extent of domestic violence. According to research conducted by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights in Romania, 29% of women treated between March 1993 and March 1994 had been beaten by an intimate partner (according to data provided by the Forensic Institute in Bucharest).

The reported numbers of women victims of domestic violence increased fivefold from 1996 to 1998. It must be noted that in 1998, 13% of women victims of domestic violence died. According to research conducted by the Pilot Centre for Women Victims of Domestic Violence from Bucharest: 74% of women victims of domestic violence were attacked by their husbands; 4% were attacked by their partners; 7% were attacked by their ex-husbands; and 15% were attacked by other relatives. Noting the connection between grounds for divorce and the existence of domestic violence, judges estimated that in Romania, 60% of divorce cases in Bucharest alone involved physical violence and 23% of divorce case were filed on grounds of violence in 1997 (*Women 2000*: 362).

A few officials, however, did provide me with unexpected statistical gleanings. Police in one city permitted me to review a typewritten internal memo containing a breakdown of criminal offences by type of crime, relationship between the parties and urban/rural location of the crime.[13] Despite my queries in this city, no one was prepared to reveal the reason why the data had been compiled in such a detailed and different manner from conventional statistics. My interview probes with police officers in other communities about the existence of such data produced no such documentation.

Other possible sources of data on domestic violence cases include: statements in divorce petitions, hospital admissions for injuries incurred in domestic violence situations and the

number of medical-legal certificates (see pages below) for injuries in domestic violence cases. These data are not collected.

Another unexpected source of data was a forensic doctor who, on his own initiative, had done an analysis on the number of medical-legal certificates issues in 1995 in two districts in his city. According to his informal study, two thousand certificates were issued at the request of victims of all kinds of injuries. Of this total three hundred eighty one were issued for injuries from all kinds of intra-familial violence; twenty-six certificates were issued to men; the other three hundred fifty five to women; the majority of these women (two hundred sixty nine cases) were between the ages of twenty to forty years. Of the total intra-familial violence certificates, three hundred were issued for injuries requiring between one and ten days of medical care; fifteen were issued for injuries requiring between ten and twenty days of medical care and eight for injuries requiring between twenty and sixty days of medical care.[14] Given the fact that applications for such certificates represent the "tip of the iceberg" in family violence cases (see discussion pp. below), these numbers are extremely revealing. They suggest that the violence is a widespread.

Even if more complete statistics were available, they would only reveal the number of cases in which official or professional help is required by law (Penal Code Article 182 - grave injuries or Article 183 – homicide[15]) or where a victim, for a variety of reasons, is prepared to call upon the authorities. At best, these numbers are a modest percentage of the total number of incidents as the qualitative data gathered from interviews reveals.

Most cases never reach the officials and professionals charged with handling them. As discussed below, the reasons for this systemic failure include: widespread disinterest in domestic violence cases on the part of police and prosecutors, scepticism about the victim's motivations and her role in provoking the conflict, pressures on the victim to reconcile with the perpetrator, and the claim that there is an available option of divorce from an abusive spouse rather than prosecution. Singly or in combination, these considerations serve to discourage the overwhelming majority of women from pursuing a complaint through the legal system.

In the absence of hard data, interviewees were asked to estimate the incidence of domestic violence in Romania based on their own work experience. Some recoiled openly at the prospect of giving an opinion; those who were willing to answer provided widely differing estimates. A highly placed prosecutor in Bucharest estimated ten percent of all Romanian women experience domestic violence; a gynaecologist estimated one in every twenty women;

an official in the Ministry of Social Protection who stated openly that she was including unreported as well as reported cases, estimated one out of every three Romanian women experience domestic violence.

Regardless of their willingness to provide a numerical estimate, a majority of interviewees stated that the number of domestic violence cases has increased, since the beginning of the transition to a market economy. In response to a further probe about whether there was an actual increase or whether the issue was more visible because more women were willing to talk about their experience of abuse, most interviewees responded that the dislocations marking the transition have generated increased family violence.

In assessing this response, one must take into account that the interviewees were products of the period when prevailing Communist ideology conveyed the message that the perfect "socialist family" had been achieved in Romania. In this family, violence did not exist; or, if it did, it was limited to some pathological or anti-social individuals. Family violence was not a topic covered by the tightly controlled Romanian press. The residues of this well-developed ideological stance, when combined with strong cultural traditions naturalizing domestic violence, make it difficult to reconstruct the past with any degree of accuracy.

Most interviewees connected greater frequency of the violence with rural areas. Only one older interviewee, born in a village, disputed this assessment with the claim that community pressures were stronger in rural areas than in the cities. He referred to the practice of a girl's parents making inquiries, especially about the drinking habits of a prospective husband, if he was from another village. If their inquiry produced a consensus that he drank "water in the water" (meaning that he drank only in the evenings), he was an acceptable prospect. Such an account, however, appears to be more focused on his ability to work and provide for a family. It does not take into account violence occurring in the evening at home.

