Gender and Power :
A Collection of Essays

Edited by Olena Lytovka

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Interdisciplinary Discourses

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A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

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Introduction

"Gender and Power" is a collection of essays that explores the complex and often fraught relationship between gender and power. Throughout history, gender has been a critical factor in determining who holds power and how it is exercised. This collection delves into the ways in which gender shapes power structures and how those structures impact individuals and societies. It offers a thought-provoking exploration of the ways in which gender and power intersect, and how these intersections impact individuals, communities, and societies.

The essays included in this collection examine various aspects of gender and power, from the ways in which gender roles are constructed and reinforced to the impact of gender on access to education, employment, and political participation. They also explore the intersections of gender with other factors, such as race, class, and sexuality, and how these intersections shape power dynamics in unique and complex ways.

In addition to exploring the historical and cultural roots of gender and power, this book also touches on contemporary issues such as gender (in)equality, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and the persistent biases and stereotypes that continue to affect women and marginalized genders. The authors draw on a variety of disciplines and approaches, including sociology, psychology, political science, and feminist theory, to offer a nuanced and comprehensive look at this critical issue. Whether you are a student, a professional, or simply someone who is interested in understanding the complex dynamics of gender and power, this book provides a valuable resource that will broaden your understanding and deepen your appreciation of this important subject.

Olena Lytovka

Part 1.
Process and Progress:
Aspects of Gender Equity

Jessica Seidel

Masochistic Burnings that Empower: The Desubjectified Female and Argentine Body in Mariana Enríquez's "Things We Lost in the Fire"

Introduction: What Did Women Lose in the Fire?

In an attempt to approach Mariana Enríquez's intriguing short story "Things We Lost in the Fire," we may first and foremost identify "we" to locate the "things" lost. In consideration of the eponymous 2016 collection originally published in Argentina that portrays female protesters within a culture and national history of structural gender-based violence, a collective of women appears to suffer the loss of their self-determination and agency. As an Argentine author and woman, Enríquez problematizes such past and ongoing abuses from feminist angles; built upon the political potential of the gothic genre, Enríquez's literary horror attuned to the nation's history identifies feminicides as a point of intersection between phallogocentrism, biopolitics, and female masochism. This perspective functions as the basis for a critical subversion of persistent sociopolitical mechanisms which perpetuate gendered inequality and the constraint of women, their bodies, and their femininity. To challenge these daunting mechanisms, Enríquez depicts individuals and their resistance to certain kinds of horror within their lives: women who are impaired by but also oppose their gendered bodies and the violence against

them. At the center of the narrative's subversive metamorphosis, then, stands corporeality; Enríquez theorizes the female body as a site of resistance and recovery of power. As a reaction to incessant feminicides that several Argentine women fell and continue to fall victim to, doused with alcohol and set on fire by men, female activists introduce a burning ritual that resignifies their bodies' exposure to gendered violence. The deliberate burning of their own bodies transforms figurative scars into literal burn scars as an explicit display of females' abusive past and present. By overt resistance to habitual violence against them, women reclaim their agency through self-determination of the female body which, as a political tool, reformulates its connotations and that of women's alleged subject position. Those politics of embodiment, essentially, operate in tandem with a female desubjectification that realizes Enríquez's corporeal feminism identifiable throughout her writing.

In view of this reformulation of Argentina's culture and the gender-based violence embedded within it, the following chapters will explore the historical, social, and political power dynamics that organize the contemporary landscape of Enríquez's evoked microcosm. After a first historical contextualization of women's confinement within gendered society and public responses to such, the scope of violence against the female subject will be examined in line with gender and feminist theories. Linking to those, the following subsection determines phallogocentrism, as defined by Derrida, to drive the continuous sociopolitical reinforcement of male privilege which affects the unequal balance of masculine–feminine power depicted. Exemplified by two further victims of gender-based violence, the second chapter pursues a Foucauldian reading to analyze concepts of biopower and resistance in the frame of Enríquez's fiction. Despite different approaches of resistance to predetermined female subjectification and respective subject positions, drawing among others on Agamben's observations, the women's agency facilitates an emancipation from phallogocentric

regulation and knowledge production. This move from individuals to an entire female population will then be investigated in the final chapter; according to Musser's reconceptualization of masochism, the burning ritual as a physical, masochistic practice transforms into an emancipatory strategy to counteract phallogocentric mechanisms. This resignification of the burning ritual mirrors the resignification of female subject positions; the body comes to serve as dual testament to patriarchal, violent subjugation as well as the recovery of women's autonomy through the exercise of masochistic power and self-desubjectification. By locating the body at the center of their claim to power, the women refute a stipulated female identity, manifesting instead alternative, empowered realities indicated by individual and collective female embodiment.

Argentina: Past and Present—Feminicide and Gender-based Violence

As a contemporary Argentine short story, "Things We Lost in the Fire" reconstructs the horror of a concealed national past in the frame of a socially unjust, sexist present characterized by gender-based violence and feminicides. In line with a literary movement that seeks to explore cultural trauma primarily originating from Argentina's military dictatorship (1976–1983), Enríquez interprets perpetual violent acts directed against the female population as integral to the country's socio-historic and political identity. This form of "la nueva narrativa Argentina" ["the new Argentine narrative"], coined by literary critic Elsa Drucaroff (2011, p.95), encompasses many writers of Enríquez's generation who aim at processing clandestine state terrorism and torture in their essentially political writings. While

Argentina's Proceso cost innumerable victims,[1] above all pregnant women were mistreated and abducted by the regime. Never to return as they were killed after giving birth, these women later became known as "los desaparecidos" ["those disappeared"], whose children were adopted by families sympathetic to the dictatorship. In search of their lost relatives, in 1977 mothers and grandmothers began to protest for the reappearance of their kidnapped children, ultimately leading to the formation of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo [Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo], an influential Argentine human-rights organization active to this day.[2] Another more recent feminist movement which serves as a political background for Enríquez concerns are the Argentine Ni una menos [Not one (woman) less] protests against gendered violence and inequality.[3] Prior to the global #MeToo movement, Ni una menos arose in 2015 following the murder of a 14-year-old girl by her teenage boyfriend, and has committed itself to stop further women's lives being lost to violence. Organized via the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, demonstrations

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[1] - The military dictatorship ruling Argentina from 1976–1983 is commonly referred to as "el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" ["The National Reorganization Process"], shortened as "el Proceso" ["The Process"]. The Argentine military-led government also used the term "Dirty War," indicating the period of state terrorism in which suspected regime critics, left-wing activists, and those otherwise presumed to pose ideological threats were violated and abducted. Victims of such abduction, the so-called "desaparecidos" ["the disappeared"], particularly included pregnant women who were killed after giving birth. Although no precise number of war casualties exists, an estimate claims that between nine and thirty thousand people fell victim to the various human-rights violations of Argentina's dictatorship (Blakeley, 2009, p.96). For further information see Blakeley's fourth chapter as well as chapter two and ten in the anthology by Esparza, Huttenbach, and Feierstein (2010).

[2] - For further information on the formation and activism of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, see the association's website madres.org and Bonner's (2007) study.

[3] - For further information on the Ni una menos movement and its accomplishments, see their website niunamenos.org.ar as well as the articles by Gago (2017) and Phillips, Booth, and Goñi (2020).

in Argentina spread across national borders, gained international recognition, and visualized the severity of feminicides for the whole of Latin America.

Dedicated to fighting the mistreatment of and violence against women, Argentine feminist activism draws attention to the particularities of murders of females. Though similar in both sound and spelling, femicide as a legal definition signifies the killing of women irrespective of gender, for instance as indirect casualties in an attack against another main target, whereas feminicide denotes the systematic, state-sanctioned murder of women. Here, the differentiation marks a sexual dimension; gender relations and inequality come into play as the perpetrator assumes a dominant position over his female victim. Mexican anthropologist Marcela Lagarde (2010, pp.xxi–xxiii) reformulates the fundamentals of the homicide of women and links it to gender violence so that feminicide as a category incorporates both misogyny and authorities' responsibility as presumed accomplices who favor impunity. In fact, the topicality of Lagarde's proposition emerges even more with regard to the Argentina of the present day. Recent statistics expose the ceaseless abuse and violence directed at females[4]; in 2016, the United Nations reported that "14 of the 25 countries which show the highest global rate of femicides remain in Latin America," reaching "levels close to those of a pandemic" according to the Inter-American Commission of Women (Defensoría del Pueblo de la Nación Argentina, 2017, p.23).[5] Uncannily prescient for readers in 2023 accustomed to Covid-19, the parallel to pandemic incidences addressed by the commission attributes an entirely new significance

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4 - Conclusive information and reports about femicides and gender-based violence in Argentina can be obtained through organizations such as the Defensoría del Pueblo de la Nación Argentina (www.dpn.gob.ar), the Argentine Supreme Court of Justice's Oficina de la Mujer (www.csjn.gov.ar/om/index.jsp), and the Asociación Civil La Casa Del Encuentro (www.lacasadelencuentro.org).

5 - Citations of the Defensoría del Pueblo de la Nación Argentina will be indicated by use of the shortened organization name Defensoría.

to the femicides. As an annual report, the Argentine *Femicide Observatory* publicizes current numbers on gender-based violence which have "grown exponentially" (Defensoría, 2017, p.23) in recent years, while the forms of violence reported to the national helpline for victims of violence by persons affected between 2017 and 2019 centered largely on the body; "9 out of 10 cases of gender-based violence involved physical violence" (Defensoría, 2017, p.23), and thus hint at a common denominator among misogynist acts.

To gain a more profound understanding of violence in terms of Argentina's present culture, it will be useful to investigate its tight linkage with gender as a social determinant. Whilst violence may emerge in different dimensions, from mental to physical manifestations, with either a man or woman as perpetrator, most often the "'female victim/male villain' dichotomy" (Terry, 2007, p.xv) appears to lie at its very core. This argument gains depth when juxtaposed with prevalent patriarchal rhetoric; in a culture such as the one depicted by Enríquez, social values and norms tend to privilege men, and their judgment and actions, as superior to their female counterparts. As observed by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949, woman is a subject produced and conditioned by patriarchal laws, merely considered a lacking subtype of the male form who recognizes "that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men" (1988, p.486). Contemporary feminist movements, then, endeavor to rectify just that; to deconstruct and abolish cultural man-made connotations and ontological arguments of naturally destined bodies and their respective functions.

Argentina: Past and Present—Phallogocentrism and Male Power

The masculine favoritism which characterizes not only Enríquez's fictive universe but also much of present-day Argentina finds itself at the center of phallogocentric thought and continuously

reinforced male power. The systematic relegation of women to the role of the other continues to reverberate in the predominant patriarchal manner of comprehending and producing knowledge about the world which surrounds us. Stemming from Jacques Derrida's (1978, p.20) identification of logocentrism in all of Western philosophy, phallogocentrism and its preference of the male order gives rise to the established binary divide and the essential subordination of the feminine to the masculine. Donna Haraway attributes this dichotomy, inscribed in Western culture, to the capitalist patriarchy and detects "troubling dualisms" such as "male/female," "agent/resources, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong," and "self/other" (1991, p.177) in the rationale behind the interiorization of females. Such deficient binarisms, deeply ingrained in patriarchal culture and thus also the individual minds that collectively constitute said culture, complicate phallogocentric-free perceptions of and actions as society—in short, a reform of the traditional conventions of meaning-making under the umbrella of the masculine logos.

When conceiving of phallogocentrism as a regime of power, a frame of reference for Enríquez's vindicated polemic emerges. Several female protagonists are subject to gendered regulation whose actions, however, come to threaten the firmly established male stability; the "subway girl," the first victim Enríquez introduces, flaunts her scarred, "masklike" upper body instead of covering it up in shame (2017, pp.186–88). The woman's husband-abuser as well as her father are thematized, purporting the alleged punishment she received as legitimate: Juan Martín Pozzi "thought she was cheating on him and he was right—she'd been about to leave him. To keep that from happening, he ruined her. Decided she would *belong* to no one else" (p.187; emphasis added). Assaulted by her husband out of a jealous fear of loss of patriarchal control, the perpetrator refuses to surrender his *possession* and douses her with alcohol to burn. Here, a palpable presence of female subordination evidences not only opposite male domination and machismo but also a sense

of justifiable ground for chastising women.[6] As a subject, woman is conditioned by patriarchal law to an extent that incites endorsement of punishment for rebellion against such law. In disbelief, even the victim's father credits his son-in-law and the alternative version of events to support justification of the chauvinistic attack: "And they believed him … Even my father believed him" (p.188). Only after her recovery the woman is able to attest to her husband's violent abuse, contradicting the accidental burning of herself, eventually resulting in his arrest. Echoing Lagarde's notion of impunity, this instance substantiates the presumed innocence of a male collective that directs guilt and prevention measures at women rather than themselves. Enríquez's society, here, appears determined to fight a symptom—the active subversion of phallogocentric order by females—rather than the problem that is gender-based violence.

Even though the nature of the crime portrayed might seem disconcerting at first, a closer look at the rates of gendered violence in Argentina reveals it to be not implausible at all. Compiled by the Oficina de la Mujer [Women's Bureau] for the year 2020, the country's national registry of femicides reports one in every four cases as being linked to a history of violence (2020, p.10), finding that 59% of perpetrators were the partner of the victim (p.9). While 79% of cases occurred in a context of domestic violence (p.15)— that is in the environments in which individuals develop their interpersonal relationships as defined by Argentine law—almost

6 - Derived from the eponymous Spanish word, machismo expresses a certain understanding of manliness, particularly a masculine pride and its unequivocal display. Such pride reveals a tendency toward traditional perceptions of the masculine–feminine dichotomy and a presumption of respective gendered behavior. The pejorative sense of the term may relate to the rigid binary oppositions that machismo builds upon. In the context of the described attack against an allegedly cheating wife, machismo functions in the frame of "active versus passive" and "legitimate versus illegitimate": inadequate opposites that seemingly justify the perpetrator's assault. The averted threat of lost masculine pride by violent punishment of the assumed culprit links this machismo offence to honor crimes; a category of crimes in the name of pride and honor closely interrelated with gender-based violence.

three in every four women fell victim to offenders in their homes mostly during the night (p.17). Fire was used in 8% of the cases (p.16), with a three-quarters majority of perpetrators engaging in behaviors such as concealment of their actions and responsibility (p.10). As these official records show, notwithstanding unreported cases, gender-based violence often triggers fatal consequences, and, regrettably, incidences of spousal crime in the assumed safety of the home are no rare occurrence. Under the phallogocentric premise of a desired perpetuation of the masculine–feminine hierarchy, violence becomes a warrantor for the recuperation and continuity of male power.

To identify patriarchal domination as systematically embedded within the discourse of power, and thereby pervading other cultural, political, and economic sectors, is to recognize the subversive quality of women's agency. Michel Foucault's understanding of power lends itself to mapping the dimensions in which individuals and their bodies are made functional in a cultural context:

> power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them ... (1978, p.92)

Power therefore denotes continually reconfigured "force relations" (p.92) in a comprehensive spectrum ranging from the personal to the public. In the bounds of hierarchical patriarchy, these relations seem to rest on the dichotomy of masculine vis-á-vis feminine and the respective subject positions. Materialized by means of the body, subjects become visible and occupy a certain social space onto which specific functions are projected. These connotations attributed to the male and female body, then, establish an observable, culturally constructed difference and balance of

power. Foucault conceives of the body as transformed into a medium (1995, p.136); in consequence, it allows for the diverse signification and potential adjustment of entrenched power structures. Within this scope, considerations of the body come to equal considerations of effective embodiment.

Biopower, Resistance, and Self-emancipatory Embodiment

Drawing on Foucault's conception of biopower, resistance to existing power relations and prescribed subject positions by exercise of female, especially corporeal agency facilitates a possible emancipation of women in the frame of Argentina's sociopolitical landscape. To understand biopower in Foucauldian terms, this "power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (1978, p.138) operates according to norms—in the Argentine culture discussed here those of a phallogocentric order—which are instilled into society and its members' minds and conduct. As a result, Foucault differentiates between two types of biopower, the "*anatomo-politics of the human body*" and the "*bio-politics of the population*", which relate to an individual and a collective body respectively (p.139). Since individuals constitute populations and those inversely consist of individual bodies, both forms of biopower intermesh to regulate and ultimately hierarchize the dichotomized genders. The former power targeted at the individual is predominantly implemented through mechanisms of discipline in enclosed institutions such as prisons or schools (Foucault, 1995, p.209) that isolate, observe, assess, and foster certain normative knowledge by which a "soul" or a subjective inner self as identification of the individual surfaces (Foucault, 1995, p.29). As established in the previous chapter, this kind of knowledge production and dissemination rooted in phallogocentric thought inhibits a detachment from patriarchal dominance, essentially generating a widespread stagnation of the social order.

Enríquez also exemplifies this in her narrative; in prison, Silvina, her mother, and María Helena discuss the other inmates' lack of awareness of female torment throughout history: "women have always been burned—they burned us for four centuries! The girls can't believe it, they didn't know anything about the witch trials, isn't it incredible? Education in this country has gone to shit. But they're interested, they want to learn" (2017, p.198). As an institution of patriarchy, education, here, omits addressing longstanding violence toward women and rather conceals any instance of female concern. Consequently, this non-disclosure and non-recognition of women's history reinforces a cultural, particularly female acceptance of predominant knowledge and structures that entail feminine subordination. Counteracting such a methodical disadvantage, María Helena becomes educator and strives for reformed, *de-phallogocentric* production and circulation of knowledge, thereby inverting the disciplinary, male-centered measures of Argentine educational institutions. This assumption of female power gains even more in significance when considering the site of events; within the bounds of a prison, another establishment in which discipline operates to regulate individuals, a woman reverses said regulation to contest the phallogocentric order. Individuals gather to communicate with each other rather than suffering isolation while the "big open hall" (p.198) that is the visiting room warrants only limited observation by guards, and therefore interferes with a perpetuation of patriarchal discipline. Foucault gives evidence of this relation between power and knowledge:

> the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. On this reality-reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc. (1995, pp.29–30)

In Enríquez's universe, male–female power relations engender a twofold corpus of knowledge, that of prevalent phallogocentrism and contrary female recovery, which reiterate "the effects of this

power" (Foucault, 1995, p.29)—the subordination of women and subversion of social structures respectively. From this continuous evaluation of each individual involved, a recognizable identity of subjects and their positions within the complex interplay of power and knowledge emerges. This tangible production of the subject and its affirmation of the self, its subject position, and the associated characteristics become essential for an effective regulation of individuals in terms of Foucauldian biopower.

As a further development, Maurizio Lazzarato and Giorgio Agamben rethink the creation of subjectivity by means of self-affirmation, or rather a refusal of such. Continuing Foucault's idea of biopower, Lazzarato reasons that "[if] power seizes life as the object of its exercise then Foucault is interested in determining what there is in life that resists, and that, in resisting this power, creates forms of subjectification and forms of life that escape its control" (2002, p.100). Such production of subjects and their positions beyond regulation may thus be understood as a reverse effect: a desubjectification. Agamben's observation coincides with the former's proposition; to him, subjectification means a creation of consciousness that consistently disintegrates and disperses in relation to discourse, whereby desubjectification proves to be integral to subjectification (2002, p.123). It appears that an unregulated subjectivity, a desubjectification such as that of María Helena, resists and discourages the reproduction of phallogocentric knowledge and power. Hence, rejection of one's subjectification constitutes a core element of power relations that can potentially replace the dominant power of any given momentum.

Foucault identifies a "multiplicity of points of resistance" that power dynamics depend upon, either in the "role of adversary, target, support, or handle" (1978, p.95). In particular, forms of "necessary," "concerted," "violent," and "sacrificial" (p.96) resistance as antagonistic toward male power resonate strongly with the counteractions of Enríquez's women. To overcome phallogocentric conventions and their paralysis as pre-defined subjects, the women utilize resistance as a vehicle to shift the balance of power outside the systems of regulation. This approach of resistance, to

"counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance" (p.157),[7] appears to emerge as the implied focal point of Enríquez's fictive but nonetheless sociopolitical revolt. Rather than mere subversion of physical connotations and dominant mechanisms of meaning-making, the extraordinary resistance realized by the women exposes not only individuals' diverse perceptions of power but, more importantly perhaps, the influence of those perceptions on their embodiment. For females whose bodies are a cultural signifier, the refusal of subjectification through corporeal agency and transgressive, creative undermining of female embodiment offers, then, an active liberation from their stipulated passivity and inferiorization.

An attempt to dissociate from such a disadvantaged role can be observed in the second case of an afflicted, violated woman that Enríquez presents. Considering corporeality in the context of Argentina's culture, model Lucila approaches a shift in the power distribution determinative of her social status by use of an aesthetic body. Described as embodying beauty, innocence, and intelligence, Lucila appears to resist the phallogocentric order not as an explicit "adversary" (1978, p.95), to argue in Foucauldian terms, but rather "support" (p.95), playing into a patriarchal insistence on feminine appearance as the determinant of woman and her docile position. Once more, however, a reversal of subjectification occurs; the model exercises power within patriarchy as her looks and character enable fame and social improvement: "She got better modeling contracts and closed out all the fashion shows" (Enríquez, 2017, p.189). Contrary to the woman who is conventionally "[s]hut up in her flesh, her home" (De Beauvoir, 1988, p.487), Lucila has "audacious things to say" (Enríquez, 2017, p.189), transforms her body into a powerful voice, and thereby moves out of the domestic sphere that, in this analogy, resembles the traditional physical oppression of the female.

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7 - In his argument about resistance, Foucault unlinks pleasure from sexual practice. His reconfiguration of pleasure as "reverberations in the body and the soul" offers an approach to consider embodiment as transgressive of disciplinary regulation and thus a method to theorize resistance in relation to power (1978, p.57).

What halts the full exhaustion of Lucila's agency is the dependence she is liable to; once her partnership with the talented and respected footballer Mario Ponte is publicized, Lucila ascends to "celebrity" status (2017, p.189). Ultimately, the relationship to Ponte as societal negotiator of the opposite gender casts a shadow over her feminist progress to the extent that Lucila's eventual fate mirrors that of the first victim. As rapidly as man brings woman into being, all the more rapidly does he annihilate her. After a fight, presumably due to her increasingly superior success, Ponte uses alcohol to set fire to Lucila's body during the night. In the same machismo fashion as Pozzi, he blames Lucila who, unlike "the subway girl" (2017, p.186), cannot convince authorities of her partner's guilt as she dies from her injuries within a week of the assault. Rather than admit to this serial link of gender-based violence and thus empower women by the conviction of men, the public refrains from identifying a "local legend" (p.189) as the perpetrator so as not to destabilize the phallogocentric structures that the Argentine social, political, and above all legal systems are built upon.

The passivity traditionally attributed to women here transfers to society, whereas a female collective federates and springs into action. This exchange of passive and active power incited by multiple victims of burnings, among them another woman and her daughter, entails a female mobilization in the form of protest: "accompanied by a group of women of various ages, none of them burned" (p.191), Enríquez's protagonists "spend the night in the street, to camp out on the sidewalk and paint their signs saying *WE WILL BE BURNED NO MORE*" (p.192). In the vein of the Ni una menos movement, several females from diverse backgrounds ally to demonstrate resistance against unpunished gendered violence and inequality, regardless of whether or not they are directly affected. This selfless alliance centered on not individuals but an entire female population is reminiscent of Foucault's second form of biopower: the biopolitics focused on a "species body" (1978, p.139). Rather than self-consciously subjecting themselves to ideological norms of phallogocentric culture, Enríquez's species of women jointly resists the dominant feminine discourse by the introduction and embodiment of a reconceptualized ideal of the female body.

Burning Women, Desubjectification, and Masochistic Empowerment

Situated between everyday dread and subversive exaggeration, the female body becomes a site for women's self-desubjectification whereby the burning ritual as a physical, masochistic practice converts into an emancipatory strategy to enable female empowerment. As identified earlier, to locate the body at the center of knowledge production and dissemination is to generate unconventional approaches to interpret power dynamics. If we return to resistance as a mode to counteract dominant structures, quite fittingly its "focuses ... are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definite way, inflaming certain points of the body" (Foucault, 1978, p 96). What becomes inflamed in Enríquez story, certainly, is the female body: the women organize themselves to communally perform their ritual as "Burning Women" (2017, p.192), developing biopower from the micro to the macro level. Butler recognizes this relationality, the possibility to "appeal for a 'we'" (2004, p.20) among diverse women who, through their connections to others, gain visibility as individuals and vice versa. Thus, the body as metaphor for inclusion–exclusion politics relates to both woman and the national female collective. In the course of this reclamation of agency, the increasingly systematic organization of the movement takes effect; while secret, makeshift hospitals and a supply of medication for women's recovery become established, Silvina films the ritual for online distribution and public attention. Emphasizing male responsibility and ceaseless violence, the women reinterpret the burnings: "They have always burned us. Now we are burning ourselves. But we're not going to die; we're going to flaunt our scars" (2017, p.193). In consideration of the burning ceremony, a distinctive coherence between that of Enríquez and that of the Spanish Inquisition emerges: after thoughtful preparations, in the midst of a gathering and chants, a woman ritually burns. This reinterpretation of history and its approach to witchcraft appears to underline the inhumane treatment of one of the two genders rooted in archaic power structures but, more importantly, also the persistence of such in a presumably modern culture.