Asked to identify specific regions where they thought the incidence of domestic violence was greatest, several interviewees spoke of the Maramureş region in northern Romania as a region where life was very hard and alcohol consumption very high; a gynaecologist who had worked in south-eastern Romania earlier in her professional career stated that life in that region was marked by greater violence including domestic abuse than other parts of the country. These observations comport with the more generally voiced claim that domestic violence is part of a peasant culture and mentality and, consequently, less likely to be found in the more developed, civilized, urban "European" parts of the country.

When asked whether there was a noticeable amount of family violence among the sizeable Roma population, most interviewees said “no”, adding quickly that Roma were most likely to commit crimes against property. A few individuals noted that Roma family structure was very close and closed and that the authorities would not know about such cases, even if they occurred. This response stands in marked contrast to the observations of Hungarian interviewees (overwhelmingly non-Roma) who spoke at great length about family violence among both urban or rural Roma.

2. Why the Violence?

Discussions in the Romanian language which rely on the term “gender” as part of an analysis of the prevailing sex system are hampered by the fact that the only word differentiating “man” and “woman” is “sex”. Gender has a grammatical meaning but does not refer to different social roles. In effect, there is a “built-in essentialism”(Bucur, 226) which serves to reproduce gender roles through biology as the centre of difference. Hence, interviewees would not be likely to refer to the specificities of the Romanian gender system as a cause factor in their analysis of domestic violence.

Like interviewees in the other three countries, Romanian respondents agreed that alcohol is the most significant cause of domestic violence. One prosecutor estimated that seventy five percent of the family violence cases are connected with alcohol. Unlike most other respondents who identified alcohol as a major cause, he was quick to add that alcohol is not an excuse for the violence; rather, it aggravates a situation. Most interviewees stated that alcohol diminished the capacity for self control especially in the home, leading individuals to act in a violent manner. One gynaecologist characterized the potential as “the animal will come to life”.

There is some disagreement among interviewees regarding the incidence of female alcoholism. One prosecutor observed that in a number of cases in which serious injuries occur both partners are drinking, although most family homicides are committed by drunken husbands. A lawyer noted that it is mostly drunken husbands who threaten to kill family members. He remarked that women and children live in a state of terror when a drunken man comes home. A judge remarked that in most divorce cases it is men who are the heavy drinkers or alcoholics; there are very few women alcoholics in such cases. One judge, formerly a lawyer, commented that in only two or three in one hundred cases was a female the heavy drinker in a family.

Prior to 1989, there was recognition of the connection between domestic violence and alcoholism in Romania. Romania (like Poland, Hungary and Russia) permitted compulsory detoxification treatment of alcoholics (those individuals with a verified medical condition of addiction as distinguished from heavy drinkers) by removal from their homes. If a spouse (usually a wife) reported to the police or the prosecutor that her husband was an alcoholic, or if there were witnesses to confirm his habits and behaviour, the state could intervene. One former prosecutor stressed that a complaint had to support he allegation with concrete evidence that the individual was violent or endangered his family or neighbours. (For example, if a wife was beaten by her husband and did not complain to the authorities or seek a medical certificate, the neighbours would have to verify that the drunkard threatened them.) Based on the complaint or verification of the violence, the prosecutor conducted an inquiry which included a medical examination by alcoholism experts. If the investigation uncovered significant evidence of alcoholism, the case was brought before a judge who could send the individual to a hospital for detoxification for a limited time period. None of the interviewees claimed that such treatment reformed or cured an alcoholic. Rather, like respondents in the other countries in this study, there was recognition that the temporary removal of an alcoholic only provided a respite from the violence for family and neighbours.

One prosecutor observed that in many cases marked by serious domestic violence injuries both partners have been drinking. The same prosecutor who connected serious injuries with both parties drinking acknowledged that most family homicides are committed by drunken husbands. And a judge confirmed that in most divorce cases men are the heavy drinkers or alcoholics. This observation was supported by a lawyer who noted that drunken husbands are the most likely to threaten to kill family members. He added that women and children live in a state of terror, when a drunken man comes home. Another prosecutor noted, "when a husband drinks too much, any word by a wife can generate a strong reaction."

Like other criminal justice systems, the Romanian system is likely to deal with most serious crimes which, in the family context, may be marked by class and aggravated by alcohol. In such cases, there may have been a long history of domestic violence which, for a variety of reasons, may have been known, but not acted upon by the authorities until serious injuries occur.