Once the ceremonies become publicly known and the movement gains credibility, women openly display their scarred bodies to manifest, much to the dismay of the public and authorities, their new, liberated female realities. Instead of yielding to public pressure, the activists concentrate on a further rebalancing of power: "'It's not going to stop,' the subway girl said in a TV interview … Everything was different since the bonfires started" (2017, pp.196–197). Their joint resistance climaxes as burned females begin to present their scars in public, pursuing activities of everyday life:

> The first survivors had started to show themselves … To take taxis and subways, open bank accounts, and enjoy a cup of coffee on the terraces of bars, their *horrible faces* lit by the afternoon sun, their hands—sometimes *missing fingers*—cupped around mugs. (2017, p.197; emphasis added)

The disfigured, crippled body denies any residual phallogocentric claim to femininity; quite the contrary, branded as monstrosities, the women embody an entirely novel idea of desirable female physique. This emerging "new kind of beauty" (p.191), derived from self-governed feminine aesthetics and action, is inserted into society not merely to be accepted but to adapt to it, primarily by authorities and males who can no longer appropriate the female body.

Protagonist Silvina encounters this new beauty only in a limited manner; she feels herself as both fellow activist and objector. Her ambivalence surfaces when she contemplates whether to further ally or end her involvement in the grotesque enforcement of female self-determination; Silvina asks herself, and possibly also the reader: "Since when did people have a right to burn themselves alive?" (p.194). Rather than to find a direct answer to this complex matter of entitlement, an understanding of human reality and embodiment as diverse and multifaceted offers a constructive approach to comprehend this conflict of subjective right and obligation. In view of different individuals, their respective perception of and interaction

with claims of power differ accordingly; thus, subjectivity and power interact with diverse realities and embodiments (Musser, 2014, pp.21–22).

When considering the resignified embodiment of the collective—precisely their resistance to conventional female subjectification—a resignification of the burning ritual as their main strategy of resistance also becomes discernible. Drawing on Amber Jamilla Musser's (2014) theorization of masochism helps to grasp female self-harm as an effective methodology. In this realm of biopolitics, masochism detaches from its familiar context of sexual practice to offer an exploration of the interplay between power, bodies, and culture, and how such interplay generates and affects individuals' agency, subjectivity, difference, and freedom. By this utilization of masochism as a relational mode, it is particularly relevant to understand it as an "embodied form of [potential] social critique" (p.4), a means to describe resistance to prevalent power structures by use of the body. Musser reasons how the woman, in a traditional sense of female passivity, is not considered masochistic, though psycho-historically is prone to subordination to men and, as such, self-annihilation (2014, p.5).[8] Once again, a reconfiguration occurs in Enríquez's story, in this instance that of said self-annihilation in the conscious pursuit of a supposedly painful act: the deliberate burning of their own bodies signifies not the women's subjection to violent patterns of phallogocentric order but their active resistance to them. Masochism becomes methodological subversion in that it enables a powerful reclamation of female personhood, of phallogocentric-free existence by, to borrow Leo Bersani's psychoanalytical inflection, the "*nonsuicidal disappearance of the subject*" (1995, p.99).

To conceptualize the women's existence outside considerations of identity, a detachment from their subjectification by the Argentine patriarchy is necessary. This desubjectification, if we recall Agamben's

8 - Musser draws on psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's 1886 handbook of sexual disorders *Psychopathia Sexualis* to examine the subversive political potential of masochism for bodies and gender. Krafft-Ebing's study introduces masochism as a disorder of sexual desire to the field of psychiatry and largely considers it as characterized by passive submission and subjection (2014, p.4).

observations, requires subjectification as its counterpart to define the subject positions that individuals shed and pursue respectively. Resistance against inadequate subject positions is thus an act of self-desubjectification: the burning ritual as resistance to their subjectification demonstrates the women's desubjectification and thereby refusal of the stipulated female identity. In a 1978 interview, Foucault addresses this opportunity of self-desubjectification; exemplified by the encounter of different bodies in a bathhouse, he argues how individuals "cease to be imprisoned in [their] own face, in [their] own past, in [their] own identity" once determinative connotations are stripped from the being (Miller, 1993, p.264). What remains is the body as corporeality, an embodiment of resistance that resonates with the emancipatory strategy of Enríquez's women. While Foucault recognizes "'an exceptional possibility in this context to desubjectify oneself, to desubjugate oneself,' to 'desexualize oneself' by affirming a 'non-identity,'" he conceives of the body as "at once tangible and fugitive" (Miller, 1993, p.264). The women's masochistic desubjectification, their refusal to further affirm the roles, practices, and ideals phallogocentric Argentine culture continues to attribute to them, contributes to their formation of the autonomous self and bares their realities as females. Rather than understanding their body as part of a fixed female identity, they consider both separately and utilize the former as a site to implement their politics of subversion, empowerment, and corporeal feminism.

In connection with feminist rhetoric, however, it is important to emphasize the detachment from identity categories that Enríquez appears to seek. To avoid a common feminist "cycle of abjection and resurrection" in firstly presenting the body as falsely appropriated by phallogocentric actors, and secondly, somewhat inconsistently, striving for a feminized version of said body (Musser, 2014, p.20), Enríquez depicts her protagonists outside the bounds of identity whilst still indicating gender difference and its deficiencies as lying at the very core of feminist concerns. To rethink female reality and embodiment in an effective manner—as a desubjectified mode—this difference is brought to life, materialized through the "tangible and fugitive" (Miller, 1993, p.264) body and the specific interpretations

of existence and agency it comprises. The closing metaphor of the "flower of fire" (2017, p.198) that Silvina's protesting mother anticipates her becoming, the ability of regeneration from within the largely destructive, desert environment of Argentina, comes to resemble a possible female reality outside phallogocentric borders that operates according to reconfigured and self-chosen but grotesque principles. In the vein of gothic traditions, Enríquez taps into this dread of the unknown to construct her story and its assertion of twofold body politics which expose alternative realities—of both the female and the national body—that resignifies Argentine culture in a feminist manner.

Conclusion: What Did Women Gain in the Fire?

Enríquez's extremized vision of gender-based violence, its consequences, and victims within contemporary Argentine culture urges the reader to recognize the interrelated phallogocentric power structures and resultant implications for women's sociopolitical status that persist to this very day. By masochistic means of resistance to masculine, violent subjectification, Enríquez's protagonists utilize the female body to not only substantiate their fatal inferiorization but also resignify women's illegitimate subject positions to empower themselves. A need for such a twofold body politics traces back to Argentina's national past ravaged by systemized violence against the female gender and the resulting feminicides thereof. The structural phallogocentrism and continuous reinforcement of male-centered regulation that Argentine feminist movements strive to abolish come to constitute the disadvantageous regime of power women were and are still subject to; various recent statistics prove the continuity and frequency of gendered violence especially in domestic settings between partners. As an approach to subvert these entrenched power relations favoring the patriarchy, the body, as a materialized version of the subject caught within those relations, becomes the tool by which women can effectively exert a feminine power that defies phallogocentric intention and dominance.

A Foucauldian reading establishes how biopower and corporeal agency operate in the story to facilitate female emancipation; both adversarial and supportive resistance to female subjectification function to displace predetermined subject positions, thereby disrupting epistemological and physical conventions of phallogocentric order and gradually shifting the balance of power in Enríquez's microcosmic society. This active recovery of power through desubjectification, not by an individual alone but a whole population of women who embody transgressive agency, counters further patriarchal mechanisms of control. The protagonists' introduction of a reconceptualized female body, a body that refuses to yield to heteronomy, offers a joint emancipation from Argentine biopolitics.

In the course of an increasingly methodological organization of protesting "Burning Women" (2017, p.192), their strategic physical resistance to gain empowerment as a collective culminates in the historically inspired burning ritual, whereby Enríquez's activists publicly reformulate their female realities exempt from phallogocentric claims to power. This rather grotesque enforcement of female self-determination in a masochistic manner—where power, bodies, and their cultural surroundings interact—takes effect through the women's autonomous embodiment, or rather self-desubjectification from Argentine rule. By resistance to their alleged subject positions, Enríquez's women refuse to affirm a presumed female identity and its associated attributes. The remains, essentially, imply corporeality, a body understood outside regulation, cultural connotation, and feminist shortcomings that becomes a vehicle to recover what has been lost: visibility, power, and autonomy.

Irrespective of the exaggeration that drives Enríquez's narrative, parallels between her fictive society and present-day Argentina are not to be overlooked. The volatile context between violent past and optimistic future from which the story emerges not only reverberates in the protagonists' collective, rather literal embodiment of female scars, but also in the contemporary realities of Argentine women. While the scourge of Covid-19 increased incidences of gender-based violence on a global scale, Latin America in particular has experienced an accelerated rise in pandemic-related crimes against

the female body since early 2020. Confined in domesticity due to government-imposed lockdowns, those living in violent relationships were left at risk of abuse without prior possibilities of direct help by emergency services such as shelters or centers for legal, medical, and psychological purposes (Blofield et al., 2021, pp.2–3). Despite efforts by the Argentine government to institutionalize the proactive fight against gendered violence and, during quarantine periods, medialize support for individuals affected through specific hotlines, digital counselling, and complaint mechanisms,[9] official action such as reports of violence decreased, thus indicating complicated access to vital legal services over the course of the pandemic (Alcoba, 2020; Rein Venegas et al., 2021, pp. 69–71; Blofield et al., 2021). As recent studies and records demonstrate, to establish a long-term

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9 - Vigorously promoted by the Ni una menos movement and a public feminist mobilization, from 2015 the Argentine government implemented policies alongside nongovernmental organizations to establish an infrastructure directed at the prevention and fight of gender-based violence and its consequences. After a change of government in late 2019, the newly created Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity commenced to pursue their gender-equality agenda (Blofield et al., 2021, p.5), most recognizably in founding digital emergency systems, measures, and lockdown exceptions to support victims during the early pandemic (Rein Venegas et al., 2021, pp.69–71). Two measures in particular aimed at compensating cancelled pre-pandemic support; the Acompañar [accompany] program offered financial help for self-help to survivors of gendered violence, whereas the Mask-19 campaign originating in Spain ought to enable women to report suffered violent threats or actions in lockdown-excluded places such as pharmacies (Blofield et al., 2021, 3–5). While the effectiveness of the latter measure is merely speculative, failures to support those affected included insufficient follow-ups of complaints, rural remoteness and inaccessibility, omission of addressing specific forms of violence, political disputes between the previously mentioned ministry and subnational divisions, and insufficient inclusivity of indigenous, migrant, disabled, elder, and LGBTQ+ minorities (Rein Venegas et al., 2021, pp.69–71). For further information, see Alcoba's (2020) article on lockdown-related femicides as well as studies on Argentine-government measures against gender-based violence before and during Covid-19 by Blofield et al. (2021), Rodríguez Gustá (2021), and Rein Venegas et al. (2021), especially the latter's extensive country analysis of Argentina.

prioritization of gender equality, a politically-driven commitment to consistently accessible resources, accelerated legal procedures for gender-based offences, and adequate education is needed. The habituation to and continuity of violence against women that lingers within Argentine society—in large part still branded by machismo that is, according to Ni una menos, another, yet much more permanent "pandemic" (Alcoba, 2020)—can only be unlearned and resisted by means of a gender-inclusive consciousness and respective reforms. However, such unlearning to gain power equalization, an emancipatory deliberation stimulated by the self-empowered women of Enríquez's alternative Argentina, requires above all a departure from systematic phallogocentric understandings of the female and her body on both individual and national levels.

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Renuka Singh

Empowerment of Women through Political Participation and Representation in India: Farce or Reality?

Introduction

In democratic societies, political participation and the representation of cross sections of society prepare fertile ground for their empowerment. Despite the presence of a level playing field for both men and women, the entry of women into politics is not uniform across nations. In developing societies, the cultural context within which the socialization of both the genders takes place entrusts them with different gender roles, making them confined to and responsible in diametrically opposite spheres of life. Being a deeply patriarchal society, wherein social and cultural constraints on women are widely imposed, India pushes women to the margins as they are denied opportunities to bring them into the mainstream and empower them. Though women in India have full autonomy to enter the political arena and make their voices heard at the ground level, structural constraints inherent in society impede their participation in both formal and informal political arenas. This restricts women from partaking in governance, an important arena having the potential to fundamentally alter the gendered space into an egalitarian one.Empowerment of women as a goal is realized

when women effectively participate in institutional decision-making process. This inevitably confronts us with a pertinent question: Does the representation of women in national legislature result in more equitable and egalitarian policy formulation? The academic scrutiny on this aspect has been undertaken primarily in the Western context. Such an inquiry is scarce in India, however. Cross-country studies establish a positive correlation between women's representation and policies promoting women-centric issues (Asiedu et al., 2018; Yoon, 2011; Celis et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2003; Celis, 2006). Through representation, "female politicians may demystify gender biases, promote policies that ease formal and informal barriers to further female engagement and provide a role model for current and future generations of women" (Hessami and Fonseca, 2020, p.2). With an increase in the number of women MPs over every election, in consonance with the hypothesis established through cross-country analysis, we may expect a larger share of women raising their voice in bringing the women-centric issues to the table, and hence a corresponding increase in the legislations focusing on women's interests.Given the dismal record of the passage of women-centric legislations in India, the paper attempts to analyze if the growing number of women in politics in recent years has succeeded in bringing about any qualitative change in content of parliamentary deliberations and women-centric legislation in India. To analyze this, the paper has been divided into three parts. The first part maps women's participation in formal and informal politics as voters and electoral campaigners, respectively; the second traces the success of women in grassroots institutions of self-Government in India; and the third analyzes the qualitative participation of women representatives in the parliamentary procedures and their ability to bring women-0centric issues to the fore.

To assess the impact of women's participation and representation in Government and legislature, a comparison of two different governments—the United Progressive Alliance Government (2009–2014) and the BJP Government (2019–present)—with a gap of ten years between them, has been selected. This time span has been chosen because major changes in governance are usually evident

over a decade. This was also a time in which the number of women also rapidly increased. Due to these factors, this period is considered apt for analysis. The variables analyzed include the allocation of cabinet portfolios to women parliamentarians, their attendance and participation in parliamentary proceedings (debates and questions), and the bills proposed by women MPs. The proceedings taking place in the lower house of Parliament have been selected for this purpose as the representatives of this house are directly chosen by the people.

I

Women's Participation in Formal Arena as Voters and the Informal Arena as Political Campaigners

India is the world's largest democracy, yet the female presence in its national legislatures has consistently remained below 10%. It is only in the last two elections that this number surpassed the 10% mark. The voter turnout gap among men and women, as wide as 16.7% in the 1962 general election, narrowed to 0.10% in 2019 (see Table 1). As India transitioned from a post-colonial state to a liberalized economy, a corresponding increase in the "level of development" is evident which, argues Matland (2002, p.6), is the "most important feature of society (having) a bearing upon levels of women's representation in national legislative assemblies." He further posits that "development leads to a weakening of traditional values, increased urbanization, greater education and labour force participation for women and attitudinal changes in perceptions regarding the appropriate role for women—all factors that increase women's political resources and decrease existing barriers to political activity."

The account of women's participation in informal political activities has been limited. The first such systematic quantitative study was done in 2017 by Praveen Rai, whose analysis of the National Election Survey (NES) of the three general elections between 1999 and 2009 conducted by the Centre for the Study of

Developing Societies (CSDS) revealed that women's participation in election campaigns substantially increased from 13% in 1999 to 22% in 2009 (see Table 2). This "suggests that relatively more Indian women are now actively participating in high-voltage campaign activities of party dispensations that are more time-consuming, as compared with simply voting" (Rai, 2017, p.70–71).

Table 1. Turnout of Women Voters in General Elections in India (%)

General Elections	Total Turnout	Men's Turnout	Women's Turnout	Difference in Turnout
First (1952)	61.2	-	-	-
Second (1957)	62.2	-	-	-
Third (1962)	55.4	63.3	46.6	16.7
Fourth (1967)	61.3	66.7	55.5	11.2
Fifth (1971)	55.3	60.9	49.1	11.8
Sixth (1977)	60.5	66.0	54.9	11.1
Seventh (1980)	56.9	62.2	51.2	11.0
Eighth (1984)	64.0	68.4	59.2	9.2
Ninth (1989)	62.0	66.1	57.3	8.8
Tenth (1991)	57.0	61.6	51.4	10.2
Eleventh (1996)	58.0	62.1	53.4	8.7
Twelfth (1998)	62.0	66.0	58.0	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	60.0	64.0	55.7	8.3
Fourteenth (2004)	58.8	61.7	53.3	8.4
Fifteenth (2009)	58.2	60.2	55.8	4.4
Sixteenth (2014)	66.4	67.1	65.6	1.5
Seventeenth (2019)	67.4	67.11	66.71	0.10

Note: The official account of the gender gap for first two general elections held in 1952 and 1957 is not available.

Source: Praveen Rai (2017, p.69) and the Election Commission of India

Table 2. Women as Voters and Election Campaigners (%)

Levels of Participation	NES 1999	NES 2009	Increase/ Decrease (%)
Non-voters	47	44	-3
Voters	53	56	+2
Low Campaigners	87	79	-9
High Campaigners	13	22	+9

Sources: Praveen Rai (2017, p.67)

The surge in participation of women in both the formal and informal arenas can be attributed to the "level of development" attained by India over the seven decades since independence, the indicators of which include: the liberalization of the economy since 1991 (Rai, 2017); the role of the Election Commission of India (Spary, 2020); women's interest in politics (Chhibber, 2002; Kumar and Gupta, 2015); local and spatial factors[1] (Rai, 2011); the dilution of belief among women about politics being dirty (Kumar and Rai, 2007); the reservation for women in institution of local self-government (Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)) (Ghosh and Lama-Rewal, 2005; Narasimhan, 1999; Vyasulu and Vyasulu, 1999); civil society and awareness campaigns launched by women's groups (Rai, 2017); employment (Rai, 2017; Gleason, 2001); education (Kumar and Gupta, 2015; Gleason 2001); media exposure (Rai, 2017; Kumar and Gupta, 2015); and the social background and liberty and freedom enjoyed by women (Rai, 2017). Among all these indicators, education and employment, in addition to media exposure, have generated significant interest among women in politics and paved the way for their participation in both formal and informal politics.

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1 - Praveen Rai contends that women in rural areas vote in a higher proportion than those in urban and metropolitan areas because those in the latter have to spend a good amount of money and time reaching the polling booths.

II

Local Self-Governing Institutions (PRIs) and Women

The local self-governing institutions called the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India were strengthened in 1992 when the 73rd and 74th amendment act was passed in Parliament. Under the provision of these acts, one-third of seats were reserved for women in general and for women of marginalized groups (called the schedule caste and schedule tribes),[2] in particular in PRIs. How and when these acts were to be implemented was the prerogative of the state governments. Thereafter, more than half the states in India have increased the 33% reservation of the quote of women up to 50% in PRIs.In each state of India, the panchayat system has produced different results due to variations in social structure, beliefs, resources, and dynamics of power. Broadly, the reservation of seats for women or quotas are found to have not only had a positive impact on the representation of women but also helped in reducing the hegemony of dominant castes and improving governance. Munshi and Rosenzweig (2008) argue that quotas disallow the emergence of any numerically dominant caste in any constituency. In addition to this, quotas have also led to the delivery of public goods to the disadvantaged sections. The study conducted by Duflo and Topalova (2004), covering 36,542 households in 2,304 villages of 24 Indian states, found that higher public goods (more notably infrastructure goods related to drinking water and roads, etc.) were provided by women leaders of the reserved local government (panchayat) as compared to the unreserved local government.

Despite positive results produced by women leaders, owing to mandated provisions of reservation in PRIs, the quota has come under constant attack for a plethora of reasons. Firstly, the women elected through the quota are seen as lacking sufficient merit to

2 - Schedule castes (SC) and schedule tribes (ST) are social classes belonging to lower castes under the caste system, and are located at the lower pedestal of the caste hierarchy. The schedule caste community was also called the "untouchable," the practice of which has been prohibited under Constitution of India.

enter politics. Secondly, they are considered to be the representative of their own gender, not representing the larger interests of the community as a whole. Owing to these reasons, women in the early years of the one-third quota debate in national and state legislatures rejected any move to advance the reservation of seats for women in legislature and argued that they should enter politics according to their own merit (Rai and Spary, 2019, p.75).These objections do not stem from the patriarchal mindset of the male politicians alone, as the working of the PRI system itself has also exposed the loopholes of the quota system. The plethora of studies suggest a lack of interest of women in politics and their entry in politics primarily due to pressure from families or village communities and the mandatory provision of quotas (Panda, 1996); the educational, financial, and experiential deprivation of women elected under quotas (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004); and women being proxies to male members of their families or vice presidents of Gram Panchayats (Nilekani, 2010). Quotas have also been interpreted as an attempt by the state to make electoral gains among female voters while promoting the selection of "malleable" women who will not challenge the patriarchal status quo (Goetz and Hassim, 2003). Since these challenges are inherent to the social fabric of the system, by not overcoming them, the genuine representation and empowerment of women will remain an objective far beyond their reach.

III

Women in Parliament

The most important indicator of empowerment is "obtaining authority to make decisions or participate in decision making on affairs that affect their lives" (Patnaik, 2013, p.34). The representation of women in legislature allows them to significantly contribute to the decision-making process by actively engaging with the legislative agenda through participating in parliamentary debates, proposing private-member bills, holding a position in governing cabinet, and even influencing the policymaking through their mere presence in

the legislature. Assessment of these parameters can help capture the progress made by women on the path to their empowerment.The number of female parliamentarians elected to the national legislature has been miniscule. Though the current parliamentary term (2019–2024) has the highest number of women representatives since 1952, when the first general election in India took place (see Table 3), it is still meagre. The absence of any provisions related to the reservation of seats for women in the national legislature is a major impediment for women finding a space in national politics and bringing about qualitative changes in the system favoring them. This has incited a debate on the reservation of one-third of parliamentary seats for women in the national legislature. The very first time the bill for the reservation was tabled in the formal arena was in 1996. However, due to widespread resistance to the sub-quotas provision, the bill could not be passed. With such structural biases against women, it is impossible for them to enter politics.

Representation of Women in Government Cabinets

The legislature has played a limited role in proactively bringing about the women-centric legislations to the fore. The bargaining and negotiation power of women for key portfolios in the cabinet (such as home, defense, finance, and health) is compromised because of their limited number, ultimately resulting in men getting all the plum portfolios and women given feminine portfolios. The allocation of cabinet portfolios to women MPs in the period under consideration largely confirms this trend. During the United Progressive Alliance Government's second term (2009–2014), only three female representatives (10%) found a place in the 33-member cabinet. Two of them were allocated the plum ministries of railways and information and broadcasting, and the third was allocated a non-plum ministry. The reason for the allocation of these attractive ministries to women was a coalition of support with the political party of the MP who was allocated the railway ministry. The second was given to a female due to her seniority in the party. Regarding junior

ministers, only five women (11%) were inducted in the 45-member junior ministries, out of which only one female minister was given a heavyweight junior ministry of external affairs. Another was allocated a "feminine" ministry of women and child development, while the rest got relatively less significant ministries (see Table 4).

Table 3: Number of Elected Women Representatives in General Elections (1952–2019)

General Election	Elected Women Representatives	Percentage (%)
First (1952)	22	4.4
Second (1957)	27	5.4
Third (1962)	34	6.7
Fourth (1967)	31	5.9
Fifth (1971)	22	4.2
Sixth (1977)	19	3.4
Seventh (1980)	28	5.1
Eighth (1984)	44	8.1
Ninth (1989)	28	5.3
Tenth (1991)	36	7.0
Eleventh (1996)	40*	7.4
Twelfth (1998)	44*	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	48*	8.8
Fourteenth (2004)	45*	8.1
Fifteenth (2009)	59	10.9
Sixteenth (2014)	61	11.4
Seventeenth (2019)	78	14.3

Note: *Included one nominated member*Source*: Praveen Rai (2017, p.63) and the Election Commission of India

Table 4: Allocation of Ministries to Women MPs

Type of Ministry	2009–2014			2019–February 2022		
	Total number of Cabinet Ministers	Number of women MPs allocated portfolios	Number of ministries allocated to women MPs (%)	Total number of Cabinet Ministers	Number of women MPs allocated portfolios	Number of ministries allocated to women MPs (%)
Cabinet Ministers	33	3 (9%)	4 (12%)	24	3 (13%)	5 (21%)
Junior Ministers	45	5 (11%)	5 (11%)	33	3 (9%)	3 (9%)

Source: Compiled from the List of Council of Ministers retrieved from website of the Prime Minister's Office Archives, Cabinet Secretariat and Rajya Sabha, Government of India

In the current parliamentary term (2019–2024), the Government inducted only three female representatives into the cabinet, who were allocated five ministerial portfolios out of the total 24 ministers (see Table 4). Of these three female cabinet ministers, one belonging to the upper house of Parliament was allocated two heavyweight ministries of finance and corporate affairs. She managed to get these plum portfolios owing to her seniority. The other two were given ministries of lesser significance, i.e. women and child development, textiles, and ministry of food processing. Regarding the allocation of junior ministries, only 9% of the female representatives were assigned the charge of junior ministries (3 out of total of 33 junior ministers).An assessment of the allocation of ministerial portfolios to women reveals an interesting pattern, i.e. women are not given heavyweight ministries as easily as men. Very few women are allocated plum ministries, primarily due to their seniority and stature in the party, political experience, and their role in the sustenance of the Government (in the case of a coalition Government). A minuscule number of women MPs actually manage to reach the top of the party hierarchy and possess authority and exercise influence on party decisions.