Alcohol consumption was connected to contemporary economic problems by a number of interviewees who stated that people will find money for alcohol to escape their reality, even when they are poor. One eminent elderly lawyer, commenting on alcohol as a refuge, mused:

"This may be hard for someone who comes from a healthy and wealthy country to understand. You have to live through a Communist regime to understand the reasons for people's behaviour. In the post-revolution period, there are depressed living standards and money isn't 'real.'" Unlike the Communist period when alcohol sales were limited, (albeit from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) there are no longer specific limitations on sales. In any case, home brewed *ţuica* (a very powerful plum brandy) is readily available.

While life may have been harsh in the Ceauşescu years, there was full employment, a shared misery, and the certainty of visible targets for blame ("He" and "She" – the favourite names in jokes about Ceauşescu and his wife, Elena). Now this certainty has been replaced by confusion and a lack of understanding about the future. Unemployment and increasingly serious economic problems, compounded by stress (independent of alcohol consumption), were identified by most interviewees as a major trigger for increased domestic violence. People were described as more "irritable and less tolerant." In poor families, discussions about household living expenditures may generate quarrels that escalate into physically violent behaviour. Or, if a wife is working and a husband is unemployed, a quarrel over his failure to find work may lead to violence. As one highly placed judge stated "it is difficult to have family harmony when basic economic conditions are not met". But, when asked whether there was violence in well off families, the same judge acknowledged its existence as "one of the basic instincts in the world."

Issues of sexuality and sexual performance and their connection to domestic violence are not widely and publicly discussed in Romania. However, in comparison with interviewees in Poland and Russia, several Romanian interviewees were far more open and willing to engage in a discussion of the connection. They did raise the issue of behaviours connected with sexuality such as a male potency as well as jealousy and adultery as causes of domestic violence. Several lawyers who have handled many divorce cases noted a pattern in which one spouse (usually a husband) with a lover wants a divorce and may provoke violence from his wife, in order to encourage her to seek a divorce. An eminent criminal lawyer noted that: "When a man is drinking his sexual potency diminishes. He then becomes jealous of a wife's lover (real or imagined) and attacks her - perhaps even killing her." Other interviewees agreed that when husbands drink they also demand sex, claiming that they are entitled to the sexual services of their wife. In such a situation, marital rape may occur, although everyone confirmed that women will not use the term, because they are unwilling to talk about intimate matters. One young gynaecologist observed that when women began to provide her with

details about the violence they experienced from their husbands, "it was sometimes close to rape". Many women do not have access to contraceptives. Either they are too expensive or their husband will not use condoms or their husband will not permit them to acquire a female barrier method because he believes that female contraception encourages promiscuity.[16]

Almost every respondent identified culturally acceptable threshold explanations for the causes of domestic violence (heavy alcohol consumption, a declining standard of living, the deep insecurities and confusion generated by the transition to a market economy). However, very few were prepared to engage extensively with the possible connection between Romanian cultural assumptions of appropriate gender roles in marriage and domestic violence.

The notable exceptions who considered domestic violence as an accepted part of Romanian traditional culture and gender relations were quick to point out that contemporary gender socialization does not disavow the violence. An eminent lawyer identified a historical legacy of a patriarchy which treated women as property and allowed the paterfamilias the right of correction of his wife combined with "oriental influences" - a catch-all phrase used to characterize the Turkish presence and culture in the Balkans. In contemporary Romania, he mused, this cultural heritage is reflected in the way women are educated to their roles. But, he recognized that even when changes in the relations between the sexes occur domestic violence continues to exist. "In the old days women did not have economic independence. Now there are cases in which women earn more than men and they may manifest their independence by talking back. This is a provocation. When women are the higher wage earner, a man is called 'handicapped'" he noted.

A young gynaecologist reported that women often tried to talk with her about their "problems". She summarized their comments: "Men are the masters and are very powerful; women are not important and have to do everything he wants...Violence is like a routine; they are used to it; it is like water flowing." She noted that "younger women are more angry about such attitudes; older women are more resigned."

Family status and acceptance of traditional gender roles were important in the analysis an Appeals Court judge. In some families "the man is the head and the woman obeys or the man will use his fist. In other families when women are more successful in their career, they may encounter an upset husband who might not actually be violent. Rather he is less patient and this may trigger the violence. He might develop a psychological complex and might feel wounded. His dignity is affected and he might become violent, if his wife is not very diplomatic; there's no point in her showing her intelligence in such a situation."

Notes

[1] Constitutional cite

[2] Until the communists assumed power, most Romanians had lived and worked in the countryside. By 1989, over half lived in towns and cities and the proportion of those working on the land had fallen to less than one third (Cartwright, 2001:96).

[3] Briefly, in 1949(?), the Romanian government outlawed abortion; in 1957, in response to the toll of this policy on women's health and, following the lead of the Soviet Union, Romania legalized abortion on request. Within 10 years Romania's population growth rate had plummeted to less than 1 percent. In 1966 the Ceauşescu government reversed the policy and began to pursue a harsh and punitive pro-natalist one coupled with an unremitting propaganda campaign extolling the virtues of motherhood as providing meaning in women's lives. Between 1966 and 1989 the campaign testified as the state enacted laws prohibiting abortions for women under 45 with less than 5 children, punishing doctors who performed the procedure, requiring compulsory gynaecological exams for women between 16 and 45 years of age, imposing a monthly contribution (tax) on all childless persons over 25 years of age (Kligman, 2001:242-45).

[4] To illustrate this proposition, during a class session devoted to reproductive rights, I asked my 40 law students about their family's reproductive history. Initially they looked puzzled. What was the number of children in their maternal and paternal grandparents' families? Their answers ranged from 5-13 siblings. In their parents' generation the answer was 3 or 4-7 siblings. In their generation, with the exception of two or three students, everyone came from a family of 2 or 3 siblings at most. I remarked on the striking consistency of this last response and then commented that since their generation would have been born during the repressive Ceauşescu years, I rested my case.

[5] Baban and David's work, *Voices of Romanian Women*, is a pioneering effort.

[6] During the Communist period under the provisions of Act 3 (1970) prosecutors were obligated to go to schools and to homes to make inquiries regarding children who were causing problems. This law was abolished immediately after 1989.

[7] This judge admitted that she and her colleagues were not pleased with this additional responsibility which was eliminated after 1989. Given the numbers of cases she has heard since then, she now believes it may be necessary to reinstitute such a program.

[8] During the Ceauşescu years there were some individual dissidents such as the poet Ana Blandiana, Doina Cornea (an academic from Cluj) and Smaranda Enache (the director of a puppet theatre in Tîrgu Mureş); however, these women were not part of a programmatic opposition.

[9] According to Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, some Orthodox priests are identified as having worked with the *Securitate*.

[10] See, for example, Liga Apărării Drepturilor Omului (League for the Defence of Human Rights) which sends observers around the country to report on a wide range of human rights violations.

[11] The staff was chastised by the American publisher.

[13] In 1993 there were 221,397 criminal cases and 950,675 civil cases tried by the courts. The number of persons sentenced by law courts was 83,247. Brochure, Romanian Development Agency, Bucharest, n.d.

The statistics for serious crimes by any family members were:

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	
Murder		5/19	3/20	2/22	2/18	1/15	5/11	8/12
Att. Murder	-	2/30	3/29	2/22	4/15	3/11	3/10	
Gr.Harm	1/11	1/7	0/3	0/3	0/5	½	½	
SerInj		2/31	2/26	1/17	2/21	5/21	2/24	0/17
Rape/Inc.	-	1/24	1/21	0/42	0/40	2/40	2/38	

Att.Mur-Attempted Murder, Gr.Harm=Grievous Body harm leading to death, SerInj=serious injuries, Rape/Inc=rape or incest. Of these cases the percentage in urban areas was 78.8%

When asked about the causes of the violence among family members, police identified alcohol, jealousy, conflict situations, and problems of inheritance.

Police also provided me with another typed internal memo containing the following statistics for 1990-96:

Murder: H/W 10 urban/3 rural Other family: 9

Cohab 1 rural

Att.Mur H/W 5 urban/1rural Other family: 9

Cohab 2 rural

Gr.Harm H/W 1 urban - Other family: 3

Ser.Inj H/W 4 urban Other family: 4

Cohab 5 rural

Incest Parent/child 5, uncle/niece 1

Total population in the district: 740,000 persons

Since I was not allowed to make a Xerox copy of the data, I tried to make some quick calculations regarding the discrepancies between the first and second set of statistics which I was allowed to see. The interviewees had no explanation for them and brushed off my several attempts to ask the question.

[14] There was no explanation offered for the disparity between this breakdown by days of treatment needed (324 cases) and the number of intra-familial cases (381). The remaining number (57 cases) could be cases requiring over 60 days of medical treatment though this is not likely.

[15] One sociologist who had access to statistics for 1995 reported that 65 wives were killed by their husbands and 25 husbands were killed by their wives.

[16] See also Baban and David for a confirmation of this attitude

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GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE PROCESS OF ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN INSTRUMENTS OF THE EU ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

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"Gender mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them."

"Action to promote equality requires an ambitious approach which presupposes the recognition of male and female identities and the willingness to establish a balanced distribution of responsibilities between women and men."

"The promotion of equality must not be confused with the simple objective of balancing the statistics: it is a question of promoting long-lasting changes in parental roles, family structures, institutional practices, the organisation of work and time, their

personal development and independence, but also concerns men and the whole of society, in which it can encourage progress and be a token of democracy and pluralism."