Women's Participation in Legislative Process

Attendance

The attendance in parliamentary proceeding is a strong indicator of women's increasing participation in the legislative domain. Even if women do not speak up during the debates and question hour, their mere presence denotes their strong support for other women to raise their voice and concerns (Agarwal, 2009, p.102). It is encouraging to find that the absenteeism among women MPs in Parliament is declining (see Table 5). The participation in the lower house of Parliament suggests that women take their position as representatives of the people very seriously, and take interest in the matter of governance whether they participate in debates and ask questions or not.

Table 5: Attendance of Women Representatives in Lok Sabha

Attend-ance Range in %	2009–2014		2019–February 2022	
	Number of Women MPs	%	Number of Women MPs	%
0–25%	9	14	2	3
26–50%	3	5	5	6
51–75%	11	17	22	28
76–100%	41	64	49	63

Source: Compiled from PRS Legislative Research, MP track data for 15th and 17th Lok Sabha

Parliamentary Debates and Questions

Overall participation in debates is a powerful mechanism to keep the Government on its toes and compel it to include agendas raised by women in its policy proposals. In addition, it helps highlight pertinent issues, the awareness of which may not be particularly high among both the parliamentarians and the public. For instance, a nominated member of the upper house of Parliament in 1953, Mrs. Rukmini Devi Arundale, played a prominent role in generating awareness about the "vivisection of monkeys without anesthesia and preservation of wildlife," which was later taken up by environment activists around the world. Dhal and Chakrabarty (2018) argue that women's participation in parliamentary proceedings brought a different set of emotions to the fore. According to them, "many questions of the women members expressed on the floor of the House pointed to the finer emotions of mercy, compassion, and love reflecting the nobler aspects of life" (Dhal and Chakrabarty, 2018, p,71). The increasing participation of women in parliamentary debate, as evident in Table 6, therefore brightens the chances of women taking centerstage in bringing about a balanced approach regarding issues discussed in parliamentary proceedings.

As the number of elected women representatives increased in the lower house over time, a corresponding increase in the number of women participating in the parliamentary debates was also noted. Also in terms of asking questions in parliamentary debate, women have fared very well as compared to the 2009–2014 term (see Table 6). Though the maximum number of questions asked by women has been within the 0–100 range in both parliamentary terms under consideration, it is significant if considered from the point of view of the total number of elected women representatives. As the number of women increased from the 2009–2014 parliamentary term to the present term (2019–February 2022), the number of questions asked by women has also witnessed a corresponding increase. This is progressive sign and shows the activeness of the women MPs.

Table 6: Participation of Women MPs in Parliamentary Debates (2009–2014 and 2019–February 2022)

Number of Parliamentary Debates	2009–2014		2019-February 2022	
	No. of Women MPs	%	No. of Women MPs	%
0–50	49	86	70	86
51–100	5	9	10	12
101–150	3	5	0	0
151–200	0	0	1	1

Note: In the 2009–2014 term, seven women MPs were ministers in the Government, hence their data has not been included here*Source*: Compiled from PRS Legislative Research, MP track data for 15th and 17th Lok Sabha

Private Member Bills (PMB) proposed by Women MPs

The private member bill is yet another yardstick for assessing women's role in highlighting issues and concerns which otherwise fail to get the attention of lawmakers. Although these bills rarely get passed, their importance lies in the fact that they may deal with an issue that the Government is opposed to, and for which might never have proposed a legislation itself. While such bills will inevitably fail, the issue will at least be raised and, occasionally, debated. Sometimes the debate on a PMB may itself be educative by raising topics or matters that enhance public awareness.The study focused on all the PMB introduced into the lower house of Parliament during 2009–2014 and 2019–February 2022, and found that in addition to women-centric issues, diverse issues have also been taken up by women MPs. Between 2009 and 2014, out of the 372 private bills introduced in the Lok Sabha, 23 (6%) were introduced by 10 women MPs (see Table 8). One-third of the bills introduced by women pertained to family welfare, women, and children. Women MPs also took up diverse issues such as finance, citizenship, overseas citizens, language, schedule tribes, disabled people, employment, religion, and aviation security, and the proposed legislation on them.

Table 7: Question asked by Women Representatives in the Lower House of Parliament

Number of Question Asked	2009–2014		2019–February 2022	
	No. of Women MPs	%	No. of Women MPs	%
0–100	23	40	47	58
101–200	10	18	27	33
201–300	2	4	4	5
301–400	10	18	2	2
401–500	4	7	1	1
501–600	4	7	NA	NA
601–700	3	5	NA	NA
701–800	1	2	NA	NA

Note: In the 2009–2014 term, seven women MPs were ministers in the Government, hence their data has not been included here*Source*: Compiled from PRS Legislative Research, MP track data for 15th and 17th Lok Sabha

Table 8: PMB Introduced by Women MPs (2009–2014)

S. No.	Subjects of the Proposed Private Member Bill	Total Number of proposed bills	%
1	Family Welfare	3	13
2	Women	3	13
3	Children	2	9
4	Democratic rights and duties of citizens	2	9
5	Political reform	2	9
6	Welfare of specific Groups	2	9
7	Others	9	38

Source: Compiled from PRS Legislative Research, MP track data for 15th and 17th Lok Sabha

During 2019–February 2022, on the other hand, 366 PMB were introduced, out of which 35 were proposed by 9 female representatives, which is meagre 10% of the total bills introduced (see Table 9). The most frequently invoked subject proposed by women has been issues related to women such as education for girls, the reservation of women in services, and the protection of women from crime, comprising 34% of the total bills proposed, followed by issues of social welfare, welfare of schedule castes and schedule tribes, education, and infrastructural issues. These subjects comprised more than two-thirds of the proposed legislations introduced by women MPs.

Table 9: PMBs Introduced by Women MPs (2019–February 2022)

S. No.	Subjects of the proposed Private Member Bill	Total number of proposed bills	%
1	Women	12	34.2
2	Infrastructure	4	11.4
3	Social welfare	3	8.5
4	Welfare of SC and ST community	3	8.5
5	Education	3	8.5
6	Protection of group interest	2	5.7
7	Others	8	25.2

Note: Other issues include: urban administration, legal jurisprudence, tourism, social media, inclusive lawmaking, prohibition legislation on the Government, corruption, and children. On each of these issues, a PMB was proposed*Source*: Compiled from PRS Legislative Research, MP track data for 15th and 17th Lok Sabha

This verifies that women prioritize issues central to their interests, but equally take up other issues of significance and propose legislation on them too.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment through political participation and representation is a powerful tool for elevating their status in society. These tools make women equal stakeholders in the policymaking process. The growing participation of women in politics and campaign activities is leading to gradual change in the policy profile of political parties toward issues which affect women. The manifestos of political parties now include issues related to women's safety, education, employment, and improvement in conditions for dignified living, etc. Some of these issues have also been translated into policy programs, for instance the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) in its pledge to prevent female feticide and infanticide and promote girl's education launched the "beti bachao beti padhao" ("Save daughters, educate daughters") scheme in 2017. This reflects that women's participation has definitely brought changes which aim at their empowerment, albeit only gradually. At the panchayat level, on the other hand, though positive changes towards women empowerment are visible, women face many challenges in effectively discharging their representative duties in the wake of biased attitude of villagers toward women.At the national level, the participation and representation of women in governing cabinets presents a gloomy scenario. They are hardly considered worthy for core ministerial profiles and are mostly allocated women-centric or less significant ministries. Having control over such ministries, women hardly get the chance to play a substantial role in tabling a legislative proposal aiming to empower women, and even if they do they require the support of a majority of male MPs for the passage of such laws. Unless women are allocated powerful ministries, their potential to effect positive changes favorable to women is likely to remain very low. Women's participation outside the Government as representatives of women in Parliament has in fact garnered them more success in encouraging fellow women MPs to raise their voice in Parliament, highlighting issues of importance to women and making the Government accountable to issues raised by them. It is owing to their increasing number and influence in Parliament that

the Government has seriously started making laws for women and issues raised by them increasingly. However, despite these positive indications, there is a dearth of laws aiming to truly empower women. Hence, to achieve the objective of women's empowerment, not only does the gender bias have to be diluted but women ought to be provided an egalitarian space to put forward their representation, which can only be facilitated though the reservation of seats in the legislature, which unfortunately remains a distant dream.

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Linguistic Devices in Hillary Clinton's Speech on LGBT Rights

Introduction

Demonstrations against social inequality and discrimination have been more and more frequent over the last few years, and have increased people's sensitivity to certain rights that have often been taken for granted in Western countries (Bhugra, 2016, pp.336–341). The recent events in Afghanistan, for example, have disclosed the denial of many civil rights, generating concern about Afghans' lives. The human tragedy in this Asian country has brought to the fore evidence that many states in the world are still far from fully acknowledging human rights, and has undermined the apparently feeble certainties of the progress made so far on this front. Numerous groups of people, often labelled as social categories, lack even the most fundamental rights. Such groups mainly, but not exclusively, include women and children, and in light of this, human rights are a cause for concern for many people and minorities in different parts of the world. One of the categories that has recently voiced its request vehemently for its rights to be recognized is the LGBT community. As Wilkinson and Langlois (2014, p.249) write, "The issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights has loomed large in debates over human rights in recent years." LGBT rights are acknowledged to some degree in different parts of the world, especially in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North and South America. In spite of the progress in this regard, life for LGBT people is still difficult, if not impossible, in many other

parts of the world (Parker, 2016, pp.65–76; Derks and van der Berg, 2020, pp.1–20). This issue would require broader discussion on the history of LGBT human rights; however, this is not the goal of my work, since it is meant to address the linguistic and stylistic changes brought about by the evolution of human rights in speeches on LGBT rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

One of the most famous and penetrating speeches about the issues of LGBT people was given by Hillary Clinton at the Palais de Nations in Geneva on 6 December 2011, on International Human Rights Day. In this paper, I mean to investigate Clinton's discussion of such a sensitive issue, considering the perspectives that different political, social, cultural, and religious groups might have toward it. One of the main reasons I set out to analyze the linguistic means used by Clinton to discuss this issue is that in her numerous speeches prior to this, the problems of LGBT people were hardly ever dealt with (Roberts, 2016). Through an attentive analysis of Robert's chart, which illustrates the word frequency in Clinton's speeches pertaining to "identity politics," the words related to gay and LGBT people have not been often repeated in Clinton's speeches; themes about Muslims, the climate, and weapons are mostly often dealt with by the former NY senator. Although she has always campaigned to protect human rights, Clinton's speech at the Palais de Nations in Geneva stands out owing to its insightful vocabulary, in that it unearths the discriminations LGBT people have been experiencing, often overlooked by those empowered to eliminate them (Daley and MacDonnell, 2011). This speech therefore marks an important step toward abolishing social barriers and fostering social equality and respect for all people.

The former New York Senator starts her speech by introducing a brief description of the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948. In the introductory part of her speech, Clinton underlines the most important principle

of the Universal Declaration: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Clinton, 2011). By citing the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she underlines that all governments must recognize their citizens' rights as their innate and natural rights. What mainly characterizes Clinton's speech is, from a stylistic angle, the gradual approach to the heart of the matter. She often anticipates the following part of her discourse by means of repetitions, in order to provide further insight into the points she means to discuss afterwards: "Because we are human, we therefore have rights. And because we have rights, governments are bound to protect them." Following the pattern of a syllogism, she gradually addresses the core of the question by repeating "because," at the same time alternating the use of the verbs *to have* and *to be*, to emphasize people's natural rights to a worthy existence. By repeating the verb *to have*, she stresses the importance of human rights as something people are entitled to be granted, as well as the duty of governments to ensure their citizens' freedom. As a result of such repetitions, Clinton increases cohesion in her discourse, which "is concerned with the linguistic means through which a speech gives the impression of being unified" (Charteris-Black, 2018, p.61; Johnstone, 2018, pp.115–120). In particular, Clinton makes use of a causal conjunction, "because," which is an example of lexical cohesion, conveying the impression of wholeness, as a means to engage the audience and lead them step by step to the core of her discussion (Charteris-Black, 2018, p.71; Statham, 2022, pp.2–20). In addition to providing lexical cohesion, Clinton praises the effects of the Universal Declaration, and states that progress on the front of human rights has been made over the last few years in different parts of the world.Clinton's introduction is followed by a series of sentences, which clearly pave the way to further points to discuss prior to leading the audience to the heart of the speech. Such sentences are meant to draw the audience's attention to a new aspect of the problem pertaining to human rights, and focus on a specific category of people whose human rights were not included in the Universal Declaration. Before explicitly naming this category of people, she highlights different examples of injustice and discrimination these people have been subject to for years. Clinton defines them as an

"invisible minority," thus underlining the need to have their real identity recognized. The adjective "invisible" suggests that this category of people have experienced psychological discrimination and physical violence. The subsequent reference to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people is followed by Clinton's awareness of the difficulty that such a discussion can generate. In this regard, she says "raising this issue, I know, is sensitive for many people and that the obstacles standing in the way of protecting the human rights of LGBT people rest on deeply held personal, political, cultural, and religious beliefs" (Clinton, 2011). Another cohesive device which Clinton uses in the introductory section of her speech is a specific type of repetition: the anaphoric reference, i.e. the comprehension of a word or a concept "by referring back to something previously said" (Charteris-Black, 2018, p.67). The purpose of the anaphoric reference is once again to enhance wholeness and integrity, and to introduce the audience to a better understanding of the issues pertaining to the LGBT community. She claims that, "Some have suggested that gay rights and human rights are separate and distinct; but, in fact, they are one and the same." The pronoun "they" clearly refers back to "gay rights and human rights;" the pronoun is meant to join the rights that so far have been considered separately for homosexual people and heterosexual people.

Linguistic Devices and Metaphorical Images

The whole discourse is structured in five parts, and each part is marked by Clinton's new introductory clauses. When she introduces the first part of her speech, Clinton goes on using repetition as an effective linguistic device to make her claims more compact. Within the first part of her discourse, she repeats three times, "It is a violation of human rights when ..." The clause condemns the prejudices about non-heterosexual people and, by repeating it, Clinton aims to underline the widespread discrimination toward LGBT people in the twenty-first century, which is still a cause of hidden identity or loss of life. Unlike traditional theories on the

differences between men's and women's speeches (Broadbridge, 2003, pp. 15–17; Hargrave and Langengen, 2021, pp.580–606), the first statements uttered by the former NY senator reveal limited verbosity, conciseness, and a penetrating tone, which contribute to analyzing the issue with simplicity from different perspectives (Jones, 2016, pp. 630–632). The repetition in the first section of her discourse of so-called "Wh-words" like "what," "where," and "who" has the purpose of pinpointing people's common origin: "No matter what we look like, where we come from, or who we are, we are all equally entitled to our human rights and dignity" (Clinton, 2011). As a result, she stresses the common root that all humans share, namely the right to lead a free and a worthy existence.If repetition and cohesion represent the most dominant devices that Clinton uses to enhance effectiveness and integrity in the first part of her speech, listing is frequently employed in the second part. Once she has got to the core of the point, by gradually approaching the issue, Clinton dwells on the question and enumerates the categories that include LGBT people. She does so to remove from common opinion the conviction that LGBT people fall within a specific and isolated category: "[LGBT people] are all ages, all races, all faiths; they are doctors and teachers, farmers and bankers, soldiers and athletes; and whether we know it, or whether we acknowledge it, they are our family, our friends, and our neighbors" (Clinton, 2011). By listing the professions of LGBT people, Clinton points out that those whom we wrongly thought to be relegated to a specific category, e.g. pedophiles, people with psychological illnesses and so on, are actually much closer to us, and they work or live near us. The list of the categories of workers and people we may happen to deal with represents the ground which subverts every common figured world. As Gee (2014, p.89) puts it, "A figured world is a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal. What is taken to be typical or normal, of course, varies by context and by people's social and cultural group." According to Gee's definition, a figured world is the stereotyped representation that people have of typical situations in their everyday lives. By naming the workers and people who are usually included in certain categories owing to stereotypes, she eradicates the common images usually

associated with the LGBT community. Thus, LGBT people are not simply those whose ways of life do not conform to social and cultural patterns. They are not those people who tend to distance themselves from the normality of social conventions. They are first and foremost the people we happen to see and interact with every day, like our relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Unlike the stereotypes which include in the LGBT community people affected by psychological illnesses, Clinton points out that those who have different sexual orientations are among us. The subversion of such stereotypes is supported by her assertion that homosexuality is not a Western phenomenon, but is part of human nature. Sexual orientation should not be seen as a discriminating element, but simply one of many sexual expressions. She means, therefore, to remove another example of the figured world, according to which LGBT people do not exist in certain areas of the world, due to the fact that different sexual orientations are generated by the manipulating and perverse ideologies of the Western world.The third part of the speech deals with religious issues and is therefore, as claimed by Clinton herself, the most complex one to discuss, which she does by evoking ethical principles. Clinton invokes the image of slavery when she prepares the ground to discuss the relationships between LGBT rights and religion. She dwells on the ambivalent behavior of many religious people, especially at the time of slavery, when a number of believers and churchgoers justified it while others among them made every effort to abolish it. Most religions are based on fellowship, mutual help, and tolerance. Considering such principles, she argues that the rights to religious freedom and protecting the dignity of LGBT people derive from the same ethical source. More than using specific linguistic devices, she appeals to the past image of slavery to show the ambivalent behavior that many people of the church might have toward the issue of LGBT rights (Mongie, 2016, pp.28–29). By evoking religious principles like respect, tolerance, and love, she explains the reason why it is fair to extend such principles to LGBT people.In the fourth part of the discourse, Clinton means once again to disrupt the figured world related to the traditional identity of homosexuals. Many people's figured worlds tend to construe, still today, the identity of gays as

people affected by psychological illnesses or personality disorders. As a matter of fact, different communities, even in Western countries, consider homosexuality a pathology (Klysing, Lindqvist, and Björklund, 2021, pp.10–13). Clinton asserts that "there are some who say and believe that all gay people are pedophiles, that homosexuality is a disease that can be caught or cured, or that gays recruit others to become gay." Clinton's suggestion to combat such a prejudice is to invite antigay people to share their beliefs and fears. Forcing those with homophobic attitudes to change their views is useless. Clinton employs a conceptual metaphor to hint at the road ahead and the amount of work and time needed to have LGBT rights fully recognized all over the world: "Reaching understanding of these issues takes more than speech. It does take a conversation. In fact, it takes a constellation of conversations in places big and small" (Clinton, 2011). This part of the discourse represents the climax, as it conveys the difficulty in reaching a global consensus on LGBT rights. By using the image of the "constellation of conversations," she refers to different aspects of the question and its complexity. It is also worth noting the position of the adjectives "big" and "small" after the noun "places," with the purpose of emphasizing the complexity of the issue everywhere in the world.In the same part of her speech, Clinton stresses the importance of legalizing the rights of LGBT people and, more importantly, she advocates the need to exorcise all fears which could prevent good proposals from manifesting. In this regard, she repeats the word "law" to amplify the importance of the legalization of LGBT rights: "progress comes from changes in *law* ... *Laws* have a teaching effect. *Laws* that discriminate validate other kinds of discrimination. *Laws* that require equal protections reinforce the moral imperative of equality. And practically speaking, it is often the case that *laws* must change before fears about change dissipate" (Clinton, 2011; emphasis mine). The repetition of "law" conveys the domino effect of any legal action; thus, discriminating laws favor further discrimination, whereas protective laws foster protection. At the same time, Clinton is aware that changing laws is not easy at all and that, prior to doing so, it is important to change hearts and minds.In addition to the repetitions employed for the sake of the harmony and integrity of the speech,

Clinton uses a specific idiom whose metaphorical meaning has the purpose to engage the attention of the audience and make them think about the discrimination experienced by LGBT people: "progress comes from being willing to walk a mile in someone else's shoes" (Clinton, 2011). By quoting such a well-known idiom to refer to LGBT rights, Clinton refers to the "situated meaning" of the expression and converges the audience's attention on the daily problems that LGBT people have to deal with. As Gee (2014, p.233) claims, situated meanings are tools of inquiry: "The specific meanings words and phrases take on in actual contexts of use." The use of the abovementioned idiom is intended to bring to the fore the different perspectives between the speaker and her audience. As known, communication is complex, and messages from the addresser to the addressee may not be well conveyed. In this regard, as Gee (2014, p.233) claims, the audience or the addressees may choose to be "uncooperative (or "resistant") and construct specific situated meanings without full (or any) regard for the intentions of speakers ..." As a result, "walking a mile in someone else's shoes" requires the audience to imagine what it would be like to live, as Clinton argues, "if it were a crime to love the person I love? How would it feel to be discriminated against for something about myself that I cannot change?" Clinton uses this idiom to call for people's cooperation and a new attitude toward LGBT people, aimed at abolishing barriers, discrimination, and resistance to change. Here and in other parts of her speech, as I have underlined, Clinton utters idioms and specific expressions to trigger a new response from the audience. Such expressions aim to shift the meaning of being LGBT to a new ideological context. Clinton paves the way for a different situated meaning; she employs the semantic power of particular words and expressions in order to change the rooted meaning of homosexuality, and to bring to the fore the rights that both LGBT people and heterosexual people should share today.In the fifth and final part of her speech, numerous adjectives recur. They highlight the great effort that LGBT people are making to have their rights recognized: "invaluable" (which collocates with "knowledge" and "experiences"), "inspirational" (which collocates with "courage"), and "brave." These adjectives, which all refer to LGBT people's

praiseworthy gradual achievements, are used as a means to remove barriers, a concept Clinton often mentions in her speech. Barriers are both physical and abstract, and they have a specific meaning. Unlike borders, which are drawn to separate political entities like nations, barriers are built for other purposes. Their primary function is to ghettoize, isolate, and discriminate people. They do not necessarily mark political territories but they can mark spaces within nations in order to divide ethnic groups or minorities. As markers separating different political entities, borders are mainly imaginary, whereas barriers are often represented by walls or visible obstacles, although they can be imaginary as well. The noun "barriers" stands out in the former NY senator's speech owing to its different connections with the issues of LGBT people and the connotative meaning it conjures up, like segregation and discrimination. In this regard, the barriers which Clinton talks about are not actually visible, and neither can they be touched. However, they are irremovable and their presence is experienced by people with different sexual orientations. Clinton puts forward the cooperation from both sides of the barriers. As, for example, "In the fight for women's rights, the support of men remains crucial," the same applies to other situations where segregation is still an everyday reality, and where cooperation from both parts is essential to eliminate differences and inequalities (Law, 2018, pp.140–150; Jen, 2015). As she repeatedly underlines, ideas on this front are still evolving and, in light of this, the vocabulary she uses in her speech represents an attempt to change the situated meaning of the status of LGBT people. She aims to eradicate the traditional image usually associated with people with different sexual orientations, and locate the meaning related to being LGBT in a new social and cultural perspective. As she claims:

> we send a powerful moral message ... the international community acted this year to strengthen a global consensus around the human rights of LGBT people ... 85 countries from all regions supported a statement calling for an end to criminalization and violence against people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. (Clinton, 2011)

The evolving meaning of being LGBT is fostered by the use of such adjectives and verbs as "powerful," "strengthen," and "supported", which hint at the ideas of courage and determination, highlighting the principle that "language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and the long term" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p.10). The numerous adjectives convey the shaping power of the language Clinton employs to change people's perspectives; at the same time, her language does not convey a coercive overtone. At the end of the speech, Clinton quotes a meaningful phrase, which is the motto that Americans use to support human rights: "Be on the right side of history." As she advocates the removal of the barriers separating people with opposing views, she points out the importance of joining those who are on the right side of the fence, namely those who are in the imaginary space where human rights are supported. As symbols of social, political, and cultural divisions, the situated meaning of the barriers refers, in this case, to the imaginary social partitions which keep people with different sexual orientations segregated. Clinton repeats "be on the right side of history" and foreshadows a long and difficult road ahead, since the "side of history" implies the existence of boundaries, as partitions leaving aside the LGBT community and, among it, many other people who are still forced to deny their own identities. The end of Clinton's speech relies on the future, and the direction of the future path depends on history and, in particular, how people will interpret the historical facts pertaining to LGBT rights. She foreshadows two possible implications with regard to the behavior of those who "are on the right side of history" and "those who tried to constrict human rights." The former, according to Clinton, will be honored by history, and the latter will see the consequences of their own actions reflected by history. In this regard, she argues that the past and the future are connected. No matter how long the road ahead will be, history will forge the future and deliver the "immutable truth" to people. History will therefore mark an important passage for the LGBT community: from being discriminated and isolated, they will share universal duties and rights. History will hopefully remove the borders which delimit the spaces of LGBT people (Burack 2018, pp.215–226).