"The systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all Community policies and actions: this is the basic feature of the principle of 'mainstreaming', which the Commission has adopted. This does not mean simply making Community programmes or resources more accessible to women, but rather the simultaneous mobilisation of legal instruments, financial resources and the Community's analytical and organisational capacities in order to introduce in all areas the desire to build balanced relationships between women and men. In this respect it is necessary and important to base the policy of equality between women and men on a sound statistical analysis of the situation of women and men in the various areas of life and the changes taking place in societies." (from Communication: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities", www.europa.eu.int)

*"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (*Gender Mainstreaming in the United Nations system, e.1997.l.10.para.4; adopted by ECOSOC, July 1997)

Gender mainstreaming is an important part of the enlargement process of the European Union. It is one of the starting points in adopting EU law – a prerequisite for membership. The European Union is a Union based on law. The body of common rights and obligations, which apply to all the member states within the European Union, is called the "acquis communautaire" (the acquis). The first condition for membership of the Union is that the candidate country accepts and transposes the acquis and thereafter, shows implementation capacity in applying the laws that have been integrated into the national legal framework. In order to advance the accession negotiations the Commission has set out a "road map" which identifies priorities for the negotiations for the next three semesters. The "road map" is a sequenced approach to the chapters and its aim is to serve as a timetable for all the participants in the negotiations. The laws of acquis communautaire

can be divided into primary law, which establishes the European Community (Treaty), and secondary law, which derives from the treaties. Moreover, from a gender perspective, there is also the very important soft law, adopted by the EU. The 'soft law' is a term used for EU policies, which guide the national policies of the current Member States in fields such as employment, social and gender equality policy.

The most important Primary Law in relation to Gender equality

- Article 2: Equality between men and women is established as one of the tasks of the Community.
- Article 3: This article refers to eliminating inequalities in all the activities of the Community as well as to the promotion of equality between men and women (the obligation to mainstream gender equality).
- Article 13: This article proposes to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex.
- Article 137: This article supports activities in securing equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work.
- Article 141: The article ensures the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and supports the adoption of positive action for the under-represented sex in vocational activity and compensation for gender-linked disadvantages in professional careers.

Secondary Law in the field of Gender equality

The aqcuis in the field of equal opportunities comprises ten directives in the area of:

1) Equal pay (75/117/EEC)
2) Equal treatment at the workplace (76/207/EEC) - in the process of being revised
3) Equal treatment with regard to statutory social security schemes (79/7/EEC)
4)Equal treatment with regard to occupational social security scheme 86/378/EEC)
5) Equal treatment for self-employed and their assisting spouses (86/613/EEC)
6) Maternity leave (92/85/EEC)
7) Organisation of working time (93/104/EC)
8) Parental leave (96/34/EC)
9) Burden of proof in sex discrimination cases (97/80/EC)
10) Framework Agreement on part-time work (97/81/EC)

Some important Soft law instruments

- The Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) This EU policy instrument represents a strategy to promote gender equality by addressing a wide range of issues: gender equality in economic life; promoting equal participation and representation; promoting equal access and full enjoyment of social rights for women and men; promoting gender equality in civil life; promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes.
- The European Employment strategy The European employment strategy includes guidelines for Member States' employment policies. One of the four pillars of the guidelines is gender equality in employment. Every year all Member States of the EU are required to develop National Action Plans on Employment in line with the European guidelines.
- The European Social Policy Agenda The Social Policy Agenda is a strategically important and broad-ranging social policy document adopted by the Member States in December 2000. It defines specific priorities for action for the next five years grouped around several strategic areas, one of which is gender equality.

The Regular Progress reports: evaluating the accession process

The review procedure by which the European Union explains its acquis and examines the laws of the candidate states is called "screening". The main instrument for the screening process is the Regular Progress report, each of which contains a detailed analysis of the progress made by the candidate country. The progress reports are prepared every year by the European Commission for each candidate country. The purpose of this exercise is to identify issues which will be discussed in more detail in the negotiations. In the progress reports the acquis is divided into 29 chapters to facilitate the accession negotiations. The screening exercise in the field of gender equality focuses on Chapter 13, which deals with the social policy and employment issues. The European Parliament gives its view on the progress reports and they are also adopted by the European Council. The general view is that the progress reports do not sufficiently address gender equality issues, nor in any systematic way address the need for support for gender equality mechanisms in order to implement the EU legislation.

Pre-accession strategy

The Pre-Accession strategy is aimed at supporting the candidate countries in the process of re-aligning their legal and institutional framework in advance of membership of the European Union. It consists of priority setting coupled with financial assistance and participation in Community Programmes.

The Accession Partnerships constitute the central pre-accession strategy instrument. The partnerships are agreed separately between the European Union and each candidate country and they are closely linked to the adoption of the acquis communautaire. The Accession Partnerships provide an assessment of the priority areas in which the candidate country needs to make progress in order to prepare for accession, and outline the ways in which the Phare Programme will support the accession preparations. In response to accession partnerships the candidate countries produce their National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), which were adopted in December 1999 for candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in March 2000 for Cyprus and Malta.

The participation of candidate countries in Community programmes is a key feature of the pre-accession strategy. All the candidate countries participate in some of the community action programmess, however, the degree of commitment to these programmes varies. The most important community action programmes concerning gender equality are the DAPHNE (combating violence against women) and Equal Opportunities programmes. The programme for Equal Opportunities between women and men has been opened to five candidate countries. Five countries so far have requested to participate in the DAPHNE programme; others have not yet applied to it.

On the occasion of the seminar “Strengthening women’s rights in the accession process”, the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) took the opportunity to put forward a set of recommendations in relation to six areas where reinforced policy action is needed by the European institutions in order to promote de facto equality between women and men.

Gender equality is a fundamental and integral part of economic, social, and democratic development. In order for the European Union to meet the expectations of women both in Member States and in Candidate countries, gender equality must be established as a priority in the accession process.

Firstly, we must emphasise the need for increased political will among all the players concerned to make gender equality a horizontal and central issue in the accession process. Gender equality needs to be brought into the core of accession polices. This means that

gender equality in the accession process cannot be considered merely a question of adopting and implementing the existing EU legislation in this area.

An increased emphasis on gender equality is urgent in order to respond to the developments in some of the candidate countries, where inequalities between women and men have, in many areas, become more severe during economic and social transition. Many countries have seen a decline in women's representation in parliament, a considerable weakening of women's situation in the labour market, a scaling down of childcare facilities, etc. Additional problems, all too familiar also in the current Member States, include occupational segregation, low pay, sexual harassment and lack of effective laws and enforcement mechanisms to combat violence against women.

In order to create the necessary synergy and commitment to this work increased co-ordination is needed between the key players at European level. The EWL proposes the establishment of a European co-ordinating body, including representatives of women's NGOs, with the aim of developing a strategic action plan for strengthening gender equality in the Accession process.

The following pages outline six key areas for action, which need to be taken into account by all relevant European actors in the development of a an effective approach to strengthen gender equality in the accession process. 1. Reinforcing gender equality mainstreaming, and using other important EU policy instruments in order to strengthen gender equality in the accession process.

- Strengthening of gender equality in the accession process through an increased use of different existing EU policy instruments, which outline actions for achieving equality between women and men: the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005), the European Employment strategy, the European Social Policy Agenda, the common objectives to fight social exclusion, and the EU Anti-discrimination package. The Increased use of international agreements and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the UN Protocol on Trafficking. The use of these policy instruments must be coupled with setting deadlines for monitoring and evaluation.
- Increased use of international agreements and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the UN Protocol on Trafficking.

- Reinforcing gender equality within the Phare programme;
- Increase the participation of candidate countries in Community programmes of importance for promoting gender equality;
- Integrating gender equality as a central concern into the Accession Partnerships;
- Specifying how the EU annual progress reports on the candidate countries will fully integrate a gender equality perspective;
- Gender equality awareness and training mechanisms for EU officials involved in the accession process, as well as for officials of candidate countries;
- Gender equality assessment of the economic guidelines for candidate countries in order to counteract negative effects on gender equality from the process of privatisation, liberalisation, and cuts in public social expenditure.

2. Ensuring the implementation of the 'acquis communautaire' on gender equality

Although many candidate countries are showing considerable progress in transposing the EU gender equality legislation ('acquis communautaire'), there are still serious problems of implementation. The EU must step up its efforts in promoting and supporting, with financial and human resources, the candidate countries in their work to efficiently implement the acquis on gender equality. This should entail:

- Increased use of the Phare programme to build institutions, put in place processes, and develop competence, which can ensure the effective implementation of the acquis in the field of gender equality;
- Increased support for women's NGOs working to ensure the effective implementation of the acquis on gender equality.
- Information and awareness campaigns targeting women in order to inform them of their rights.

3. Combating violence against women

Violence against women in all its forms remains an unacceptable violation of women's human rights throughout Europe. Efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women need to be reinforced including:

- Improving legislation in the field of violence against women;
- Ensure that perpetrators are pursued and punished

- Increased support for women's NGOs working in this field.

  In the context of violence against women, trafficking in women and girls from Eastern and Central Europe into Western Europe is a flagrant violation of women's rights. A Europe of solidarity and equality cannot be created as long as women from Central and Eastern Europe are exploited in the sex-industry in Western Europe, serving Western European men. Combating trafficking in women requires:

  - Effective implementation of the forthcoming Framework decision on combating trafficking in women, and the ratification and subsequent implementation of the UN Protocol against trafficking;
  - Putting in place measures through the Phare programmes that explicitly endorse women's employment opportunities;
  - Review of immigration and asylum policies so that these grant the women victims of trafficking the right to stay in the country of destination with a work permit and social rights;
  - The enablement of increased co-operation between women's NGOs in East, -Central- and Western Europe working to combat trafficking.