Conclusion

Apart from the linguistic tools employed by Clinton to put an end to social discriminations, and which have been highlighted in this work, the road to eliminate both antigay attitudes, as well as words and expressions categorizing people according to their sexual orientations, is still tough and winding. The situated meaning of such words as "homosexual," "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," and "transexual" is not likely to disappear in the next few years. Far from trespassing the borders of psychological studies, this work aims to start from the language employed by a famous politician to sensitize the public opinion to LGBT issues. The existence of discriminations originates partly from language and the use of certain words and expressions which have imprinted distorted ideas and prejudices in the public opinion. The next challenge, which could be discussed in a more pertinent paper, will be the elimination of certain categorizing words and expressions, mostly used to refer to people with different sexual orientations. Thus, the abovementioned words like "lesbian" and "gay" should be replaced by more general expressions related to sexual attraction toward other people, no matter the gender and sex involved.

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Part 2.
States of Physicality:
The Limits of Cultural Context

Irene Santoro

Fat Queer Bodies Leading the Revolution: The Evolution of Control over Bodies in the 21st Century and the Fat Body as a Site of Resistance

> Society needs to acknowledge women's hunger. Not just our hunger for the 2,500 calories a day we need to fuel us through full and interesting lives, but our hunger for life, for love, for expansion of our horizons, our hunger for passionate politics, our hunger to take up space and to live and act out of our own flesh.
>
> Laurie Penny, *Meat Market: Female Flesh under Capitalism*

This work intends to explore the outsider position of the fat body in Western society, in particular the female gendered fat body, analyzing the repressive forces that the patriarchal society exercises to control this body out of the "Norm," in an interesting dichotomy of visibility and invisibility. In the paper I highlight how the exclusion of the fat female body through shame finds its purpose in maintaining the structure of heteronormativity and reducing women's agency. However, there are many other meanings culturally ingrained in the concept of fatness in Western society. Historically the turning point for the fat body can be located around the end of the 19th century, where the disdain and hate for fat is connected to the elaboration of the Western identity and the rise of the prime resident of capitalism: the citizen. He is white, male, able-bodied, thin, fit for work, and in control of his own destiny. This construction worked heavily on

the creation of the "other" to stress the difference with the citizen and its innate superiority. The "other" or the many "others" came to be the female, black, fat, disable bodies, all of which are in some ways associated with a lack of control, morality, and intelligence. It must be remarked that the fat black body, especially female, became in this narrative the primitive uncivilized body to be tamed, to be conquered, a symbol of savage lust (Farrell, 2020), and which faces a kind of oppression that intertwines racism, fatphobia, and misogyny that has yet to be untangled. Therefore, in acknowledging the racist roots of fatphobia and discrimination against fat people, I also want to position my point of view as a white fat woman, and in this work I intend to explore the similarities between the female fat body and the queer body in their oppression and possibility of resistance. Although some parts may be applicable to the condition of the fat body in a broader sense, I express my inevitable partiality on the matter, and I wish for further exploration of the fat body tied to black, trans, queer, and disabled history.

Fat bodies and the idea of fatness have been at the center of reflection particularly in the USA and Canada since the 1970s. Fat Activism has been in contact and agreement and disagreement with feminism and queer activism for years; recently the discourse around fatness has become a field of study: fat studies. "Wann (2009) locates the beginnings of Fat Studies as a field at a 2004 conference and event at Columbia University. The conference, 'Fat Attitudes: An Examination of an American Subculture and the Representation of the Female Body', was hosted by Columbia University Teachers College" (Pausé and Taylor, 2021, p.6). This is a multidisciplinary field involved in bringing to light the discrimination that fat people face every day, along with the meaning attached to their bodies and the oppression caused by the society on fat bodies. But foremost fat studies is bringing forward a new point of view, often with an intersectional approach. This work wishes to join fat studies, taking as a guide the idea that fatness is a social construction (Pausé and Taylor, 2021, p.19), as is gender. But the paper is intended to have a greater frame of reference, and it borrows from Foucault's theory on power and the body, as well as Butler's, especially from *Bodies*

That Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex," in an attempt to apply and enlarge fundamental ideas for the feminist and queer analysis to the fat point of view.

It is difficult to imagine fatness as a social construction, given its material dimension and the Western approach in separating mind and body, considering the last only as a "natural" element. I argue that both fatness and thinness are social constructions related to gender, attributes of the female body, and they have a purpose of exclusion and inclusion in the system called heteronormativity. The body is a site of control and the materialization of power that the patriarchy still holds over women, but it can also be a site of resistance.As gender and sex can be seen in their cultural components (Butler, 2011), far from any idea of nature and essentialism, the body also cannot be seen merely as a natural given entity. As Foucault argues, there is no "natural body" in society since it is shaped by the force of the power (Foucault, 1977). Western society is bound to the idea of the "naturality" but what is perceived is what lies beneath, the symbolic construction encrypted in the body. The author of the encrypting process of the body, filling it with meaning, is the society:

> one of the most innovative aspects of Foucault's theory of power was the insistence on power as a productive and positive force, rather than as a purely negative, repressive entity. In relation to the body, power does not simply repress its unruly forces, rather it incites, instills, and produces effects in the body. There is, therefore, no such thing as the "natural" or "pre-social" body; it is impossible to know the body outside of the meaning of its cultural significations. (McNay, 2007, p.38)

This poststructuralist gaze on the body allows us to move forward from any type of essentialism, and therefore in this analysis I am not looking at a female (fat) body in its innate "femininity," but instead I would like to start from the body as a site of interrogating the operation of power (Pausé, Wykes, and Murray, 2014), recognizing it as a place of knowledge to inspect the forces that society excises. The

body is created by power to express cultural meanings and fit into the given narrative, but where Foucault sees "docile bodies," I see bodies that have the strength to resist disciplinary power (McNay, 2007) by existing and performing queerness and fatness, seeing the relationship between society and the fat body as a dynamic, as where there is control and repression there can be also resistance and disruption. What emerges above all is complexity, with many contradictions in which the repressive and resisting forces are constantly moving and untangling, one the matrix of the other.

Heteronormativity and the "Normal" Body

The disciplinary power exercised on female bodies can be seen as a process of creating a "Norm," the normal, average, statistical body towards which everyone must tend and aspire to be, in an infinite process of approximations. The Norm works as a form of control, both material and moral, guiding behaviors as well as beliefs and even one's self-perception and self-appreciation. Such control is obtained through desire and frustration, exercised not by an authority but instead by a widespread system of shared knowledge, from family to media, in which everyone must participate and adhere, where exclusion by peers is the ultimate punishment. Following Foucault's footsteps, this form of control can be sees as the expression of the contemporary society's power, described by the French philosopher as "heterogenous and diffuse" (McNay, 2007). From one monolithic form of power exercising control over people through a repressive authority, such as a government or restrictive (often religious) moral code, the situation has been shifting in the last 40 years towards a diffuse and heterogeneous one, in which control is exercised by peers on each other and through different means: media, art, leisure, clothes, and beauty, resulting in a pervasive power, with multisource control, virtually impossible to escape. In this system the repressive action of the authority is no longer needed, since everyone is the embodiment of control for others, with the threat of exclusion. When it comes to the body the control put in place to create the Norm prescribes how bodies ought to be, and for

the female body this looks like a white Caucasian woman. Although the Norm changes over time and has changed considerably in the last decades, the perfect body is always impossible to achieve, but nevertheless women are required to aspire to it, and this body is linked to other desires such as success and happiness. Even though the perfect body is impossible to achieve, a material path is given to embark on the quest to achieve normality. Dieting, fashionable clothes, epilation, make-up, workouts, and everything that falls into the category of beauty can be considered from this point of view as an example of instrumental control that allows the power to guide both behaviors and desires. When asked if it appears difficult or perhaps impossible to pinpoint the source of such an idea of a "normal perfect body," or to indicate the moment in which the desire of "normality" has surfaced, precisely because the Norm, as an expression of power, is an all-embracing cultural environment in which women grow up, it conveys symbolic control in every aspect of life: family, relationships, clothes, the public space, the organization of daily life. Understating the Norm and the reason for its existence is perhaps easier within the definition of "heteronormativity," which is a system of values, beliefs, and behaviors under the assumption that heterosexuality is the only possible, or at least the preferred, sexual orientation. Heteronormativity goes far beyond sexual orientation, and in fact prescribes the existence of merely two genders: male and female, interacting in an unbalanced relationship with the ultimate goal of creating a family, the structure that lies at the base of the patriarchy and capitalism. The imbalance of power between the two genders is ensured by a code of conduct that designs the male as the active subject of desire toward the passive female object. Heteronormativity prescribes that the gender has to be intelligible from the body, clearly and unquestionably. This goes far beyond genitalia and sexual attributes, dictating many traits of one's appearance, among which are body shape and size. The body plays an important role in heteronormativity, in which it is the first site of attraction based on the display of one's gender rather than one's preferences or feelings. Thinness is characterized as a female attribute, and overlaps with beauty and desirability, which means that for a body to be seen as female it must be thin. A female body that is fat serves no purpose in the heteronormativity; it is undesirable,

unfeminine, and has less value with its position outside the Norm, posing a threat to the integrity, and therefore mechanisms to bring it back to normality are put in place, or else the solution is exclusion. The needs and desires of the fat female body are negated, and this is especially clear in the entrainment media that elaborates and shapes the collective narrative around love and relationship, where the fat female body is never the "love interest," and in order to be so has to go through a "make-over" a process to bring the unruly body back into the Norm. The repetition of this trope is one of the causes of the feeling of uneasiness that many may perceive at the display of desiring fat woman, expressing sexual needs or food craving, and this is precisely the realization of this symbolic construction of control[1] guiding people to distinguish "right" in what is normal and known, and "wrong" in what is not. One might argue, at this point, that this paradigm is changing with the so called "body positive movement" that demands rethinking what beauty is (Afful and Ricciardelli, 2015). Body positivity derives from fat activism, and at its core is an admirable effort, but as it is spreading mainly via social media such as Instagram, the capitalistic dynamics are at work to depower and exploit it, to turn its claims into selling points. Therefore, in my opinion, even though positive effects of the mainstream "body positive" are noticeable (Cohen et al., 2019), it does not really pose a threat to the paradigm of beauty as a value for women, only slightly enlarging the standards.

The Evolution of Control over Women's Bodies

Thinness does not find its purpose solely in preserving heteronormativity; in fact the obsession over beauty can serve as a form of control over women in a broader sense. Taking into consideration Foucault's theory about changing the form of power over time from monolithic to subtle and diffuse, I would argue

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1 - A precipitation of this phenomenon can be seen on social media, where people have the chance to voice their disdain and disgust, and where there is a perceivable difference of tone and volume in the comments received by, for example, a fat woman eating versus a thin woman eating the same thing.

that the narrative around women in Western society reflects this shift. Looking at the way society has exercised control over women in the last century, it is possible to recognize the monolithic form of power as strict morality. In the past, much of the power was exercised through sexual control, with the myth of virginity, greatly valuing purity, keeping women outside of the so-called public life, locked in their houses to preserve their virtue, busied by the house, the children, and all the (unpaid) activities involving care, as a "perfect housewife." The moral disapproval was issued by peers, but foremost by an authority that would position the woman outside the respectable society. After the 1970s and the "sexual liberation," this narrative began to weaken, losing part of its grip on the collective belief system as the social movements of feminism and LGBTQIAPK+ liberation advanced and freed women in their desires and needs. However, control over women's bodies and sexuality has not yet ceased to exist and, looking closely, it is possible to see the ability of the patriarchy and capitalism to absorb and depower feminist practice and discourses. In 1990 Naomi Wolf published *The Beauty Myth* in which she explores beauty as a form of control. As women enter the public world freed from morality, feminism is depicted, by public opinion, as increasingly unnecessary. Women, it is said, have been given the possibility to do and be as men, to work and to chase profit. But, with this "freedom" comes a list of requirements to "dress like a man, but be beautiful," and "work like a man, but be sexy," hairless, gracious, thin. Laurie Penny in *Meat Market: Female Flesh under Capitalism* (2010) notes how, soon after women entered the workforce, they were given an obsession to focus on: beauty, thinness, a new form of respectability to enter the world of men. The capitalistic patriarchal society found a way to build upon the freedom acquired, or perhaps merely desired, by women using body autonomy and sexual desire, transforming them into new cages. Turning liberating fashion items and sexual practices into mandatory elements of women's life on which to be judged, sexual liberation, with the addition of the male gaze, soon became objectification and ipersexualization in a process of depowerment that puts the woman once again in the position of the object. Therefore what emerges is a diffuse form of power, concealed behind

beauty, exercised diffusely on women's bodies, with prescribed behaviors often opposing one another; valuing virtue and morality but also celebrating liberated sexuality, only to the extent of its being a form of profit: "Patriarchal capitalism really does encourage young women to engage in a culture of monetised, deodorised sexual transaction in the name of 'choice' and 'empowerment', eliding the economic basis for all sexual work, paid or otherwise" (Penny 2010), and at the same time shaming any self-affirming sexual choice. With a series of dichotomies, demanding women to be one thing and its opposite at the same time, the complexity of the power that the patriarchal society has over them has increased, the control becoming much more heterogeneous and nebulous, diffuse in its authority, but no-less repressive.

The Other Side of "Celebration of Slenderness": "Fear of Fatness"

Above all, what is most relevant here is the celebration of slenderness that comes with mandatory beauty in Western society. As women started to join the workforce and invade the public space, they were not only required to be presentable and respectable, but also beautiful and thin. Penny notes precisely the narrative shift from the "angel of the house" to the "celebration of slenderness" as a form of control of women, using their bodies (2010). What the two types of control have in common, in my opinion, is abnegation. Women were once required to negate their desires, to put family, children, and husbands above all else, to be the perfect mother, wife, housewife. When this narrative was no longer effective, the abnegation shifted into becoming more bodily, with the negation of physical and emotional needs with hunger and starvation. Moral abnegation and bodily abnegation for thinness both require women to do much labor on themselves, thus keeping them occupied in many activities beside work, specifically designed to prevent them from focussing on their political situation and acting on it (Penny, 2010). The "celebration of slenderness" works on both a material and symbolic

level: dieting, sometimes until the point of starvation, weakens and shrinks the female body, while symbolically the process robs them of their agency and reduces their space in the world. Therefore in this analysis, beauty and thinness are not just aesthetic concerns but tools to reduce women's political participation.The symbolic and material construction of the "celebration of slenderness" has received much attention from the mainstream media, especially with the increase of anorexia the most glamorous eating disorder,[2] and from feminist critique as well. However, I believe that the point of view of the fat female body has been greatly overlooked, and thus what is lacking is the other side of the celebration of slenderness: the "fear of fatness." To give an example, next the concern for anorexia among young girls is the epidemic of obesity, two stories told with very different words, the first praising and pitying silly girls, the second described as a war against fat people. But fat women know better than anyone the process of starvation and the desire to shrink and disappear, and their point of view has been overlooked because their bodies do not fit the standard of normality and illness, so they have simply fallen into the category of those lacking self-control. With their story, their discrimination was also canceled, and the symbolic importance of fatness as a threat of exclusion was made invisible. But thinness and fatness are two sides of the same coin: prescribing, one through emulation the other through fear, a certain body shape for women, and selling behaviors: what to wear, what to eat, what to desire, what to buy/be. Hence celebrating thinness above all else would not have worked without the pending and perpetual "fear of fatness." Fatness, being undesirable for the heteronormative gaze, serves its purpose symbolizing everything

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2 - Anorexia nervosa, among other eating disorders, has received more attention in the media, though it is a complex disease that cannot be reduced to the influence of society and culture, as the social and environmental components of every eating disorder should be considered. I am not suggesting that the concern around eating disorders is wrong, but some processes of glamourization of the condition, and with bulimia, binge eating disorder, and many others being completely overlooked as they do not always cause extreme thinness, can be seen as part of that pattern that celebrates slenderness and shames fatness, to the point of using mental illness as a weapon.

that is wrong but that can occur when one disobeys. Fat is unattractive, unhealthy, unfit for work, unfeminine, and yet the fat female body is never completely concealed; on the contrary, it needs to be seen as a symbol of shame, as a threat of exclusion. In this odd position between visibility and invisibility stands the female fat body, undergoing processes that negate its needs and desires, practicing abnegation and living in hunger, real and metaphorical, without any praise, since no slenderness is achieved.

Outside the Norm

The fat body is therefore positioned outside the Norm for bodies, nonetheless playing an important role for the system. The creation of a Norm has much to do with the identity that is embodied in that normality. In order to not feel it as an imposition, maybe only perceiving it as restrictive from time to time, but believing it as natural, the narrative has to be layered and structured, intertwined in every side of identity. Fatness belongs to that process of construction of Otherness, or, in Butler's words:

> This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of "abject" beings, those who are not yet "subjects" but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. (2011, p.10)

The fat body is unlivable and the condition of fatness is uninhabitable, but still it has to exist, visible proof of how shameful it can be to live outside the Norm. In a sense fatness can be seen as a performance; the fat body does not exist outside society, which

determines what fat is, and prescribes "how to be fat." The kind of otherness that is useful to the patriarchal society implies the negations of the fat body's desire, but requires that, if the fat woman wants to achieve slenderness, she must perform as if the fat body is in fact undesirable. In other words, this performance can be called "the good fatty," the fat woman who tries to lose weight, who acts as if her fatness is shameful, and she is to blame (Gibson, 2021). The fat woman who is constantly on a diet, who covers up her body, who knows her place of undesirability and stays there. "The good fatty" is a way of embracing the mainstream narrative around fat and gaining some acceptability through self-deprecation. This performance is particularly useful to the system, serving as proof of the miserable condition outside the Norm. It is an otherness that doesn't trouble the patriarchy because it is in fact entirely its creation.Even if this concept seems rather speculative and distant from real life, it is in fact a modelling of the symbolical structure behind the society and has an impact on life, in different measures, for both fat and thin people. The difference is that this symbolic process produces material outcomes that, for thin people, are a system of inclusion, designed for their needs, but for fat people are boundaries and barriers, forms of exclusion designed to remind them of their position of outsiders. Many examples can be made, first and foremost the organization of the public space: streets, doors, transportation, etc. are design for thin, able-bodied people (male and white), to allow them to move freely, while for fat people these can be barriers that cause decreased agency. Also clothes, in particular the fast-fashion system, are designed in standard sizes that do not fit the fat body. Fat people have to buy customized and often expensive clothes that are usually loose, dark, and plain to mask their bodies. This form of exclusion may be the one more known, for it is the starting point of many reflections and claims on fat people's rights in recent years, especially via the internet. Although clothes can seem a trivial issue, this exclusion poses many problems—such as the economical one for the costs of "plus-sized" clothes—which are unavoidable since they are essential for living in the public space, and carry the symbolic exclusion from

the collective ritual that is shopping (especially for young girls). The symbolic process of exclusion is extremely clear, in my opinion, if we look at the language around fashion for fat people, where words like "curvy" and "plus-size" set the difference between clothes for normal people and fat people. The distance is remarked on, once again, in the public space with separate parts of the shops for the "curvy section," or entirely different shops. Many brands carry larger sizes only on their websites or apps. The message seems to be "there is no space for fat people here." Health can be seen as another form of exclusion. It is hard to talk about biases and discrimination in healthcare as it is a sensitive issue, but the discourse around fatness in the medical world is built around prejudice and shame, starting with phrases like "obesity epidemic" and "war on obesity." Health is usually seen as an individual problem rather than environmental and social. Fatness is considered a disease but also a fault or negligence, an illness that the person has brought upon themselves and which they should therefore be shamed for. The discourse around fatness fails to see the environmental, social, and economic causes of the condition, along with a complete disregard for the mental health and wellbeing of fat people. Health is a powerful tool, deeply connected to fear of illness, pain, and death, and the mainstream medical discourse around fatness serves the purpose of excluding fat people from the realm of respectability, putting all the pressure on the individual self-control, while actively denying access to healthcare (O'hara and Gregg, 2012). The moral exclusion of the fat body is conveyed strongly by the media, for example with the design of fat characters, the storylines that involve them, and with the attention on, or rather obsession over, celebrities' bodies. A particularly interesting device of exclusion is "body-shaming," or, better, "fat-shaming." This in my opinion is the realization of diffuse power: the control is exercised among peers on each other, controlling and commenting on the bodies, shaming fat people, even within loving relationships. These are only a few examples of the pervasive control that society holds on fat bodies, the materialization of symbolic structures that have as a result the very real negation of fat people's rights.

Fat as Queer

For their position outside the Norm, and for the exclusion they undergo, fat bodies have many connections with queer bodies:

> both fatness and queerness are, or have been, medicalised, pathologised, and stigmatised. Both are—or have been—at the centre of moral panics in which they are conceived of as perverse, excessive, unnatural, and a threat to the social order. Both have been targeted by public health campaigns and other interventions that seek to manage, "cure," or eliminate them. These discourses produce fat and queer bodies (and fat queer bodies) as "unfit" both physically and morally. (Wykes, 2014, p.3)

As previously stated, compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory thinness have much in common; they are intertwined in fact, and are similarly prescribed as natural and normal. Queerness, in the broader sense (non-heterosexual and outside the binary gender), and fatness therefore undergo a similar process of control to bring them back to the Norm, or at least to weaken their disruptive potential. "Pathologization" and "medicalization" are two processes that involve the regulatory authority of medicine. Pathologization means to create pathological categories for bodies considered different, "out of the norm," following the symbolic path of creating otherness; medicalization means to put bodies under the direct control of medicine in order to justify their existence. Another similar process is "fetishization," where, as mentioned, fat women are excluded from the laws of desire and attraction, like queer people, to manage the existence of attraction toward them, and they are therefore considered as "fetish"; a type of interest labelled as unusual, not normal, and relegated to delimited spaces, such as pornography. In all these three processes, fat and queer people are stripped of their agency, body autonomy, and needs, and their bodies are treated as objects "to fix."Alongside these regulatory and oppressive processes

of control, many other connections can be drawn between fatness and queerness. I believe that the most interesting one to explore lies in the potential of both the fat body and the queer body to be disruptive for heteronormativity, to be a site of resistance to the power of the patriarchal and capitalistic society, and to trouble the boundaries with unapologetic existence. In owning and embracing the Otherness as a position for critical knowledge on the structure of power, the fat queer body can recognize and denounce the discrimination, and can gain the awareness of not being out of place, but instead of having been forced to be out of place. Then, I would like to explore two possible ways in which the fat body can, embracing its otherness, trouble the patriarchy. The first is connected to the idea of performativity, expanding Butler's theory of performative gender and sex, and applying it to fatness: "the materiality of differently sized and shaped bodies cannot be separated from the ways in which bodies are culturally constructed. It is possible to argue, therefore, that body size and shape are performative and as a result can be troubled" (Longhurst, 2014, p.15). Thus, if the system prescribes a certain performance of fatness to be an acceptable fat woman, with the display of docile self-deprecation, the performance of the "bad fat woman" in the public space can be the opposite disruptive route to take. Performing the space with the unruly fat body can trouble the boundaries of the Norm. The unruliness lies in the affirmation and expression of needs and desires, from food to sex and beyond, blurring the categories of fatness and thinness, together with those of male and female: flaunting a female fat body that not only feels deserving of attention but is also the active subject, rather than the object, of desire. A free desiring fat body, outside the paradigm of sexual objectification, becomes a site of resistance and a disruptive force for beauty, binary gender, heteronormativity, and the patriarchy itself. The troubling performance of the "bad fat woman" implies recognizing the condition of the fat body and the regulatory control to which it is subjected, and the assertive action of responding, resisting, and flaunting the fatness. The second way consists of seeing the mandatory performance of fatness: "the good fatty" as a closeted version of a fat person (Longhurst, 2014). In many ways,

in fact, this performance tends to hide or at least disguise fatness with words of self-description like "chubby" or "curvy," considering "fat" an insult, and self-deprecating behaviors like belittling oneself, deeming oneself not worthy of attention, and describing fatness as a shame and a transitory stage of life. Hence it means embracing the patriarchal narrative on fatness and self-restricting one's own agency. In a contest such as this, affirming one's own existence as a fat woman, owning the word and the body as not inherently problematic but made to be a problem by the society, similarly to a coming out for sexual orientation or gender identity, can be a way of resisting shame, guilt, and the repressive action of the system. Both these views of how to disclose the disruptive potential of the fat female body as a site of resistance borrow from queer theory, making the connection between fatness and queerness even more relevant, and opening a possible common path toward liberation.

Future prospects

I want the connection drawn between fatness and queerness to be the starting point for a new feminist, fat, and queer phenomenology that acknowledges the fruitful possibilities of the fat body's point of view to enlighten hidden structures of society and its repressive power. In recognizing the knowledge that comes from the body, in its materiality at the intersection of the lines of fat, queer, trans, disabled, and black oppression used to build an Otherness, I hope that this awareness can now offer a new path for feminism as a liberation practice that, at last, takes into account the many overlooked points of view, such as those of the polyamorous, asexual, aromantic, disabled, and fat communities.

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Ezgi Hamamcı

Gucci's Cyborg: Alternative Embodiments and Fluid Subjectivities from the Post-gender Perspective of Donna Haraway

Introduction

Fashion touches our lives in many ways, including art, commerce, consumption, technology, the human body, identity, modernity, globalization, social change, politics, and the environment. Fashion leads to the recreation and definition of social identities by constantly adding new meanings to life. Another function of fashion is to create different discourses to understand and interpret the relationships between individual identity and the social identity acquired through belonging to various social groups by using clothing (Crane, 2003). Social, economic, political, and cultural issues arising from the production and consumption of fashion affect all segments of society (Mackenzie, 2017). In other words, fashion is a symbol of belonging to a group's lifestyle and a visual expression tool (Çeğindir, 2017). Thus, fashionable clothes are used to express class and social identity. In addition, clothing shows how women and men perceive their gender identities or how they are expected to perceive them (Crane, 2003). The fashion phenomenon, effective in all areas of everyday life and shaping social life in different ways, opens other consumption channels by creating new styles. Clothing preferences open up a significant area to examine how people interpret a particular form of culture, which includes

both strong norms regarding the appearances suitable for a specific period and an extraordinary wealth of options for their purposes (Crane, 2003). Clothing is the most competent factor of individual and social identification from one society to another in all societies and cultures. Clothing has a guiding feature in distinguishing age, occupational function, social position, and especially gender. Others can immediately perceive it through the symbols it contains (Waquet and Laporte, 2011). In particular, the dominant element in fashion is women, and women's clothing creates a perception that fashion is only about women.

The problem of the concept of woman is an issue that is found in almost all societies in different ways and has an important place in social theories (Demir, 2014). Feminism, a concept that emerged in the face of social oppression against women, deals with the issues of equality and freedom. Feminism is a social movement that emerged in Britain in the 18th century and tried to achieve equality between the sexes by expanding women's rights (Scott and Marshall, 2009). First put forward by Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century, the concept of feminism or feminist theory is a form of ideological approach to studies on women, associated with a critical and interpretivist approach and an inside view (Schroeder, 2007). Fashion holds a mirror to the society in which it exists. It is a cultural phenomenon and reflects the social, economic, sexual, and political attitudes of its time. In addition, fashion is an integral part of creating and expressing social identity by helping people define their class, sexuality, age, race, and especially gender (Mackenzie, 2017). Therefore in fashion it is seen that women are among the essential facts in forming their identity and protecting their place in society. At this point, each woman's way of expressing herself with her clothes is almost identical. With every step women take towards emancipation, the fashion designer has presented a new roadmap to both herself/himself and the woman, which plays a decisive role in feminism in this context.

According to Sarah Grimké, one of the advocates of the feminist movement, the question of femininity is related to the appearance of women:

> Fashionable women regard themselves, and are regarded by men, as pretty toys or as mere instruments of pleasure; and the vacuity of mind, the heartlessness, the frivolity which is the necessary result of this false and debasing estimate of women, can only be fully understood by those who have mingled in the folly and wickedness of fashionable life. (1838, Letter 8)

According to Grimké, the roles of fashion designers and the clothing factor are effective enough to benefit or damage women's independence rather than being part of the fashion cycle (Donovan, 1997). In the light of all this information, this paper, which analyses the relationship between fashion and women in the context of feminism, examines Donna Haraway's feminist perspective and cyborg theory within the framework of the post-gender concept in the context of gender and identity for Alessandro Michele's fashion show designed for Gucci. The aim of the paper is to think about the relationship between fashion and women, investigate the reasons and context that play a role in forming this relationship, and examine fashion-related phenomena in terms of feminism, based on the 2018 Gucci fashion show as a specific example. The research method of the article is qualitative research as it aims to reach a deep understanding of social phenomena such as women, fashion, and feminism, and tries to find answers to understanding questions such as "why?" and "how?" The extent to which the traces of feminist theory are found in the 2018 Gucci fashion show, inspired by Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*, is also examined.

Donna Haraway and *A Cyborg Manifesto*

The study of human nature has always been a fundamental quest. What human is or what it means to be human has led to the emergence of the concepts of gender in patriarchal societies. With the formation of the gender, the phenomenon of what roles these

genders will have in society has begun to take shape. In traditional societies, women are generally accepted as secondary compared to men, and the roles of women such as serving this superior gender are common. These gender stereotypes are harshly applied to both genders in societies and constitute the societies' own values and identity. In *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Donna Haraway considers the relationship between humans and machines. While making this assessment, she argues that some natural boundaries accepted by societies are blurred. She indicates that the first border to be broken is between humans and animals. In this break, it is stated that the real reason for the superiority of human beings has begun to disappear: "Far from signalling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling. Bestiality has a new status in this cycle of marriage exchange" (p.151). The blurring of the boundaries between machines and organisms is the second stage. With advancing technology and developing opportunities, thanks to the Industrial Revolution, human life has started to become mechanized. As Haraway states:

> To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. (p.151)

Machines almost become a part of people. The third blurring boundary is between the physical and non-physical. Some machines, which vary greatly in both size and visibility, play a big role in breaking through this boundary. With this new machine, the line between what is natural and what is not, what is real and what is not, becomes more and more blurred (Haraway, 1991). In this context, Haraway uses the concept of cyborgs to blur or even transcend gender differences, and by doing so demonstrates that she stands against the patriarchal ideas that corrupt societies. Located at a

point where the boundaries of the machine and the organism are broken, the cyborg combines different dimensions in a single body, blurring and even eliminating the borders.

When we look at the context of cybernetics and feminism, the main subject of the concept of cybernetics is feminism because it removes the defining points of the transition between the cultural and the found in nature. With the blurring of the boundaries, it is no longer possible to find elements that can be considered natural. At this point, cybernetics abolishes gender boundaries. Women have been labelled with adjectives such as emotional and weak, and understood to obey orders because of their nature (Balsamo, 1996), which is to be a mere mother and wife. Haraway emphasizes that changing the characterization of all patterns as natural is difficult in this context. According to the Van Loon (1996, p.232):

> This does not inevitably mean that the gendered and sexed modalities of being human can therefore be changed at will. The power set into work by discursive constructions materializes reality-effects and engenders particular possibilities for anchoring identities which are thus simultaneously limits of transgression.

First, the boundaries of the "natural" must be removed. Both women and men can be recreated when the right tools are used in the right way. At this point, a cybernetic understanding allows individuals to reconstruct themselves at every level and field, independent of being a woman or man. In this way, the concepts of race and gender are eliminated. Thus, using the concept of the cyborg, Donna Haraway (2016, p.8) creates a different feminist perspective that rejects stereotyped gender and identity norms in societies by blurring the boundaries found in this context:

> The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity.

Cyborgs break down both gender and individual identity dichotomies and give us a way to escape the thoughts that categorize us. With technology, Haraway's cyborgian perspective allows people, especially women, to transcend their boundaries and create a new self by breaking down the stereotypes imposed on them by societies. She also emphasizes that the basis of relations and boundaries in the manifesto is not the similarity or effort to create similarity, but the understanding of adaptation at the foundation of society.

Cyborg Muse: Fall 2018 Gucci Show

"Cyborgs" have inevitably captured the attention of people through the combination of human and machine, and they have a place in our imagination. The possible combination of the organic and synthetic—which invariably has striking examples in the fields of art, architecture, cinema, games, performance, advertisement, fashion, and many media and visual studies—goes beyond the strictly imposed human identity classification of modern society and becomes a part of ultimate freedom. Gucci's 2018–2019 Autumn/ Winter Collection, one of the most prominent examples of this, was exhibited in Milan. The cyborg theme, chosen by Gucci as the core of this show, introduced a freer dimension by overcoming the boundaries in which it is formulated and accepted, with its hybrid designs, pieces symbolizing the transition between cultures and the aesthetic perceptions in which societies clash, almost displaying the behavior of getting rid of borders.

Haraway argues that, from the perspective of cyborg theory, existing feminism constructs dualities such as human–animal and human–animal–machine. She thinks that the physical and non-physical will do nothing to advance this feminism. According to Haraway, trying to remove the boundaries between these concepts, that is blurring these boundaries, is the only way to produce a solution. Lynes (2015, p.2) supports this:

The examples of cyborgs in Haraway's writing—women from the global south working in new micro-electronics industries, mythological figures, new gendered heads of households, and sweatshop laborers—in many respects displaced the technological and science-fiction discourses that framed the cyborg in popular imaginaries.

Trying to remove the boundaries between machine and organism can create new opportunities for different organisms in this context. Based on this, Haraway reveals the concept of the cyborg, which is a part of both reality and the virtual. Looking at Haraway's manifesto, it is seen that the female body is also treated as a cyborg. For Haraway, a cyborg is neither male nor female but a human–machine creature that does not have a gender identity (Balsamo, 1996). Haraway claims that all humans in the postmodern world are cyborgs, and has a completely liberal and egalitarian view of the social structuring that is embedded in societies. In addition, she considers the concept of cyborgs as a completely anonymous structure without any other classification and genderless in feminism thought. In cyborg theory, which does not adhere to social norms, there is the desire to create a society without any gender and identity context:

That means that sometimes racially inflected, class-based, and gender-saturated discourses are not pseudo-sciences, but also that categories like race, gender, and class might be precisely the wrong ones for getting at the odd alliances and agencies that come together in power-saturated and power-producing ways of knowing. (Haraway, 2004, p.5)

Gender, which is considered a social norm in terms of fashion and design, can go beyond its boundaries when defined without carrying any identity element. In other words, the way to overcome gender problems in design is not that men wear women's clothing and women wear men's clothing, as this still emphasizes certain identities. Adding elements containing women to pieces identified

with the male gender or dressing these pieces for women does not provide a genderless design and identity. Likewise, trying to associate feminine clothes with men or presenting them using men symbolizes the dual world of men and women. On the contrary, designers should blur the concept of men's and women's clothing and instead design genderless clothing. From Haraway's point of view, this can lead to equality only with the emergence of genderless designs.

Gucci staged a magnificent but quite different fashion show that featured "cyborg" models and essentially embraced an underlying feminist message when looked at more deeply. In the Gucci show, creative director Alessandro Michele referenced Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*, which implements the concept of the "cyborg" to represent women without the cultural and social constraints of traditional gender and identity labels created by society. Michele wanted to share with the audience the visual manifestation he intentionally created, challenging the binary gender and human identity classification imposed on individuals, and used as an effective tool to both control and regulate us. "Identity is neither immutable nor fixed but rather a social and cultural construction, and as such it can be adjusted, redefined, or even invented" (Haraway, 1991, pp.154–157). The leading idea in this show is that the human is not created naturally but built like cyborgs. The perspective is that if they get the right tools and use them in the correct way, each one is reconfigurable. In other words, women are not actually born to be wives or make home, and neither are they "naturally" obedient and overly emotional people. Women can choose how and what they want to be. In Gucci's organic world, individuals have no determined gender and distinct identity. Gucci included genderless models. Men wore women's clothing, and women wore men's clothing, but could not be differentiated from one another. The show used items of clothing such as the Russian babushka headscarf, English tweed, Chinese pajamas, medieval chainmail, and body jewelry. The clothes of many different countries were used as an indication that it was breaking down the concept of race. Therefore, the show sufficiently revealed the key idea that traditional concepts of men and women will no longer exist in the possible future. Mower (2018), the creative director of the show, said:

> Gucci Cyborg is post-human: it has eyes on its heads, faun horns, dragon puppies as a modern kind of toy dog and doubling heads. It is a biologically indefinite and culturally aware creature.

Additionally, he refers to these "Gucci Cyborgs" as mongrels, which delicately suggests indefinable, intermixed breeds.

The show area looked more like an operating room than a podium, and the operating room tables, surgical lighting, and predominantly mint-green tones used in its design successfully reflected the ambiance. The guests sitting in rows of plastic chairs almost witnessed the realization of a number of surgical procedures that culminated in the emergence of post-human creatures walking on the podium. In a show setting that mimicked a surgical operating room, models walked down the Gucci runway carrying their own severed "heads," as well as an artificial baby dragon, chameleon, and snake to build a different world. Haraway's understanding of cyborg and posthumanism includes a broad spectrum of alternative embodiments and fluid subjectivities such as chimerical or trans-species beings that might emerge out of the transgressed boundaries and unnatural couplings. This fashion collection called for breaking social expectations and limitations and replacing them with "personal desire" because Gucci Cyborg tried to create a world that contributes to chimeric liberation in which what we wear and who we are is completely our own. As Haraway states, "In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse and in daily practice, we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras" (Haraway, 2004, p.35).

When we focus on the details of the show, the characteristic cyborg formations created by Michele interacted with the body to varying degrees but in a visible and interpretable way. In the concept of "body" there is no orientation towards an artificial and apparently non-human or animal formation that is far beyond technology. On the contrary, body forms accepted as biological have been modified through identity. Modern techniques and pieces have

been used and there have been attempts to implement the clothing style and behavior exhibited by some models. The concept of the individually created in this form of practice indicates that nature within the body is also encoded in alternative ways. The dichotomy that Haraway tries to define between "culture-nature" and "body-mind" can be clearly seen in this fashion show created by Michele. With this aesthetic vision developed by Michele about the cyborg, the continuity of the significantly deep and critical context between human and non-human beings can be explained, and these dual differences mentioned by Haraway are shown. If the technology we have continuously improves and we can identify ourselves with the concept of the "cyborg," various combinations of cyborgs become a part of the fundamental and major changes that will occur in the most crucial points and structures in the societies we live in.

The work of Alessandro Michele not only changes the precision of the human form with machine technology but also creates cyborgs in different forms with the animal and the animal's own internal technology. In other words, it tries to demolish the boundaries between human, machine, and animal from his own point of view, trying to present a more common space. Michele, who transforms important features like the head and eyes of humans together with some other biological creatures such as reptiles into accessories, combines the biological body with features other than its own. Inspired by Haraway's manifesto, Michele dressed the cyborg mannequins in clothes that she created by combining religious and traditional clothing with unique pieces. This revolted against both religious and traditional presentation by changing gendered clothing without any discrimination. In Michele's designs, it is seen that a large part of the human body was covered in clothes, indicating that he wanted to prevent the presentation of body parts and avoid any identifiable classification in the minds of the audience. Michele thus depicted the concept of the cyborg as a state of the biological body in constant interaction with the technological from the traditionally formed body form, and this continuous interaction reappears in further dimensions, evolving each time and deriving from the previous one.

Conclusion

Haraway (1991, p.153) states:

> From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.

In a world with cyborgs, the boundaries between living organisms and machines are eliminated and it is not an impossible phenomenon to create a world in which individuals establish closer relations with each other. Identity labels, which disappear with the formation of cyborgs, are a theory that will help individuals, especially women, gain even better places in society. By destroying male domination, the opportunity to be much freer and more independent may arise for women. In the age of technology we live in, opportunities arise for women to escape from the patriarchy with the concept of cyborgs. The reason why Haraway chose this concept while creating a genderless identity is that there is no maternal role for women at this point. Although transforming women's bodies or rewriting these concepts do not seem like a situation that can be adapted for all societies and for every woman living in them, the concept of the cyborg is an important step to be taken on this journey.

By developing the cyborg figure, Haraway showed that the answer to who we are today cannot be based on classifications as humans and others. The cyborg stands against the oppression and subordination of women, mainly based on the idea of a woman's nature, which anthropocentric theories assume and produce knowledge. The cyborg is an objection to the modern tradition of sexist thinking based on imagining men as disembodied minds and women as a mindless emotional charge and a body approximated to nature. On the other hand, it is the actor of today's living social relations and our present bodily reality (Haraway, 2006). The cyborg

is about the dissolution of the hierarchically located monolith, knotted in networks with economic, political, biological, and ideological connections. Dissolution has the potential to spread the body to multiple actors, multiple determinants, and multilingual, relational, communicative, plural, and multiple locations. The cyborg's body is not a complete thing. It is in formation. It is a process. Sometimes it is fiction, sometimes a project, sometimes a reality, and sometimes something through which reality is experienced. This body is mobile within the networks in which it spreads. It can switch between species. It can be intertwined with non-self parts. Besides being a ground on which social relations are written, it is something that establishes social relations. It can subvert the idea of the "other" by standing side by side with what is not itself.

The cyborg's body does not become a whole, but it is always in a relationship. It connects women and everyone else with those outside their supposed gender, ancestry, race, and species. Thus, the human expands into other people, animals, plants, machines, and technological things. Freedom also goes beyond liberal definitions, characterized by the individual obtaining the maximum benefit for itself until it reaches the limit of the other. Ultimately, the body can be in relation with other things, a comrade with others, obscuring its boundaries and sharp beginnings and endings. This body is fragmented, inter-human, inter-species, impure, complex, and originless. With all this mobility, transitivity, and ability to open up to the world, the cyborg can liberate women from the hierarchies in which they are positioned through their bodies. It can move them to another place that is more liveable for everyone.

At Gucci's 2018 fashion show, creative director Alessandro Michele successfully represented Donna Haraway's cyborg and post-gender concepts in the field of fashion. The clothes designed, the accessories used, and the setting in which the show took place made many references to *A Cyborg Manifesto* in all respects. Cyborgs were freed from a female and feminist point of view and opportunities to rebuild and recreate themselves were successfully shared with the audience. This show, which made some presentations in breaking the norms created socially and culturally in societies, proved that it

is not exceedingly difficult for the ideas defended by Haraway to be realized in our near future. As Haraway (1991, p.175) explains:

> Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

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**Part 3.
Portraits of the Past:
Art and Artifice
in Gender Characterisation**

<div style="text-align:right">

Lucija Periš

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Living up to the Victorian Ideals: Domestic Ideology and the Doctrine of Separate Spheres in Wilde's Comedies

The family is often attributed an emotional role in an individual's life, especially since the beginnings of industrialization, which has contributed to a sharp division between the private and public/business aspect of one's life: "The family as a special place of protection of individuals emerged as the nation industrialized. The family as a repository of warmth and tenderness (embodied by the mother) stands in opposition to the competitive and aggressive world of commerce (embodied by the father)" (Baca Zinn and Eitzen, 1987, p.3). In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Friedrich Engels refers to the periodization of history by anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan, who divides human history into savagery, barbarism, and civilization, the progress which arose as a consequence of the development of production. Engels claims that the development of the family from more primitive forms to civilized ones took place in parallel with the development of humanity in general (1973, p.25). The first societies were thus polygamous, and the transition to monogamy emerged with the development of the patriarchal family. Monogamy "was the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic conditions, namely, on the victory of private property over the original, primordial common ownership. The rule of the man in the family, the birth of children who could only be his and who were destined to be the heirs of his wealth—these were the only and exclusive goals of monogamy," which was first practiced in ancient

Greece and Rome (p.65).[1] However, such a family did not imply the equal power relations of its members. The ideal of the patriarchal family was the Roman one, and the word "familia" initially indicated a group of slaves that belonged to one man: "The term was invented by the Romans to identify a new social organism, the head of which ruled his wife and children and a number of slaves under Roman paternal rule, with power of life and death over them all" (p.58–59).

Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500–1800* analyses the types of family that existed in England between the sixteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century as a consequence of the shifts in ideology and value systems. He distinguishes three types of family which emerged as a consequence of the cultural changes: the Open Lineage Family (1450–1630), the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family (1550–1700), and the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family (1640–1800). Stone argues that the most significant change that occurred in the family during English history "is that from distance, deference and patriarchy to ... Affective Individualism" as a consequence of "changes in culture [which] emerged from changes in religion, social structure, political organization, economics, literacy and so on" (1977, p.4). Even though modernization in family life took place in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, resulting in the rise of the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family as opposed to the family gathered around patriarchal values, the nineteenth century brought new challenges when it came to the organization of family. The reign of Queen Victoria was based on traditional values which meant a return to the patriarchal model of family. The Victorian era can be characterized as contradictory because, despite technological advances, the society was "highly conservative and it both valued and performed dignity, moral responsibility, and restraint. It was a period of pronounced family values, domestic propriety, and sexual repression (this referred to women in particular)" (Matek, 2020, p.59). Affection was not a trait of earlier marriages, meaning that love-based marriages started appearing with the rise of the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family in the seventeenth century. However,

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1 - All quotations by Friedrich Engels in this paper were translated by the author.

with the changes emerging from the reign of Queen Victoria, the evolution of family life was challenged and English society returned to interest-based marriages, which were arranged by parents and not by the bride and groom. Thus, it can be said that the nineteenth century in England represents a devolution in family life and a return to more primitive types of families. Stone claims that the nineteenth century brought a significant change when discussing post-1800 family types:

> The trend towards the isolated nuclear family, greater personal autonomy, and emphasis on affective ties has not run a steady course from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. In terms of both sexual attitudes and power relationships, one can dimly begin to discern huge, mysterious, secular swings from repression to permissiveness and back again. In England an era of reinforced patriarchy and discipline lasted from about 1530 to about 1670, with the high point in the 1650s. This in turn gave way to an era of growing individualism and permissiveness which was dominant in the upper middle and upper classes from about 1670 to about 1790. The next stage in the evolution of the family was marked by a strong revival of moral reform, paternal authority and sexual repression, which was gathering strength among the middle classes from about 1770. (Stone, 1977, p.666)

This paper aims to provide a more detailed analysis of gender roles in a typical Victorian household through the example of Oscar Wilde's comedies *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), *A Woman of No Importance* (1894), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899), and *An Ideal Husband* (1899). Irish playwright Oscar Wilde was known for using irony and satire to express his views on the social matters of the Victorian era, and thus his body of work becomes valuable material for the study of women's status during the nineteenth century. The analysis of the aforementioned comedies indicates that Victorian society fostered conservative values, especially in terms of family life. To begin with, home life and family were the ideals

a person needed to strive for in Victorian England as they were believed to ensure personal and social stability. "The family was the main instrument for the social control of children, although it also acted, or was supposed to act, as a control mechanism for adults and as a stabilizing factor in society" (Stone, 1977, p.22). Accordingly, just like in most patriarchal societies, being unmarried was not encouraged; on the contrary, single men and particularly women were regarded as a potential threat to the established social order. Even though it was equally important for both men and women to get married in order to become full members of Victorian society, roles in the home and public life varied considerably depending on gender. In such a society, men participated in production work and women were in charge of managing the household, according to which the idea of "the angel in the house" emerged, a concept which denoted the ideal woman of the time—submissive, sensitive, pious, and devoted to her domestic duties. The concept of a woman as the angel in the house emerged after Coventry Patmore wrote the narrative poem "The Angel in the House," dedicated to his wife. The poem "reiterates the Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman who is supposed to be devoted and submissive to her husband, passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and pure" (Matek, 2020, p.58). Apart from Patmore's narrative poem, other literature of the time reinforced the same beliefs. Equally successful was Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, which "celebrates the ideal woman, Lucilla Stanley, who is devoted to domestic duties, religious, modest in dress, silent unless spoken to, deferential to men, and devoted to good works." This only reinforced the fact that "the new ideal of womanhood involved total abnegation, making the wife a slave to convention, propriety, and her husband" (Stone, 1977, p.668). Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance* demonstrates that women also adopted the role given to them, thus, when discussing her views on marriage with her friends, Lady Caroline refers to married women as "property" of their husbands (Wilde, 2016, p.209).

Not only was the home restrictive for women, but life outside the household also did not offer many opportunities to them. Although the era was marked by the proliferation of employment

possibilities due to advances in technology, science, and economy, the business market in nineteenth-century England was gender-limiting. The entire era was marked by the doctrine of separate spheres, which promoted the belief that the biological differences between the two sexes explain the established gender roles. The ideology classified women as a weaker sex falling into domestic sphere, whilst the public sphere was considered inherently masculine, thus reinforcing the patriarchy. "Men were seen as breadwinners (active, powerful, progressive), 'naturally' fit for the world of politics, law and economy, whereas women were their loyal helpers at home, where their charms (passivity, morality, and obedience) could come to the foreground" (Matek, 2020, p.67). The play *An Ideal Husband* shows that sexist views were even accepted by women in the scene where Lady Chiltern explains why she does not want her husband to sacrifice his career for her. In her speech, Lady Chiltern refers to the ideology of separate spheres, according to which women were considered naturally emotional and men resilient, and claims that "a man's life is of more value than a woman's. It has larger issues, wider scope, greater ambitions. Our lives revolve in curves of emotions. It is upon lines of intellect that a man's life progresses" (Wilde, 2016, p.368).