4. Strengthening women's position in the economy

The transition to a market economy, as required for membership of the European Union, is putting a lot of pressure on the employment situation in many of the candidate countries, and women's position has become especially difficult. The objectives of EU employment strategy in relation to gender equality must be made central to the accession process. This includes an emphasis on the following:

- Ensuring the implementation of anti-discrimination and equal treatment legislation;
- Safeguarding and encouraging the provision of childcare facilities;
- Actions that promote a higher participation of women in the labour market: access to training, facilitating reintegration to the labour market, favourable parental leave regulations, etc.

5. Promoting women in decision-making

The phenomenon of the low representation of women in decision-making positions is common to the current Member States of the EU and candidate countries. The work to

increase the representation of women in decision-making at all levels, in political institutions, but also in the public and private sector, has to be intensified through:

- The integration of the indicators agreed upon in Helsinki, and in the Paris Declaration on women in decision-making, into the accession process;
- The promotion of electoral systems based on the principle of parity democracy;
- The adoption of rules for the European Elections in 2004 which ensure parity democracy.

6. Reinforcing the role of women's NGOs in the accession process

The important role of NGOs, and the need for a closer involvement of civil society in the accession process, have been underlined and called for by all major European institutions. Women's NGOs are key players as a link to citizens, as experts, and as advocates, and must receive enhanced support in the accession process through:

- Closer co-operation between women's NGOs in the current EU member states and the candidate countries must be increasingly supported;
- Increased support to women's NGOs in the candidate countries through the Phare programme;
- The establishment of an active dialogue between women's NGOs and the European Commission delegations in the Candidate countries.

Gender Equality and Enlargement of the European Union

The accession of the thirteen candidate countries will have a considerable impact on the EU, on the current Member States and of course on the candidate countries themselves. The accession to the EU implies adaptation and reform in the twelve existing members. The EU also needs to adapt. Its institutions as well as its functioning have to undergo changes. Different European negotiations and partnerships aiming at this are currently in progress. In 1997 the European Council decided that negotiations should commence with six countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus. In December 1999, the Council decided to open accession negotiations with six more countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and Malta. Turkey was also accepted as a candidate country further to the recent developments and progress made in order to fulfil the EU accession criteria (i.e. a review of its human rights policies). All candidate States are participating in the accession process on an equal footing, within a

single framework where they will be judged on their own merits. The EU is elaborating individual agreements with each candidate country and the European Commission is responsible for producing yearly reports on the progress made by each country.

Before the actual enlargement can take place, the candidate countries will have to meet several criteria laid down by the EU, the so-called Copenhagen Criteria. These criteria, which were laid down in 1993, form the basis of the accession negotiations. The three main aspects to be considered are these: the political and economic situations in the applicant country and the ability to apply community legislation and policy. The political criteria require candidate countries to ensure the stability of national institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities. The economic criteria require a functioning market economy and the ability to compete with the market forces within the EU. The final criteria require candidate countries to adhere to the political and economic aims of the EU, including Monetary Union, and to adopt and enforce Community legislation and policies.

Equal Opportunities in the Enlargement Process

The EU legislation on equal opportunities for women and men as well as directives on this issue both form part of the "package" which the candidate countries need to adopt before joining the EU. Legislation and standards in the field of employment and social policy, covering various sectors, such as health and safety at work, consultation and participation of workers, protection of employees and vocational training and education are other areas in which candidate countries' legislation and practice must comply with EU standards.

As a result, the enlargement process has provided some important policy instruments for increasing equality between men and women, and also for fighting against exclusion based on ethnic, geographical or social origin. Critical voices have however claimed that the EU has failed to convey to the countries concerned the importance of adhering to this social dimension of the acquis. The candidate countries and the EU must show increased political will in this field, make full use of the financial and legal tools available and reinforce gender equality in the pre-accession strategies and the negotiations.

In the majority of the candidate countries women have been very active in the labour market, in many cases to a far greater extent than in the current Member States. However, as has been pointed out, the transition process has been accompanied by increased

unemployment rates. In some countries women are being encouraged either directly or indirectly encouraged to go back to being house wives and full-time carers, in order to reserve the decreased number of jobs for the male population and, at the same time, solve the increasing problem of lack of child care facilities. The EU, as well as the governments of the candidate countries, has failed to counteract this development.

Recommended Actions for Mainstreaming Gender Equality in the Enlargement Process

In order to achieve equality between women and men in the candidate countries the EU must integrate gender equality in the negotiations and evaluation, treating equality between women and men as an integral and necessary part of the enlargement process.