Women did not have equal rights either in marriage or in society in general, thus after entering marriage, women would become commodities owned by their husbands. "Upon marrying, the woman's dowry became her husband' property; women could not own, that is, handle the property; they could not inherit property from their next of kin, and the husband had the right to make all decisions on her behalf" (Matek, 2020, p.64). The play *The Importance of Being Earnest* points to the importance of a dowry for a young woman. When Lady Bracknell learns that her nephew Algernon is to be married to Cecily Cardew, Lady Bracknell inquiries about her past, relatives, and inheritance. One thing she is interested in is the fortune Cecily owns prior to marrying her nephew: "A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to

say, in an age of surfaces" (Wilde, 2016, p.64–65). In addition to not having financial independence, women were not allowed to leave conjugal union. Namely, "women could divorce their husbands only on grounds of adultery combined with cruelty, bigamy, incest, or bestiality and provided that they had enough money for it" (Matek, 2020, p.64–65). Oftentimes, even that was not the case. The play *Lady Windermere's Fan* shows that it was considered a woman's duty to stay with her child no matter what the circumstances of marriage were. When Mrs Erlynne finds out that her daughter, Lady Windermere, is to run away with Lord Darlington because she falsely thinks that her husband is cheating on her, she says:

> You—why, you are a mere girl, you would be lost. You haven't got the kind of brains that enables a woman to get back. You have neither the wit nor the courage. You couldn't stand dishonour! No! Go back, Lady Windermere, to the husband who loves you, whom you love. You have a child, Lady Windermere. Go back to that child who even now, in pain or in joy, may be calling to you. (LADY WINDERMERE *rises*) God gave you that child. He will require from you that you make his life fine, that you watch over him. What answer will you make to God if his life is ruined through you? Back to your house, Lady Windermere—your husband loves you! He has never swerved for a moment from the love he bears you. But even if he had a thousand loves, you must stay with your child. If he was harsh to you, you must stay with your child. If he illtreated you, you must stay with your child. If he abandoned you, your place is with your child. (Wilde, 2016, p.121)

During the Victorian era, obedience toward the state and the church was expected, as well as toward the husband: "God was again seen as directly controlling day-to-day events within the household, in which capacity he was a severe and pitiless masculine figure. His representative on earth was the husband and father" (Stone, 1977, p.667). In the nineteenth century, moving from a parental

home to a marital one did not imply independence for women. The paternal figure at home was now replaced by an authority figure in the form of a husband who often treated his wife like a child. On multiple occasions in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Lord Windermere uses the term "child" when addressing his wife, thus patronizing her. Lady Windermere rebels against the arrival of her husband's alleged mistress at the ball she organizes and points out that he will insult her if she comes, to which her husband responds: "Child, if you did such a thing, there's not a woman in London who wouldn't pity you" (Wilde, 2016, p.95). The above quotation demonstrates the fact that "as a social system, the nuclear family has two castes—male and female—and two classes—adult and child" (Stone, 1977, p.22). Whilst the Domesticated Nuclear Family was characterized by the equality of all family members, the hierarchical division in the Restricted Patriarchal Family was significantly more pronounced. In Victorian society, "both state and Church, for their own reasons, actively reinforced the pre-existent patriarchy within the family, and there are signs that the power of the husband and the father over the wife and the children was positively strengthened, making him a legalized petty tyrant within the home" (Stone, 1977, p.7). The parent's choice of a suitable partner for their child was based on social status and wealth of their potential significant other, meaning that marriage was seen as a business transaction, as evidenced in *An Ideal Husband*:

> LORD GORING (*expostulating*): My dear father, if I am to get married, surely you will allow me to choose the time, place, and person? Particularly the person.
>
> LORD CAVERSHAM (*testily*): That is a matter for me, sir. You would probably make a very poor choice. It is I who should be consulted, not you. There is property at stake. It is not a matter for affection. Affection comes later on in married life. (Wilde, 2016, p.337)

While in postmodern literature there are cases of parents who are intentionally single and "who have dispensed with the notion of romantic love as a prerequisite for family life and are free from the

need to make compromise with his or her partner" (Matek, 2012, p.117), in Victorian literature, single parenting is usually depicted a result of an unfortunate set of circumstances rather than a conscious choice. However, data from Wilde's personal life and literary works reveal that single-parent households were common in conservative communities such as Victorian England. The hardships faced by parents with no spouse can be seen in *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Lady Windermere's mother left her father due to having a lover when she was a child, and in order to save his daughter from disappointment, he lied to her that her mother died. Due to the fact that men were seen as the breadwinners and the workforce who performed their duties outside the home, children with no mothers were usually raised by another woman in the family. Namely, there was an obvious "division of labour between the sexes, the 'separate spheres' of duties and roles, wherein the man was responsible for the economic wherewithal and public responsibilities, and the woman for physical comfort, nurturance, and the moral character of the family and home" (Vaid, 1985, p.64). Accordingly, *Lady Windermere's Fan* points to the fact that the protagonist was not raised by her single father, but grew up in her aunt's home: "My mother died when I was a mere child. I lived always with Lady Julia, my father's elder sister, you know. She was stern to me, but she taught me what the world is forgetting, the difference that there is between what is right and what is wrong. She allowed of no compromise. I allow of none" (Wilde, 2016, p.82).

Moreover, single-parent families were not looked on favorably by Victorian society, especially when the mother was raising the child alone. Gymnich (2018) claims that, "in the Victorian period, the designation 'orphan' was not restricted to children who had lost both of their parents; instead, the term was also used to refer to those boys and girls who still had one parent," a mother (p.15). The fact that single mothers were stigmatized is exemplified in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. After finding out that he was left in a handbag at the train station by Miss Prism (not knowing that Miss Prism was a maid of his real family, and not his mother), Jack treats his assumed mother as a sinner due to being unmarried:

"Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you" (Wilde, 2016, p.72). Female independence in raising children was not encouraged because it was believed that women were not as strong as men. Namely, it was believed that men are led by reason, whilst a woman's life is directed by her emotions: "The disappearance of the open expression of emotion was the most obvious, and perhaps one of the most significant, indicators of a change in *mentalité* among the nineteenth-century elite ... Emotionalism was a weakness left to women" (Stone, 1977, p.672–673). Hence, even though single-parent families were common in nineteenth-century England, the Victorian elite deemed women inadequate to raise children alone, as demonstrated by the conversation between Lord Illingworth and Gerald in the comedy *A Woman of No Importance*:

> LORD ILLINGWORTH: Still I should imagine that most mothers don't quite understand their sons. Don't realise, I mean, that a son has ambitions, a desire to see life, to make himself a name. After all, Gerald, you couldn't be expected to pass all your life in such a hole as Wrockley, could you?
>
> GERALD: Oh, no! It would be dreadful!
>
> LORD ILLINGWORTH: A mother's love is very touching, of course, but it is often curiously selfish. I mean, there is a good deal of selfishness in it. (Wilde, 2016, p.231)

The status of women in the family, as well as in the society, is closely connected to the economic system of the time which encouraged gender imbalance in productive labor. Growing capitalism characterized by the excessive production of goods marked the entire Victorian era: "When capitalism entered the phase of industrialisation, the family, to a great extent, ceased to be a unit of economic production. Socially, what took place at this juncture was a demarcation of the home from the work place" (Vaid, 1985, p.63). However, this socio-economic change mostly affected men since women were not equally represented in the labor market.

This can be attributed to the aforementioned doctrine of separate spheres, based on the belief that women, as the weaker sex, "have to be protected from the destructive forces of the world outside so that they can fulfil the function appropriate to their nature, 'the angel in the home'" (Vaid, 1985, p.65). Furthermore, if provided a chance to work, women were paid significantly less than men: "The 'breakdown of family' and its variants were frequently used to argue that women should not be allowed to work; the argument was also used for demanding higher wages for men, so that they could support their families in decent comfort obviating the necessity for women of their families to seek employment" (Vaid, 1985, p.64). Because they were not provided with the same business and financial opportunities as men, single mothers were often not able to support their children. Unmarried mothers were left unprotected by both the society and the law. During the nineteenth century, "the New Poor Law ended outrelief for unmarried women and curtailed the availability of assistance from the father of an illegitimate child" (Higginbotham, 1989, p.321). Left without income and treated as sinners, single mothers were often excommunicated by the society and disowned by their parents, and together with their children "sought refuge in workhouses, charity institutions, and relatives' homes" (p.336). A conversation between Mrs Arbuthnot and Lady Hunstanton in *A Woman of No Importance* provides information that there were homes for abandoned women in the Victorian era, as well as the attitude that Victorians had taken towards the issue:

> MRS ARBUTHNOT: ... I think there are many things women should never forgive.
>
> LADY HUNSTANTON: What sort of things?
>
> MRS ARBUTHNOT: The ruin of another woman's life. (*moves slowly away to back of stage*)
>
> LADY HUNSTANTON. Ah! those things are very sad, no doubt, but I believe there are admirable homes where people of that kind are looked after and reformed, and I think on the whole that the secret of life is to take things very, very easily. (Wilde, 2016, p.238)

Children conceived and born out of wedlock were stigmatized in nineteenth-century England for their entire lives. Frost (2003) argues that "an illegitimate child was literally parentless at law, and even the subsequent marriage of the parents could not legitimize their offspring" (p.293). Accordingly, in *A Woman of No Importance*, Gerald cannot inherit Lord Illigworth's title because he was conceived out of marriage: "According to our ridiculous English laws, I can't legitimise Gerald. But I can leave him my property. Illingworth is entailed, of course, but it is a tedious barrack of a place. He can have Ashby, which is much prettier, Harborough, which has the best shooting in the north of England, and the house in St. James Square. What more can a gentleman require in this world?" (Wilde, 2016, p.260). The previously described law and accompanying "sanctions [of single parents] were meant to punish parents through their children" (Frost, 2003, p.293), most commonly mothers, and to morally reform sinful citizens. "Unwed motherhood did not sanctify or redeem women; it instead marked them as 'fallen'" (Frost, 2014, p.45). The hypocrisy of Victorian society toward women becomes visible in *A Woman of No Importance* when Mrs Arbuthnot decides to tell her son Gerald about Lord Illingworth's deceitful nature. Namely, she tells him the story of Lord Illingworth deceiving a girl, which was in reality her, in order to prevent him from working as Lord Illingworth's secretary. She tells him that Lord Illingworth promised that he would marry her; she conceived his child and moved away from her family home with him, and afterwards he refused to marry her. However, after hearing the story, Gerald accuses the girl of immorality: "My dear mother, it all sounds very tragic, of course. But I dare say the girl was just as much to blame as Lord Illingworth was. —After all, would a really nice girl, a girl with any nice feelings at all, go away from her home with a man to whom she was not married, and live with him as his wife? No nice girl would" (Wilde, 2016, p.246). The fact that the nineteenth-century English society was conservative becomes further apparent in the same play when an American girl named Hester points to the gender ideals in England as opposed to the gender-equal America. In America, women were deemed equal to men, whilst in England different rules applied to men and women, especially when it came

to having a premarital love affair: "Don't have one law for men and another for women. You are unjust to women in England. And till you count what is a shame in a woman to be an infamy in a man, you will always be unjust, and Right, that pillar of fire, and Wrong, that pillar of cloud, will be made dim to your eyes, or be not seen at all, or if seen, not regarded" (Wilde, 2016, p.217).

Family is an institution that constantly changes its form in parallel with the changes in culture, technology, economy, and politics. The late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England were marked by the evolution of family life, which resulted in the rise of the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family, as opposed to the patriarchal family, which had previously been the basis of English society. The modernization of family life ceased in the nineteenth century with the reign of Queen Victoria, an era which brought new challenges when it came to the organization of family life and women's rights, even though it was marked by advances in technology, science, and economy. The Queen nurtured traditional values such as morality, obedience, and restraint—values which were supposed to be regarded by all citizens, especially women. Such a climate implied a return to the patriarchal model of family, as evidenced in Wilde's comedies. His plays *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), *A Woman of No Importance* (1894), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899), and *An Ideal Husband* (1899) point to the fact that the basis of the English social system in the Victorian era was the Patriarchal Nuclear Family. Such a family was characterized by a strict hierarchy and division of roles. The man was at its head and, apart from performing his role of husband and father, was active in the public sphere, usually in the world of economy and politics. On the other hand, women were often confined to their homes, as evidenced by the fact that, during the Victorian era, the concept of a woman as "the angel in the house" emerged. Wilde's body of work depicts a diverse range of female characters who have not succumbed to the Victorian code of morality and are thus ghettoized, such as single mothers, unmarried women, and female orphans. Left without male protection and labelled as outcasts, Victorian women frequently had to rely on state welfare and find refuge in

workhouses, which again proves that the Patriarchal Nuclear Family was a prescribed norm and an ideal every obedient Victorian citizen was expected to aspire to.

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Carolina Silveira

Wee Nation, 'Big Man': Gender and National Identity in Scottish Stand-up Comedy

Representations of Scottish culture have traditionally relied on distinctly masculine symbols. From the kilted Highlander to the Glaswegian "Big man", hegemonic masculinity has shaped, and is shaped by, Scottish nationalism. Though nationalist discourses are always inherently gendered, Scotland presents particularities as it is constructed on a narrative of postcoloniality and statelessness; the politically "impotent" (Nairn, 2021) nature of the Scottish nation is said to result in an inferiority complex and reassertion of traditional masculinity. Taking Scottish live stand-up comedy as its object of analysis, this paper explores how the hypermasculine image of Scottishness is both reproduced and challenged by Scottish comedians. The paper identifies an interconnection between the perceived subordinate political status of Scotland and the gendered construction of the nation. At the same time, it also suggests that Scots are re-negotiating what it means to be Scottish, and in many cases this comes hand in hand with a critique of traditional masculinity and a rethinking of who is included/excluded from the nation.

Introduction: Scottish Straight White Men

Representations of Scottishness typically fall into one of three categories: Tartanry, Kailyard, and Clydesidism. The first of these, and perhaps the most recognizable, is the tartan-clad Highlander hero,

as illustrated in *Braveheart* or *Outlander*. The Kailyard tradition, on the other hand, originates in Scottish literary works of the late 19th century. It can be characterized as a romanticized depiction of parochial rural lowland Scottish communities, which are portrayed in opposition to, and more positively than, industrial centers. Both of these representations have been critiqued for their sentimental, idealistic, and inauthentic construction of Scottishness (Caughie, 1982; Craig, 1982; McArthur, 1993; Nairn, 2003). Nairn sees in these romanticized cultural expressions a "Tartan monster" (Nairn, 2003, p.104) that distracts from the politics of self-determination. Others take issue with the fact that these fictional Scottish representations have often been constructed "elsewhere" (e.g. London or Hollywood), and for an external audience (McArthur, 1993).

An antidote to the perceived inauthenticity and "sentimental backwardness" (McArthur, 1993, p.98) of the Tartan hero and the parochial Kailyard can be found in Clydesidism, a tradition that depicts the urban, working-class, male experience of Scottishness (Martin-Jones, 2009). Much like other former industrial centers in Britain, Glasgow was deeply affected by the economic fallout of deindustrialization in the 20th Century (Lever, 1991; Clayton, 2002; Phillips, Wright, and Tomlinson, 2020). Clydesidism offers a window into post-industrial inequality and the violence that accompanies it. Ken Loach films and Irvine Welsh novels are emblematic of the Clydesider tradition, which valorizes the Scottish "hard man" and their "refusal to be beaten by the system" (Bruce, cited in Hill, 2009, p.93). The realist discourse of Clydesidism was said to offer an authentic portrayal of Scotland that would pave the way for a more progressive future (McArthur, 1982; Craig, 1983; Dick, 1990).

Clydesidism may present a grittier side of Scotland but, much like its tartan-clad predecessors, its realism is limited to a decisively male and unquestionably white perspective, as illustrated in titles like *The Big Man* (Leland, 1990), *The Hard Man* (McGrath, 2011), and *Wee Man* (Burdis, 2013). The experiences of Scottish women, if present at all, are left on the margins, serving only to sustain men through their crisis of masculinity (Caughie, 1990, p.16). For critics then, the progressive potential of Clydesider realism is undermined by

the fact that it centers the masculine anti-hero, and projects an image of Glasgow as a "depressing dystopia" from which there is seemingly no escape (Hill, 2009, p.99). As explored in the following section, this post-industrial pessimism can also be read as "postcolonial," whereby the historical process of power and (colonial) domination generate inequality and (masculine) crisis (Gardiner, 1996).

The Fragile Masculinity of the Nation

As scholars have noted, nationalism is a gendered discourse (Nagel, 1998; Schoene, 2004, 2018). While men are tasked with protecting the 'motherland,, women are the embodiment of the nation, as illustrated in representations like Britannia. In countries that have 'struggled against a colonising "fathe',"' gender matters even more (Reizbaum, 1992, cited in Stirling, 2008, p.78). dColonized nations, by virtue of their oppression, are said to be dfeminized' (Puri, 2008, p.135). Throughdsexualized metaphors, we can describe the 'rape and plunder' of a territory, the 'penetration' by colonial forces, and the resulting 'impotence' of thedcolonized nation (Nairn, 2003; Puri, 2008, p.142).dColonized subjects have commonly beendcharacterized as savage,duncivilized, 'childlike, emotional, and impulsive' (Puri, 2008, p.135). The men, who are ordinarily the protectors of the nation (and hav, presumably failed in this regard), must accept their dependency and inferior status, or experience a crisis which is expressed through a hypermasculine identity (Jones, 2009; Lehner, 2011, p.226)

In the case of Scotland, the nation is, at least in the minds of nationalists, under the political and/or cultural control of external forces. This is most notably outlined in Tom Nairn's (2003) *The Break Up of Britain*, where he argues the Union has 'always posed grave cultural psychological problems for Scotland' (Nairn, 2003, p.118), leading to the romantic 'infantilism' p.146) of Scottish cultural expressions like Tartanry and Kailyard p.104). Beveridge and Turnbull (1989), on the other hand, see such dismissals of

Scottish culture as evidence of an internal 'inferiority complex' driven by cultural subordination to England. Scottishness, they argue, is shaped anddsuppressed by a wider British cultural framework that overvalues 'English versions of Britishness' (Connell, 2003, p.43). Though Scotland's colonial history is contested, (post-)colonial narratives seem to underpin Scottish nationalist discourse and traditional representations of Scottishness.

Performing Scottish Identity: Comedy at the Fringe

We now turn to more contemporary performances of the nation: do Scottish comedians reproduce the gendered view of Scottish nationalism outlined above? To what extent do they reproduce or challenge traditional forms of Scottish masculinity? This paper seeks to answer these questions through a discourse analysis of live Scottish comedy at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2017. The Edinburgh Fringe started as a 'playful opposition' to the official Edinburgh International Festival (Thomasson, 2015, p.107), but has now grown into the biggest arts festival in the world, filling the streets of the Scottish capital every August in a 'carnivalesque' fashion (Jamieson, 2004; Igrek, 2017). This makes the Festival a fruitful site for the analysis of identity construction

Identity is understood here to be performatively constituted through social interaction (Loxley, 2007; Denzin, 2008; Wodak et al., 2009), while stand-up comedy is a signifying practice through which identities can be negotiatd, and societal values can be challenged (Rutter, 1997; Lockyer and Myers, 2011; Brodie, 2014; Smith, 2019). Stand-up comedy is a genre of "intimacy that purposefully blurs the line between the real and fictional" (Brodie, 2014; Double, 2014; Colleary, 2015). Though a distinction can be made between the serious"'performativit'" of identity in everyday life (Butler, 2002) and the illusionary and playful performance acted out on stage (Schechner, 2003), the difference is one of degree, not kind. As Colleary (2015) explains, stand-up comedy is a continuation of

the self, which is"'channelled through the comic persona [and] can be understood as a part but not the whole, a kernel through which to grow and project partial illustrations of the self from within'" (p.98).

In the context of the Fringe, stereotypical Scottish representations can function as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that helps to distinguish the comedian. This is the case with comedian Craig Hill, who uses Tartanry as a playful caricature in the promotion of his shows, building on the tradition of"'comic tartanr'" (Munro, 2010). Fog Hill, the kilt is a staged performative device, rather than an everyday performance. In an online interview, he comments:"'I don't wear a kilt in 'real' lif!'.. It's an important part of me getting into characte'" (Student Rag, 2020). The kilt is a staple for Hill, something he has incorporated into his performances over the last 20 yearsg Hill's sexuality as a gay man is central to his performance, and his playful"'queerin'" of the kilt with variations such as pink or black leather give his performance an additional camp quality. For his 2017 sho *'Someon''s Gonna Get Kil!'*, he seems to mix Tartanry with Clydesidism in his promotional material. The aggressive pun in his show title is combined with an image of him in a kilt with an assertive stance reminiscent of the characters in *Trainspotting 2*. He displays a kind of kilted"'masquerade', which combineurhumor and aggression in a"'mocking yet celebrator'" way (Pittock, 2010, p.46).

A kilt is also worn by Scots-Sikh comedian Hardeep Singh Kohli whes he appears on stage. Singh Kohli's use of tartan differs from Craig Hill because it disrupts the familiar racial boundaries of Scottishness. It can be seen as a form of"'disidentificatio'" (Muñoz, 1999; Medina, 2003)\" and through a study of its workings, he develops a new perspective on minority performance, survival, and activism.Disidentifications is also something of a performance in its own right, an attempt to fashion a queer world by working on, with, and against dominant ideology. Whether examining the process of identification in the work of filmmakers, performance artists, ethnographers, Cuban choteo, forms of gay male mass culture (such as pornography, in that it subversively re-articulates the dominant culture. Though tartan is traditionally associated with Scottish

ancestry and heritage, it is common for ethnic minority Scots to embrace these symbols and indeed re-invent them. The creation of an Islamic and a Sikh tartan (The Scottish Register of Tartans, 1999, 2012), for example, exemplifies the openness of tartan as a national symbol. Singh Kohli's kilted performance can be read as an assertion of identity that is commonplace for Sikh men in Scotland (Hopkins, 2014), but left out of mainstream stereotypical Tartanry representations, which are predominantly white.

The use of tartan by Scottish comedians is a noteworthy strategy for a Fringe show, as it is"'an instantly recognisable signifier of identit'" (Munro, 2010, p.180), both nationally and internationally. While tartan conjures up the image of edromanticized history and heritage (Trevor-Roper, 1983; see literature review), it is also evidently employed by Scottish performers in"'knowing, ironic and reflexively self-satirica'" ways (Brown, 2010, p.109), as is the case witg Hill and Singh Kohli. The Fringe festival is frequented by an international audience, many of whom might only be familiar with mainstream representations of Tartanry by an outward facing tourism or cultural industry. As such, Singh Kohli's kilt serves to disrupt the ethnic boundaries of Scottishness, while Craig Hill's camp use of the kilt challenges the heteronormativity of Scottish masculinity.

Scottish Masculinity in Crisis

Masculinity is frequently framed through the lens of"'crisi'" as men try to navigate changing social norms and structures (Ross, 2013, p.16). This is especially the case in a postcolonial context where anxieties around national power are interpolated with masculine anxieties. For comedian Scott Gibson, the crisis of masculinity is resolved through an acceptance of dependenc:

> Men are the weaker sex ... We need women. You need to accept it. We need structure, control. Men are children. Men are idiots. We like to think we are lone wolves, we couldn't survive by ourselves.

While his rhetoric seems to elevate women to a position of superiority, it perpetuates an essentialist view of gender in which women must take on a nurturing role. Media representations of gender in recent decades have often portrayed working-class men in the household as "'buffoon'" who need to be managed by their female partners (Gentry and Harrison, 2010, p.77). The childlike man in such representations accepts his ineptitude and consequential dependence on women. This framing of masculinity as dependence mirrors the postcolonial narrative of Scottish inferiority presented in popular culture (e.., *Trainspotting*) and scholarly work (e.., Nairn, 1997, 2003). Just as Gibson asserts that men "'couldn't survive without womn'," unionists claim that "'Scotland couldn't survive without Englan'" (*The National*, 2015).

Traditional forms of masculinity are also reproduced in "'new la'" (Ross, 2013) discourses. The new lad represents a male identity whose preoccupation with sex, football, and drinking leave him in a state of perpetual adolescence (Hansen-Miller and Gill, 2012; Brabon, 2013). In the present research, lad discourse is prevalent in the performances of older male comedians. In one example, Raymond Mearns uses objectifying language to talk to the young women in the audience: "'look at all that jailbait in the front row. Are youse twins? Are youse sisters? Double jailbait! Are you a working girl? [laughter] I mean do you have a job?. In anothle, Fred MacAulay offers a somewhat nostalgic version of "'boys will be boys":

> Today, if you want something you just google it. Oral sex?
> Google it. Up it pops. I'm pretty sure. Different for us back
> in the day, wasn't it fellas? Trial and error. Remember
> that? And there was a lot of error. Thankfully just the only
> one trial. Not proven.

This style of comedy is reminiscent of working men's club stand-up, with its reliance on gender differences.

This can be starkly contrasted with the younger male comis, who, despite their "'laddis'" aesthetic (Orbey, 2019), are consciously critical of toxic masculinurbehavior. This is illustrated in Daniel Sloss's performance:

> I am a confident man, but I would never have the confidence to just shotgun dickpics."'She's gonna fucking love this"– She doesn't even know your middle name!

Sloss also critiques the problematic gender scripts perpetuated by older men:

> Listen to how your grandad met your gran, I guarantee it's this story: "well your gran didn't like me at first, but I wore her down". Awful.

Though Sloss challenges harmful masculinurbehavior in his show, the jokes problematically imply that such gendered scripts are a relic of a bygone era, or performed by others and not him. Sloss does go on to engage more critically with his own ambivalent masculinity in the HBO comedy specia *X* (2018), where he acknowledges that he is part of the problem.

Other young male comedians at the Fringe openly discuss their feelings of inadequacy and the pressure to"'perfor'" a certain type of masculinity (Butler, 2002; Walsh, 2010). Gareth Waugh, for example, feels the need to change hiurbehavior in traditionally male environments:

> I do the very clichéd guy thing. You know when you go to a garage, and you pretend to know more about cars than you actually do. But I take it one step further, righ.,Llast time I went to a garage, I caught myself walking in with a limp.

In Gareth Waugh's comedy we see the contradictions of masculinity playing out. The"'new la'" discourse and its imperative of"'heterosexual promiscuit'" (Hall, 2014, p.46) are critiqued by Waugh as he talks about his overly confident friend:"'what kinda deluded porn universe does he live in". At the same time, however, Waugh confesses he seeks advice from the same"'lad":

> I was talking to my mate about how I feel dead awkward,
> and how I don't want to feel like that anymore. He is a very
> confident guy, a bit of a lad. But very confident. A bit of a
> wanker to be honest.

On the one hand, he feels uncomfortable with the hypersexualized masculinity that is expected of him and exposes its ridiculousness. On the othnd, he defines himself in relation to the lads he views as benchmarks, despite their questionablur behavior.

The crisis of masculinity expressed in Gareth Waugh's performance serves as a metaphor for a crisis of nationhood. As Waugh asserts,"'it's hard to be socially awkward and Scottish," particularly since the current political climate calls for decisiveness and confidence:"'in the last 6 months we have had to vote 42 times. We have never stopped voting in Scotland, and I don't think I should be allowed to vote! I am a proper idiot". As Schoene proposes, it seems Scotland remains at a"'political and representational crossroad" (2004, p.124), mirroring the anxieties of the gendered self.

In Rick Carranza's show, we are also confronted with the pressures and contradictions of masculinity. Carranza's love of *Star Trek* makes him an outsider, so he usesfFootball as a way to perform heteronormative masculinity:"'suddenly, because I had that [football knowledge] I could go to the pub and I could make conversation ... I fitted n'." The separation between his private self "'Trekkie'") and public self (football fan) mirrors the homo (private)"'straight-actin'" (public) performance that many queer men experience (Zhu, 2016). Even though Carranza identifies as straight, his heterosexuality must be outwardly performed through traditionally masculine interests like football, while his true passion (*Star Trek*) must be kept secret. By juxtaposing fandom and queerness, Carranza's stand-up show illustrates the"'boundary work being done to uphold and defend the heterosexual order'" (Haywood et al., 2017, p.64).

Another theme that emerges in relation to masculinity is the re-negotiation of fatherhood. Macht (2019, p.134) notes that in Scotlad, the traditional role of the father as the"'disciplinarian who delivered

the serious punishment upon his arrival at hom"' has waned in recent yeas––—something which may be helped by the increased focus on children's rights and protection in Scotland. Scott Gibson acknowledges this changing landscape in his comedy:"'It was a simple time back then, you could raise people properly. Through fear … canny hit kids now. And they know that! The power has shifted.. Comedian Mark Nelson also laments, in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, that"'you can't scare kids anymore'

While the role of fathers is changing, the experience of parenting is not commonly discussed from the male perspective. This is something that both Scott Gibson and Mark Nelson address in their shows. Gibson admits that motherhood should take priority during pregnancy, but worries that"'we don't talk about the fathers. We have come a long way, but we still have this weird thing with men. There is no conversation". Fatherhood continues to be presented as a"'part-tim"' or"'secondar"' role compared to motherhood (Wall and Arnold, 2007, p.511). This is particularly problematic for Mark Nelson:

> I joined a mother and toddler group at our local catholic
> church. And you'll notic:, mother and toddler group. There
> is no father and toddler group. It's a stigma most of you will
> never kno– the stigma and suspicion of stay-at-home dads.

The"'new fathe"' represented in the media in recent years is"'more emotionally involved, more nurturing, and more committed to spending time with his childre"' (Wall and Arnold, 2007, p.510); however, there are limitations to this shift, as illustrated by Gibson and Nelson.

Mark Nelson's experience of being both Scottish and a father is central to his comedy. He rose to fame thanks to his online videos which show his then thre3-year-old daughtr, Isl, as a political commentator. The videos were so popular that Isla was even named one of Scotland's"'most inspirational women under 3"' (Sanghani, 2018). Yet, being in the spotlight as a father, he also attracted criticism:"'I get hate mail now. I get death-threats. Of all

the horrific things I've said over the years, I've never had a death threat. I try to do something nice with my wee girl, people want me to die.. The hostility is not just online. Nelson's experience at the toddler group in church was also unpleasant:"'they treated me with suspicion and contempt.

There is still an uneasy relationship between masculinity and familial intimacy. As Aboim (2016) explains,"'the new male engagement in private life, a traditionally feminized sphere, is pervaded by the tensions between the predator and the provide'" (p.6). This tension seems particularly prevalent in the Scottish context, where masculinity is traditionally represented as violent (Abrams, 2017; Batchelor, Armstrong, and MacLellan, 2019). This could help to explain why jokes abouiapedophilia are so common in Scottish comedy. Nelson, for example, talks about the amusingly accurate description of himself as"'the guy who does things with the little girl on the internet"; and Gareth Wauh, uses a"'paed'" joke to exemplify why Scotland"'makes the best idiots in the entire word'." The prevalence of this topic in Scottish comedy can be seen as an indication of the persisting anxieties that surround the idea of male familial intimacy.

Women and Scottish Nationalism

While the reconfiguration of Scottish masculinity presented above shows modernization of Scottish attitudes, some female perspectives on Scottish identity are less optimistic. Fern Brady provides a personal account oedgender-based violence as she tells the audience about her previos, abusive relationship:

> I remember the first time he chased me out of a restaurant, I thought"'this isn't norml'." Then quickly it just became an everyday thing … There was never a convenient moment to go [to friends and say]"'yes, he is great, but sometimes he strangles me, and not in a sexy consensual way."

In her performancen Brady inadvertently connects gender and the experience of (not) belonging. Unlikg Hill and Singh Kohli, who show a strong sense of attachment to their Scottish identityn Brady's lived experience is perhaps one of fear rather than belonging. This is illustrated by her worry that her ex, who still lives in Edinburgh, will hear about her show an '"have another go at killing me."

This raises the question of who belongs to the nation (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault, 2000; Mulholland, Montagna, and Sanders-McDonagh, 2018). Though womesesymbolize the nation, they play a paradoxical role:"'women *are* the landscape, just as they *are* the nation, but they do not inhabit the landscap'" (Stirling, 2008, p.23). As the symbolic embodiment of the nation, women face"'a variety of pressures to conform to idealized models of behaviou'" (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault, 2000, p.70)n Brady critically addresses this in her show:"'what makes a good woman in a patriarchal society is how willing you are to do this to men over and over again: 'Oh wow! All your opinions are so interesting and vald'.'" Other female comedians also touch on gendered pressures. For example, the pressure to have kids:"'people have been putting pressure on us for years about it: 'why have you not got kid??'" [Jay Lafferty]beto be passive in conversations:"'I've met some men who are like, 'oh, women should be a wee bit quieter'" [Janey Godley]; to look younger:"'I like to tell people I'm 30, because for 25 I'm alright. But for 30, I'm fucking bangin'" [Kimi Loughton]; to look thin:"'oh you look so thin … cause that's the highest compliment a woman can have over any career achievemen'" [Fern Brady].

Jay Lafferty's show discusses gendered"'labels and expectation'" at length. She focuses on the Scottish word bBesom" (which is also the title of her show). After describing the etymology of the word as originally meaning"'a woman of low moral valus','" she concludes:"'just to put that back into context, it is traditional in Scotland for our grandmothers to call their grandchildren tiny whors'." Lafferty expresses her discontent with the fact that the word is"'not used to describe males. It's only for little girls in the famiy'." Yet, rather than rejecting the word altogether, she seeks to find a male equivalent:

> I want to come up with a male equivalent for besm-—like a hesom, tha''s what ''m looking for. So for a Scottish male. I''s obviously got to mean somebody with low moral value. Somebody who has strange sexual appetites, a new Scottish word.

Lafferty's search for a male equivalent of besom can be viewed as a type of mock language reform, which shines a light on the significance of gendered language structures.

To return to the postcolonial psychology of the nation, we have two issues that connect to gender. First, the external gaze of the state anf the"'sons of the natio'" disciplines thurbehavior of women. The weight of gendered expectations is expressed by many of the female comedians—Oone example is Jay Lafferty's objection to the unequal codes of morality embedded in Scots language (i.., Besom as a slur used for women and not men). Secondly, the patriarchal notions within nationalism can leave women at the margins.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the intersection between gender and national identity in Scotland through an analysis of stand-up comedy at the Edinburgh Fringe 2017. Stand-up comedy is a particularly interesting forum for identity construction since it is an unmediated and intimate artistic form that relies on seemingly authentic self-presentation. Scottish identity, if seen through stand-up comedy, is much more fluid and complex than mainstream representations would suggest. The ironic use of Tartanry by Scottish comedians helps to challenge the white and heterosexual version of Scottish masculinity. There is evidence of a re-enforcement of traditional masculinity through sexist comedy in some instances, but the comedians also express a sense of inferiority which is indicative of a crisis of masculinity. Such masculine anxieties are said to mirror the

neurosis faced by Scotland in its stateless condition. The younger male comics in this study challenge toxic masculinity, albeit with varying levels of self-reflection. Male comedians also shine a light on the experience of fatherhood, which they argue is under-discussed in Scottish society. For women, national attachment is more complex since the patriarchal vision of nationhood botesidealizes and represses women. Scottish female comedians criticallseanalyze, and in some cases outright reject, the gendered labels and expectations they face. The conclusions from this study could be expanded through further research into the audience reception of Scottish comedy, which would provide deeper insights into how audience members interpret the comedy performances. Another interesting avenue for research would be the analysis of comedy outside of the Fringe in order to understand how comedians adapt their performance to different types of audiences.

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Zsuzsanna Balázs

Acting and Activism:
The Gender-bending Roles of Florence Farr and Eleonora Duse in Modern European Plays

This paper addresses the relationship between acting and activism in the theatrical roles of two highly influential New Women: Florence Farr and Eleonora Duse. I contend that their progressive ideas about gender and sexuality considerably shaped the scripts of modernist playwrights, such as W. B. Yeats, G. B. Shaw, Federico García Lorca, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Luigi Pirandello, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My aim here is to shift the focus from male playwrights to the women who shaped their scripts and production histories, but who have thus far been largely ignored and treated merely as passive muse figures in scholarship.[1]

Within Italian studies, Lucia Re's research underscores the social and political importance of New Women in the theatre. Re observes that the end of the nineteenth century brought a radical change in European theatre whereby the "actress" became much more important than the "actor." and it was the great actress who could attract the masses to the theatre (Re, 2002, p.115). Re connects this phenomenon to the women's emancipation movement in other parts of Europe:

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1 - When I quote from Italian-language secondary sources, I use my own translations, unless otherwise stated.

> The years of the triumph of these so-called "prime donne" are the same years when in France, Italy and England the suffragist movement and organised feminism were born, and their role in society and in the relationship between the sexes was debated in literature as well.[2] (p.115)

Re discerns that New Women played a seminal role in the fights for women's emancipation, as through their stage roles, they embodied the potential of women to be independent, and suggested that women could have multiple roles besides and beyond the domestic sphere (p.116). This also implies that working with these women—who were the only women referred to as geniuses at the time—was a very important political and social statement in an age that only accepted male geniuses. New Women actors could influence masses of people and, thanks to their almost sacred position, could portray sexually ambiguous, transgressive, and anti-authoritarian characters without being censored. However, this does not mean that they did not cause any outrage in their predominantly bourgeois theatre audiences. They were also referred to as phallic women and often compared to Oscar Wilde, which made them even more disturbing for normative society:

> The phallic woman, armed and cruel (or disguised) is in a certain sense *not* a woman; yet it is not possible to say for sure, if not with a paradox worthy of Wilde, that she is therefore a man. Rather, she exhibits a sexual ambiguity, a "dangerous" oscillation which Wilde could identify with.[3] (Re, 2002, p.129)

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2 - "Gli anni del trionfo delle cosiddette prime donne sono gli stessi anni in cui in Francia, in Italia e in Inghilterra nascono il suffragismo e il femminismo organizzato, e anche nella letteratura si dibattono accesamente il ruolo della donna nella società e il rapporto tra i sessi."

3 - "La donna fallica, armata e crudele (o travestita) *non* è in un certo senso una donna; né si può dire certo, se non con un paradosso degno di Wilde, che perciò essa sia un uom essa esibisce piuttosto un'ambiguità sessuale, un'oscillazione 'pericolosa' in cui Wilde non poteva non riconoscersi."

Eleonora Duse was one of these phallic women. She was also one of the five most influential queer women whose social and theatrical activity contributed to creating significant queer subcultures in early twentieth-century Italy (Cenni, 2011; 2007). The other four women were Sibilla Aleramo,[4] the playwright Lina/Cordula Poletti,[5] and Irma and Emma Gramatica who played the most dissident, queer women in Gabriele D'Annunzio's plays and staged the first travesti adaptation of Irish playwright J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1919 and 1924 (see Bibbò, 2018).

Duse's immense influence on artists, acting, and the women of her time still tends to be underestimated. As part of the BBC podcast series *Great Lives*, Fiona Shaw and Matthew Parris discuss Duse's idiosyncratic acting style. As Shaw notes, Duse had built into her greatness her own disappearance: she refused to wear make-up and wore simple, ordinary clothes at a time when theatre was all about spectacle. She was a creator of silence on the stage, and her stage presence accentuated the power of the inarticulate. She fully identified with the characters she played, and the effect was so powerful that people used to faint during her performances (Shaw, 2022). She was only four when she featured in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1862), and fourteen when she played Juliet in Verona. She formed her own company in 1886, and was the first to perform Henrik Ibsen's plays in Italy—*A Doll's House* in 1891 followed by *Hedda Gabler* in 1898. Strikingly, she often "searched out failed plays to make triumphs of them through her inventiveness" (Da Gama, 2015), such as Alexandre Dumas' *The Princess of Bagdad* which she turned into a success.

Italian playwright Gabriele D'Annunzio's decision to write for the stage was also informed by his collaboration with Duse from the 1890s, when he wrote his first plays, namely *The Dead City* (1896), *Francesca da Rimini* (1901), and *The Daughter of Iorio* (1903), which were all performed in the 1920s as well in front of predominantly fascist audiences. Lucia Re was the first scholar to

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4 - Aleramo wrote the first feminist novel *A Woman* (*Una donna*), and the first sort of coming-out novel *The Passage* (*Il passaggio*) in Italian literature.

5 - Poletti was openly lesbian, and she was also the first cross-dressing woman of Italian theatre.

highlight that Duse was not merely a passive inspirational muse figure for D'Annunzio, but an active force and equal partner in his work (2002, p.118). Re explains that Duse's gestures raised D'Annunzio's interest in a new type of tragedy which was classical in a Greek way but also modern in terms of psychology and politics (p.119). Duse thus made the appearance of the playwright D'Annunzio possible. Despite D'Annunzio's established image as a masculine womanizer, many people at the time saw him as a man of "androgynous softness" ("Eleonora Duse," 2020). More strikingly, his role models and complex, dissident protagonists were all women too, mostly Sarah Bernhardt, the Gramatica sisters, and the lesbian dancer Ida Rubinstein, as well as Duse.

Duse was also a prominent feminist voice in early twentieth-century Italy. She felt an immense sympathy for the hurts and stories of the characters she embodied onstage, seeing them as theatrical representations of historically marginalized subjectivities. In the aforementioned BBC podcast, Fiona Shaw (2022) cites Duse's 1884 letter to Francesco D'Arcais in which she explains her relationship with acting and the female characters she played:

> Acting. That very word. If it were only acting! I feel that I've never known and I will never know how to act. Those poor women in my place who have so entered my heart and my head, that while I do my utmost to make them understood to those who listen to me, almost as if I wanted to comfort them, it is them who have solely wound up comforting me. How and why and when this tender and affectionate interchange, inexplicable and undeniable, started happening between these women and me, would be too long and also too difficult to explain exactly. I don't care if they lied, betrayed, sinned, or if they were born perverse, provided I feel that they have wept, suffered for lying, betraying or for loving. I stand on their side with them and for them, and I dig and scavenge, not because I crave suffering but because feminine compassion is greater, more concrete, and sweeter and more complete than the grief that men are used to allowing us.

Besides male authors, Duse also influenced the women intellectuals of her time: Matilde Serao, Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda and the cross-dressing lesbian playwright and critic Cordula/ Lina Poletti, among others. Duse thus became a feminist icon in Italy before World War One mostly due to her roles in Henrik Ibsen's plays as Nora, Hedda, and Ellida, with which she toured Europe at the turn of the century. Her role as a feminist icon was due "to her new, both empathic and critical approach to the predicaments of women and femininity under patriarchy." Re further explains that Duse "highlighted and heightened the capacity of the theatre to represent identity and gender as inherently performative and constructed, thus dismantling the myth of an essential femininity or masculinity, or even of an essential, unified, individual self" (Re, 2015, p.349).

More pressingly, Duse's stage presence was queer: her acting style was a spectacle of strangeness and disruption, and reminded audiences of the neurosis afflicting the modern woman, yet for women in the audience she could also represent the possibility of freedom from patriarchy. Re also observes that Duse raised desire in both men and women:

> The strength and charisma that emanated from her persona, and some of her powerful roles and performances, made her appear subtly virile—at once masculine and feminine. Duse's eroticism on the stage, like her acting in general, was always very subtle, made of small, intimate, and often surprising gestures that "seduced" both men and women. (p.350)

Re has rightly criticized scholarship which insists on looking at Duse within a heterosexual and patriarchal framework, reducing her role in D'Annunzio's life to that of a passive, subordinated muse figure and a mere object of heterosexual desire. Even the BBC podcast with Fiona Shaw (2022) mentions only her relationship with men and how men sexualized her stage presence and commented on her roles, yet there is no mention of her crucial and undeniable relationships with women. Duse was not only a queer icon, she

also had very intense romantic relationships with Cordula Poletti, Isadora Duncan, and Sarah Bernhardt, and Poletti wrote two plays *Arianna* and *Incesto* (*Incest*) for Duse during their relationship.

Bound up with her activism, Duse raised her voice against the patriarchy in Michele De Benedetti's 1913 interview with her entitled "La Duse parla del femminismo" ("Duse Speaks about Feminism"). In this interview, Duse called for a new type of education for all women to help their emancipation (Duse 1913, cited in Mariani, 1987, p.133). She criticized Italian society for seeing women as suitable only for love, motherhood, marriage, housework, and reproduction, while in other areas they were kept in moral, sexual, and intellectual subjection (cited in Mariani, 1987, p.131). She speaks up for women whom society stigmatizes because they do not want to or cannot marry:

> [society] then considers the woman who does not have family as a fallen woman, a woman whom even if due to simple vicissitude of fate, no one wanted. Because men ... cannot admit that a woman can freely and happily live without a man, that she can refuse to choose a husband, and that between the prospect of an unhappy, dubious marriage and that of remaining a "spinster," she has preferred the latter one.[6] (cited in Mariani, 1987, p.132)

Duse contends that women's anger is entirely justified, as "[t]he laws do not make her equal to man"[7] (cited in Mariani, 1987, p.131), even when women exceed men in all fields of life. Duse laments that women are diminished in men's eyes and deemed as

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6 - "e considera poi la donna che non ha famiglia, come una donna *ratée*, una donna che sia anche per semplice vicissitudine di fortuna, *nessuno ha voluto*. Perché gli uomini … non ammettono nemmeno che una donna possa liberamente, serenamente vivere senza l'uomo, che abbia essa rifiutato di prender marito, che fra la prospettiva di un matrimonio infelice e dubbio e quella di rimanere 'zitella' abbia preferito questo secondo stato."

7 - "Le leggi non la fanno eguale all'uomo."

inferior, even when in terms of productivity, energy, intelligence, and will-power they prove to be equal or superior to them (cited in Mariani, 1987, p.131).

Duse thus engaged critically with her time's sexual and gender politics, which were inseparable from her acting. One of her last roles on the stage was that of Ellida in Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*, staged in May 1921, and whose character represented for Duse a woman's needs and desires in a male-centered world (Re, 2015, p.352). As Re explains, after Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922, Duse gave up her hope of renewing Italian theatre. Even though Mussolini and Silvio D'Amico wanted to include her in their project to create a state-supported theatre under Fascism, Duse declined the offer and refused Mussolini's proposal for a pension (pp.352–353). Instead of collaborating with fascists, she went abroad and toured Ibsen's plays in the US with her own theatre company between 1921 and 1924. Duse's roles on the stage were therefore inseparable from her social activism to achieve women's emancipation in Italy and normalize intimacy between women:

> Duse, through her work with the interpretations of women's stories on the stage and through her complex web of—often very intimate—friendships with other, and especially younger women, enabled the emergence and recognition of a female symbolic that contributed to foster a new sense of legitimacy for women's thought, women's writing, women's experiences, women's desires, women's gendered subjectivity. (Re, 2015, p. 353)

The English-born actress Florence Farr played a very similar social and artistic role in Ireland and Britain. Irish theatre scholar Eibhear Walshe has named Roger Casement, Eva Gore-Booth, Kate O'Brien, Michael MacLiammoir, and Hilton Edwards as the five most visible queer public figures in Ireland (2006, p.39), yet I believe Farr should belong to this list too.

Both Duse and Farr became very influential in theatre circles. They were obsessed with Ibsen's female characters, had an androgynous stage presence, and shaped male playwrights' works and ideas about gender and sexuality, embodying sexual liberation and women's emancipation through their acting and activism. As Irish theatre scholar Susan Cannon Harris notes, Farr "was an outspoken feminist, an occult adept, a vocal critic of the institution of marriage, and a woman already identified—at least by Yeats, Todhunter and Shaw—as queer" (2017, pp.18–19). Harris highlights Farr's first performance in Irish playwright John Todhunter's play *A Sicilian Idyll* (1890) in Bedford Park, London, in which Farr appeared as a Hellenistic New Woman and strongly suggested "that Yeats, Todhunter and Shaw fell for Farr partly *because* they identified her as queer. They did not, of course, see her as exclusively lesbian—she had one failed marriage behind her, and for years she was romantically involved with Shaw—but *A Sicilian Idyll* suggests that Farr's bisexuality was, for them, one of her charms" (p.36). In Todhunter's play, Farr played Amaryllis, who is shown "as a man-hating virgin who is grieving the end of a passionate attachment to a younger woman who is just beginning to take an interest in men," and this "is enough to establish her as Sapphic" (p.36).

One year after her role as Amaryllis, Farr portrayed the New Woman Rebecca West in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* (1891), who releases herself from the chains of Victorian Christianity. In 1893, true to her New Woman roles, she began to take matters of directing and producing in her hands (like Duse in Italy). With financial support from Annie Horniman, she enlisted Irish playwrights George Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats, and John Todhunter to write plays for her to direct and produce in London's Avenue Theatre in 1894.

The Avenue Theatre productions, however, caused a significant outrage in London, as the plays portrayed transgressive women who rejected motherhood and heterosexuality. Farr's queer stage presence as Lady Carmen in Todhunter's *A Comedy of Sighs* "provoked first-night audience to mutiny at a time when even the most hidebound London critics were resigning themselves to the New Woman as the new normal" (Harris, 2017, p.45). This fiasco

also changed Shaw's attitude to and admiration for Farr. The failure made Shaw realize that he might lose audiences by collaborating with Farr, which he explained in a letter to Elizabeth Robins: "Oh my Saint Elizabeth, holy and consoling, have you ever seen so horrible a portent on the stage as this transformation of an amiable, clever sort of woman into a nightmare, a Medusa, a cold, loathly, terrifying, grey, callous, sexless devil?" (cited in Harris, 2017, p.45). As Harris discerns, the reason for this unrest was that the plays produced in the Avenue Theatre fused "two fundamental anxieties evoked by the New Woman: the fear that she would reject motherhood, and the fear that she would reject heterosexuality" (2017, p.46).