- Gender mainstreaming should be a guiding principle in the enlargement process. Reforms should not be carried out in the candidate countries before they have been analysed to assess their effect on equality between women and men. It is essential that economic aims set up are not counterproductive to those in the field of social policy, employment and equality between women and men.
- Data and statistics produced in the candidate countries are seldom gender disaggregated. This makes it difficult to assess how the transition process affects women and men respectively. This current information gap needs to be addressed by the EU and the candidate countries alike.
- A balanced participation of women and men in the political decision-making related to accession process, on a national as well as on a European level is essential. Today, relatively few women are involved in the enlargement process.
- Account must be taken of women's particular needs and interests within the EU support programmes. Specific funding should be designated to women's projects within these programmes.
- Co-operation between institutions involved in the enlargement process and women's NGOs should be encouraged. Women's organisations in the candidate countries must be supported and accepted as important actors in the enlargement process.
- Candidate countries should be granted the necessary support to create, maintain or strengthen the institutional structures and procedures necessary to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

EU support programmes for the candidate countries

The aim of the EU-funded PHARE programme is to strengthen the administrative and judicial capacity in all sectors in the candidate countries. It also funds investments necessary to adopt Community legislation and policy. A special programme, the Phare and Tacis Democracy Programme, has been set up to strengthen the democratic process. This year two new support tools are to implemented: The Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) and The Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA), the latter being concerned with regional policy.

Apart from financial aid the Commission suggests that aid in the form of technical assistance, training programmes, exchange of experts, etc be provided. This would help the candidate countries to strengthen local institutions. Another means being used to achieve this goal is to invite the candidate countries to participate in different Community programmes. None of the EU support funding is earmarked for projects linked to equality between women and men, or for projects run by women.

Mainstreaming gender equality

Gender equality mainstreaming is a principle which is established in the Treaty of Amsterdam (Art. 3). The strategy of gender equality mainstreaming should be promoted by the European Commission in relation to all areas of EU policy, including all policies related to enlargement. Equality between women and men in the enlargement process is not only a question of focusing on discrimination in employment and social protection but also a matter of addressing human rights and social development, and of making sure that economic convergence does not prove counter-productive to the strengthening of gender equality.

Within the framework of this report, a number of information and communication inquiries have been undertaken in order to determine to what extent gender issues have been incorporated in the overall accession negotiations process. The recent documents on the progress of candidate countries have been analysed from a gender perspective. Within GD Enlargement the national representatives of the candidate countries as well as the head of equal opportunities in the Commission have been contacted. On the basis of the information gathered, however, it can be concluded that gender equality mainstreaming has not been reinforced in the enlargement process at this stage.

Gender issues are still dealt with as a sub-category under employment and social affairs in the General Directorate on Enlargement of the European Commission, rather than as horizontal issue concerning all fields of the community activities. Within the European Commission, most EU equality issues are dealt with in the General Directorate on Employment and Social Affairs. The failure to apply gender equality mainstreaming in the enlargement process indicates that their expertise is not sufficiently integrated into the issues and work in relation to accession of new member states.

Against this background, the EWL believes that it is an urgent task for the EU institutions to put together a coherent strategy on how to effectively implement the principle of gender equality mainstreaming in the enlargement process.

Protection against discrimination - Article 13

Article 13, which was introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam, is aimed at combating discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. However, the scope and material content of the legal provisions dealing with discrimination vary greatly between member states as well as in the candidate countries. It is nonetheless worth noting that all of the constitutions of the accession countries do state that the principle of equality between women and men is of outmost importance and that discrimination based on sex is forbidden.

While the broad legal framework for equality seems to be in place in the accession countries, there is still much to do in making the spirit of the law a daily reality in the lives of women and men - at home, in the workplace and in the wider community and public life. Achieving and promoting real equality in practice both in the candidate countries and current Member States requires a process that goes beyond articulation and constitutional principles. In some of the candidate countries when it comes to legal wording, and particularly to Labour Codes, the term discrimination is not clearly defined. Therefore it is still often unclear what exactly is forbidden since there is no definition of what discrimination entails. In practice, it means that each state authority, each judge or each employer and employee is left in an arbitrary situation when it comes to determining what discrimination means and how it can be identified.

Article 13 of the Treaty can and should be used as a tool for urging intensified efforts in fighting discrimination against women, be it in the labour market, in social protection systems, or in civil life. Currently the EU is planning a new directive covering all spheres

of life, and not like current EU legislation only confined to banning discrimination against women in the labour market.

In conclusion, then, we should underline that it will not be sufficient for the candidate countries and existing member states simply to conform, in a merely theoretical way, to the range of provisions already enacted, or to the amendments proposed (elaborate and complex as they are). Care should be taken that the fact that the provisions are also applied in practice.

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