Despite the failed performances, in 1899 at the inauguration of the Irish Literary Theatre, Yeats deliberately chose Florence Farr to embody the male character Aleel (a bard who is in love with the protagonist Cathleen) in the first production of *The Countess Cathleen*. What is more, *The Countess Cathleen* premiered alongside a highly homoerotic play by Edward Martyn titled *The Heather Field* (1899), which portrayed bonds between men who refuse physical contact with women and desire only each other's company (Balázs, 2020, pp.35–40). According to Katherine Worth (1990), Farr-as-Aleel "cannot but have played down the virility of Aleel, the force of his sexual frustration ... We can understand how the part of Aleel could be played by a woman; how Florence Farr's femininity could be a concealing mask for the more fierce and virile frustration the situation of Aleel seems to require."

Besides Harris and Worth, Cassandra Laity has also acknowledged Farr's role as a feminist icon, stressing the formative impact of New Women and mostly Farr on Yeats's increasingly unorthodox portrayal of women and the shift from chaste maidens to strong heroines in his drama. Yeats lamented the lack of assertive and passionate New Women in Ireland and blamed the Catholic Church's oppression of women for it (Laity, 1985, p.633). Laity recognizes Farr as a New Woman, an Ibsenite, and the model for "the unwomanly woman" (p.620). Like the D'Annunzio-Duse collaboration, the Yeats-Farr cooperation lasted from the end of the 1890s until 1904, had a lifelong influence on the authors' dramatic

imagination, and marked their apprenticeship in drama. As Laity explains, Farr's "boyish beauty, her emancipated view of women and sexuality, and even her strident manner brought into question Yeats's former ideal of beauty, the chaste sensuous maidens of his early poetry, and the romantic code of platonic love that reinforced his Victorian prudery" (p.620). What is more, when Yeats began a new phase of theatrical activity in 1901, some artists devoted to his theories of musical speech and dramatic pose founded a group called Masquers. This group involved feminists such as Farr, Pamela Colman Smith (nicknamed Pixie), Edith Craig (who was also a lesbian), the queer artist Charles Ricketts, Thomas Sturge Moore, and Laurence Binyon (Foster, 2005, p.257).

Farr was also a short-story writer, essayist, playwright, and scholar of occult studies who wrote about alchemy, Kabbalah, and Egyptian magic. Her 1894 novel *The Dancing Faun*, for instance, depicts the theatrical and the spiritual as inseparable, suggesting that "the public and the private are part of a single, trans-temporal, egalitarian system" (Denisoff, 2020). More strikingly, her feminist essay *Modern Woman: Her Intentions* (1910) celebrates free love, encourages women to flirt freely, criticizes marriage, attempts to normalize the idea that a man and a woman can be in each other's company only to exchange ideas, and applauds women who do not wish to become parents.[8] As Farr claims (1910), "[w]e want married women to recognize the various proportions of sexuality in each sex, to make allowance for the passionate, and to admit that we are greatly indebted for our culture to individuals who do not desire to be parents." She explains the origins of women's oppression in society, and outlines the prospect of change which must be initiated by women in order to achieve freedom:

> There is a great difficulty in writing of the women of the first ten years of the twentieth century. This is to be the Woman's Century. In it she is to awake from her long sleep

8 - I have used the online version of this book which does not include page numbers: *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*. Hermetic Academy Library, 1910, https://www.hermetics.net/media-library/mysticism/florence-farr-modern-woman-her-intentions.

and come into her kingdom; but when I look about me I find myself surrounded by the most terribly contradictory facts. We know there is to be a revaluation of all values—we know that old rubbish is to be burnt up, that the social world is to be melted down and remolded "nearer to the heart's desire."

In addition, she demands equal wages and work opportunities for women, including wages for women who raise children. She writes honestly about how she is often criticized because of her profession which is associated with prostitution: "I think I had better own up at once that as an artist I am prejudiced against the exhibition of the necessities of nature." However, she owns her story and refuses to feel ashamed because of societal judgements, as the body and sexuality are a necessity of nature and there is nothing unrespectable or unnatural about it: "The old lies are in our blood—we still believe in Eve and her shame. White men have fought in the past, and it remains for white women to fight now, and at last rid their sex all over the world of the ignominy of this false doctrine."

Moreover, Farr speaks up for prostitutes, and criticizes all those women who uphold the patriarchal system which shames other women. Farr laments that since prostitutes are forced to feel ashamed because of their way of life, they cannot avail of the same sanitation as other women:

> The pitiless contempt of married women for prostitution is bringing a terrible punishment, which is ruining the physique of nearly every civilized race … The contempt that is shown towards prostitutes makes it impossible for them to insist upon proper sanitation in the quarters where they congregate.

Just like Duse, Farr suggests that society should not be surprised that such marginalized outcasts turn their rage against the society that abuses them: "Can we wonder that a woman who

is treated as street walkers are treated should feel this wild anti-social rage against the society that has first made use of her and then treated her as an outcast?"

Recalling once again the BBC podcast with Fiona Shaw and Matthew Parris (2022), we can conclude that New Women like Duse and Farr never really needed to be in the light, but deserve to be so today, and thus we need to "deobliterate" them. To achieve this aim, theatre scholarship should more often shift the attention from male modernist playwrights to those women who shaped the most influential plays of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through their acting and activism.

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**Part 4.
Envisioning: Role and Response
in Contemporary Writing**

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Addressing the Complexity of Unstable Gender Identity as a Dilemmatic Representation in Modern Arabic Literature: Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter* as a Case Study

Introduction

Notably, in light of the highly complicated challenges and debates confronting the modern and contemporary Arab world and its literature, the question of gender and its ambiguous representation in the Arabic novel has become a point of dispute for Arab and Western critics, literary scholars, and even readers. Thus, Arabic literature has been introduced to the Arab world, and particularly Arab readers and thinkers, in this sense as a mirror that reflects societal events and topics, mostly pertaining to politics, religion, and, most importantly, culture and traditions.

Undoubtedly, Arabic literature dating back to the Abbasid period played a significant role in portraying themes related to homoeroticism and sexuality. However, in recent centuries it has shifted its focus to considerably more complex concerns involving the stability of normality, most notably in relation to gender and sexuality issues, which have become essential themes tackled in modern and contemporary Arabic literary texts. Arabic literature, one may argue, has become an effective tool for revolutionizing

traditional assumptions about normative gender identities and sexuality. However, despite the recent increase in the number of literary works dealing with similar topics, modern literary depictions of non-normativity have been far less common and often problematic, in contrast to pre-modern Arab culture's liberal, permissive attitude that acknowledged the fluidity of desire and sanctioned its artistic celebration in literature (Alkabani, 2019, p.353). Furthermore, Arab readers today appear to be aware of the way Arabic novels reveal certain complex corners of the Arab world by announcing daring and courageous depictions that challenge the conservatism that surrounds Arab societies and cultures. In this regard, gender and sexuality appear to play a complex role in both modern and contemporary Arabic novelistic genres. However, as Fedwa Malti-Douglas highlights in "Dangerous Crossings: Gender and Criticism in Arabic Literary Studies," dealing with gender issues in Arabic literature might be a troublesome task. In this concern, she states that "when I cross Arabic literature with gender criticism, trouble emerges" (1994, p.224). Of course, in the Arab world, broaching a sensitive subject through literature has long been considered forbidden and taboo, especially when it comes to voicing this challenge without regard for the ramifications on society and societal expectations, norms, and politics in relation to taboo subject matter. The issue of breaking the silence surrounding taboo subjects such as sexuality, gender, politics, and religion has become quite popular, and Arabic literature and its contemporary canons have successfully overcome the danger of profiting from the way certain Arabic literary texts and writers have revolutionized the Arabic novelistic genre in relation to the taboo. Significantly, in defying taboos, Hoda Barakat established herself as one of the most popular female writers in the Arab world and beyond who have clearly tried to challenge their conservative heteropatriarchal societies through their daring texts.

Therefore, the disruption of gender and sexual identities in specific Arabic texts has given rise to a new genre of queer texts in Arabic literature. The emergence of this genre has frequently drawn the attention of literary critics, scholars, and readers to question non-normative identities and how they are portrayed in Arabic

literary texts, which could be classified as revolutionary in terms of broaching what is considered to be taboo. This concern, it could be argued, has captivated the attention of Arab writers, who have sought to shed light on what has long been considered a contentious subject in Arab societies and cultures, particularly in the Middle East. One can take into consideration the role of Arab writers and novelists, particularly modern and contemporary figures in the Arab literary world, in challenging gender and sexuality in their literary works. Notably, this issue has prompted Arab critics to consider how gender and sexuality are being disrupted in ways that go beyond the heteronormative view of these extremely sensitive topics.

In this context, this research paper examines the ambiguous and perplexing image of gender and how it is depicted in Arabic literature, revealing taboos surrounding gender identity and its eventual annihilation as a result of Lebanon's Civil War tragedy. As such, Butler's Gender Performativity theory is utilized to ascertain and explore Khalil's fluid[1] gender identity and their non-normative sexual urges, which may serve as a pivotal method throughout the novel's fragments to highlight their changeable gender and sexual identity. In this light, this study seeks to contribute to the disciplines of Arabic literature and gender studies by presenting a Butlerian analysis of Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter* "as a novel that highlights the ambiguous nature of masculinity and questions gender boundaries, as well as paradigms of femininity and masculinity, in a war situation" (Aghacy, 1998, p.186) in the context of gender as performative and how it has been interpreted and analyzed.

One could argue that gender and its role in the disruption of Khalil's identity is a central theme in Barakat's novel, making it one of the most complicated texts in modern Arabic literary narratives. In this regard, one could shed light on how the category of gender is understood in comparison to sex, because—as it is widely stressed

1 - A fluid person, also known as a gender-fluid person, is one whose gender identity (the gender with which they most identify) is not fixed. It can change over time or from one day to the next. Fluid is a type of gender identity or expression, not a sexual orientation.

in the field of gender studies, particularly by post-structuralist and gender theorists—gender and sex are not terms intended to be used interchangeably. So how about the cultures of the Arab world? Can we assume that the complexity of gender transcends the way it has been understood? Essentially, modern Arabic literature seeks to portray the queer subject as someone who appears to violate the laws of normality in the Arab world's heteropatriarchal matrix in terms of gender identity and sexual tendencies. In this way, *The Stone of Laughter*, which could be considered a reflection on non-normative gender identity and sexuality, may be viewed as a vital, challenging novel that speaks to a silent corner in terms of the complexities of the themes it raises for the Arab reader and Arab societies in a broad sense.

This paper will look at the protagonist's fluid gender identity, which appears to be at odds with the heteronormative social system in Lebanese patriarchal society. So the paper poses three main questions that will be addressed through the analysis and implementation of gender performativity theory. First, to what extent can *The Stone of Laughter* be read through the lens of Judith Butler's gender performativity? Second, how is gender performativity portrayed in *The Stone of Laughter*? And why is it viewed as dilemmatic in the Arabic novel? Third, Judith Butler contends that gender is fluid and cannot be stable; how then can we interpret Khalil's gender identity as fluid? Hence, the paper will first look at Hoda Barakat's background as a well-known novelist in the Arab world, particularly the Middle East. Second, the paper will shed light on the notion of gender. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity will be tackled in the context of the study as well.

Ultimately, this paper is primarily an attempt to raise awareness about gender identity and its problematic position in the Arabic novel. It aims to bring taboo subject matter to light, particularly in the way it presents a non-conforming gender identity within a heterosexual matrix. That being said, Arabic literature serves as a vehicle for gender mainstreaming because it is so replete with gender issues (Musgamy, Rusydi, and Kurniati, 2020, p.245).

Background of the Author

Coming from a Christian background, Hoda Barakat is a Lebanese novelist who was born in the capital city Beirut in 1952. Barakat is a prolific writer who has written seven novels, two plays, a collection of short stories, and a memoir, and has contributed to French-language works. Her writings, particularly novels, have been translated into other languages. In 2002 she was named a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and in 2008, she received a *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite National. The Stone of Laughter* (1990), *Disciples of Passion* (1993), *The Tiller of Waters* (2000) which won the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature that year, and *My Master and My Lover* (2004) are among her well-known works both in the Arab and Western worlds. In 2013 her fifth novel, *The Kingdom of This Earth* (2012), made the International Prize for Arabic Fiction longlist. Barakat was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize in 2015. Her most recent novel, *Voices of the Lost* (2020), was the winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. As a fluent French speaker, Hoda Barakat graduated from the Lebanese University with a degree in French. Years later, she moved to Paris in 1975 to pursue a PhD. Since 1989 Barakat had been a permanent resident in Paris, where she decided to stay for the rest of her life. She is currently working as a journalist and novelist there. Essentially, Hoda Barakat, through her writings, has left a vivid trace of complexity and intricacy in modern Arabic literature, both in the Arab world and the West. As an intellectual who attempts to push the Arab reader to understand and question Arab societies beyond the veil of civil wars and the cruelty left behind, Hoda Barakat has sought to look at the other side of Arab societies in the context of the Lebanese Civil War, which clearly had an enormous impact on Lebanese society in both the public and private spheres.

Her debut novel *The Stone of Laughter*, despite being it depicted as bold and radical, won the prestigious *Al-Naqid* Award in 1990 when it was first published in Lebanon. Barakat, unlike other Lebanese women writers, aims to cast light on issues in her society other than those related to feminism and women's societal issues.

She succinctly asserts in an interview originally published in Arabic in *Mawaqif* magazine: "because I am an Arab woman and writer, I believe I should apologize, for despite the urgency of the problem, it is not among the concerns of my writings and has absolutely no priority or precedence when it comes to my basic obsessions or to the profound questions that I raise" (Aghacy, 1998, p.185). In this regard, Barakat sought not to immerse her writings on women and their status in Arab societies, particularly in her mother country. However, as a well-known Arab author, she covers what may be considered a delicate and complicated matter in Arab societies and culture. In this light, Barakat has intentionally utilized her works, particularly *The Stone of Laughter*, to address issues of masculine identity, gender identity, and non-normative sexuality, serving as a model of daring and velour in terms of the subjects addressed. Scholar Samira Aghacy in her article "Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter*: Androgyny or Polarization?" asserts that:

> Unlike many of these writers, who prefer to concentrate on the particular problems of women, Barakat's fiction focuses on male characters whose sense of male identity is threatened. These are men who naturally uphold the values of the patriarchal society, but whose sense of masculine identity is shaken in a civil war atmosphere, the general confusion and violence that prevails, and the sudden changes that occur at all levels. (1998, p.185)

Noteworthy, Barakat's literary texts, which are classified as well-known works of modern and contemporary Arabic literature, have a significant influence on the development of the Arabic novel and its concerns. Hoda Barakat appears to be among the courageous Arab writers who attempt to reflect on the Arab world's gender and identity crises, particularly in the context of the Lebanese Civil War. In this regard, one can assert that Hoda Barakat's treatment of gender in most of her works, notably *The Stone of Laughter*, encourages Arab and Western readers, critics, and scholars to rethink gender in ways consistent with Butler's critical perspective. Undoubtedly,

Barakat has left, through her writings, a vivid trace of complexity and intricacy in modern Arabic literature.

Theoretical Framework:
Critical Concepts in Light of Gender Complexity

Gender

Notably, in gender studies, "doing gender" refers to the idea that gender, rather than being an innate quality of individuals, is a psychologically ingrained social construct that manifests itself actively in everyday human interaction. In this regard, when discussing gender and its presumption in broad terms, whether politically, socially, culturally, or historically, it may seem necessary to emphasize how it is now viewed as a critical contemporary issue due to its inherent complexity, whether within the traditional heteronormativity circle or beyond it, as a threat to the natural order of norms. In essence, when we consider gender as a social construct, as Judith Butler asserts in their 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," and later in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), we frequently associate and link it to society and the institutional rules that define it as a rigid and stable category. Without a doubt, the normative assumption about gender is founded on an essentialist perspective. Butler, on the other hand, as a social constructionist and feminist scholar opposes the essentialist view of gender and the way it has historically been viewed as a natural phenomenon or a fact about the individuals. Therefore, Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that debates over the meaning and comprehension of gender can result in feelings of distress and trouble.

Furthermore, in their efforts to radicalize the essentialist definitions of gender, sex, and sexuality, they recognize that issues of gender and gender identity, in particular, are unavoidable, particularly for people who identify as non-normative or queer in

terms of their gender and sexual identities. As a result, they have seen others, including themselves, face consequences for deviating from and experimenting within established normative frameworks. It is worth noting that problematizing gender outside of the heteronormative matrix allowed for more complex interpretations of the subject, as these types of discussions may appear as a challenge to destabilize the heterosexual paradigm's normative construction of gender. In this regard, based on Butler's assumptions about the notion of gender, or the category of gender, as Joan W. Scott named it in her essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," gender is not something we inherit; rather, it is something we make by our actions and daily behaviors. In essence, what we do is more significant than who we are in terms of the gender we perform on a daily basis based on our acts and behaviors. Thus, according to Butler, we presume that if we do not perform a gender, we do not have one. In this regard, the intricacy of gender lies in this distinction between the doing of gender and the identity of gender in and of itself.

It is noteworthy that one can think of gender as an improvised performance. It is worth noting, however, that those performances that become ritualized over time construct the gender we perform on a daily basis without any prior considerations. Without a doubt, Butler's *Gender Trouble* emphasizes the idea that unconscious acts contribute significantly to gender determination. They declare in this regard:

> Because there is neither an "essence" that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. (1990, p.178)

All in all, gender, in accordance with Butler's constructionist assumption, relies on the subject's acts to be defined. Thus, gender is not an innate characteristic, nor is it manifested in the form of the essence; it is only through action, or repeatedly doing things,

that one may properly establish their gender. Butler reiterates their ideas, claiming that "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (1990, p.179). Ultimately, as Butler highlights, gender can be viewed as a complicated system whose totality is always in flux, and never fully realized at any given time (1990, p.22).

Gender Performativity

Gender performativity theory is one of the most innovative theories that Butler has addressed, first in their 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," and later in depth in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Essentially, it is well-known that performativity theory's primary objective is to shed light on the performative rather than performance nature of gender. Butler clarifies what they mean when they refer to gender as performative. They argue that "gender reality is performative which means quite simply that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (1988, p.528). Without a doubt, according to Butler, when we say gender is performed, we mean something quite different from gender performativity in the sense that "for something to be performative means that it produces a series of effects" (Butler, 2011).

In essence, the performative issue Butler raises is readily recognizable from the performance. Performative is not a choice to be made, whether intentionally or unintentionally; rather, it is a constant action (Sadjadi and Hojabri, 2019, p.11). In this regard, gender performativity is primarily concerned with gender as a social construct that is constructed through an individual's daily performances and acts (Rehman and Polymenopoulou, 2013).

About the Novel

The Stone of Laughter (*Hajar al-Dahik*) is widely regarded as one of the most difficult works of Arabic literature written in the twentieth century. As previously stated, the novel was Barakat's first literary work. Sophie Bennett translated the novel from Arabic to English in 1995, and it was republished in 2006 with an introduction by Fadia Faqir. Arab readers frequently regard it as a novel about the Lebanese Civil War as seen through the eyes of Khalil. One could argue that Khalil, the novel's protagonist, serves as a vehicle for depicting the ambiguity of gender identity in the Arab world, particularly in light of the war and political turmoil surrounding Lebanon at the time. As a result, the text contains numerous inconsistencies, most notably regarding Khalil's gender and sexual identity, which appear perplexing and fluid throughout the narrative. Scholar Samira Aghacy introduces the novel in her article "Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter*: Androgyny or Polarization?" by stating that "the narrative is rendered through the consciousness of Khalil, a young graduate of the Lebanese University whose effeminate tendencies become more pronounced in an overwhelming war situation where violence dominates the scene" (1998, p.187). As an engrossing novel depicting the contradictory history of a city on fire through the life and dilemmas of a man with a highly ambiguous, non-normative identity, the novel, it is argued, is audacious, bold, and quite radical in its treatment of sensitive and taboo subjects. Furthermore, the novel is brimming with dark humor and cynical observations about Lebanon's 1975 Civil War. Interestingly, when it was first published in Arabic, it was hailed by Arab literary critics throughout the Arab world as the best novel set against the backdrop of the Lebanese Civil War. Others, on the other hand, saw it as a revolutionary literary text that paved the way for modern Arabic novels to defy gender and sexual identity taboos. Thus, one can assert that *The Stone of Laughter* is "the first Arabic novel with a queer, androgynous protagonist, Khalil" (Alkabani, 2019, p.353).

Khalil[2]

Despite the novel's predominant theme of war, *The Stone of Laughter* is centered around Khalil, who Barakat describes as "sexually deviant" in a 1994 interview published in the *Al-Safir* newspaper in Lebanon (Aghacy, 1998, p.188). Surprisingly, the narrator, whose gender identity is not disclosed until the novel's final two pages, is bewildered about Khalil's own identity, which she describes as a woman, physically and emotionally.

In this regard, the reader can see Khalil's perpetual confusion about their own gender identity throughout the novel. They believe they are not a man and do not fit into patriarchal society's manhood and masculinity categories. Khalil's actions, performances, way of thinking, and physical appearance all point to them being a gentle sensitive woman who enjoys cleaning, cooking, knitting, and listening to the radio, through which they can share their womanly thoughts with other women. In this regard, Feras Alkabani in his article "Desire under Conflict: The Potential for Queer in Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter*," asserts that:

> Unlike other young men, Khalil prefers to stay in his room, which is kept immaculately clean and tidy in contrast to the chaos of the outside world of the raging War. He is effeminate, with delicate limbs, and does not fit in with the macho male culture of the War. He keeps away from militias and secretly falls in love with a couple of young

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2 - In addition to Alkabani, other literary scholars and researchers claim that Khalil is a man who does not conform to the masculine environment he was born in. However, in this concern, it should be kept in mind that Khalil's gender identity is quite ambiguous and could not be identified throughout the novel. In this sense, we refer to Khalil as them/ they. The reader may be perplexed as to how to refer to Khalil, as they often perform female gender identity, particularly in their private sphere in their room. Khalil, however, is still referred to as a "he" in their society and the public sphere. I am assuming Khalil is non-binary, and I use the pronouns they/them to emphasize the ambiguity of their gender identity.

men: his friend, Naji, who lives in the elegant apartment upstairs with his mother Mme Isabelle, and, later, his cousin Youssef. (2019, p.355)

Therefore, Khalil is constantly attempting to make sense of their situation through the lens of heteronormative male-female gender roles throughout the novel. They read heterosexual love poetry and make an attempt to envision themselves and the man they love (in this case, Naji) in the scenes depicted in the poem. Given that Naji can only play the role of the man in the scene (Naji's masculinity is initially what attracts Khalil's attention as a woman who falls in love with her male hero), Khalil's only alternative choice is to imagine themself as the woman and divorcee who is constantly waiting for her husband to come and knock on her door. Thus, Khalil's life is almost entirely modelled after what they observe their mother doing with hers—obsessively cleaning the house, shopping for groceries, cooking, sewing, knitting, and constantly thinking about male lovers. As depicted in the novel, Barakat attempts to convey to the reader how Khalil's mother regards them as one of her daughters. In other words, Khalil's mother considers them to be female:

> If I was your only son, I mean, if I didn't have any sisters, would you agree to send me with the soldiers to die defending my country? Khalil asked his mother one day. Against who, his mother said, as she tipped the water from the sink onto the dusty courtyard in front of the house, against the enemy who wants to take away our independence, answered Khalil, whoever that enemy may be, No...she said, laughing, as she put the shining plates in a row on the big stone out in the sun...I would tie you by the leg to the iron bedstead. But then the enemy would raze our walls and burn our temples and libraries and parade our corpses and they'd kill me in any case. No, said his mother, they'd kill the men and I'd say to their leader that you were one of my daughters and when he saw you, he'd believe me and go away. (2006, p.110)

The Representation of Khalil's Ambiguous Gender Identity: Between Physical Appearance and Feminine Performances

Gender, as previously stated, is something we create through our actions rather than something we are born with. Because what we do is more important than what we have, we do not have a gender if we do not do or perform one. Actions, according to Butler, play a significant role in determining one's gender. In this regard, our goal is to examine Khalil's gender identity through their daily performances and acts, which determine their fluid gender rather than the gender assigned to them at birth.

Therefore, Hoda Barakat attempts to reflect the dilemma of gender identity by depicting gender as an act of performance rather than a natural phenomenon that individuals are born with. In this regard, Barakat focuses the entire novel on her main character, Khalil, whose physical appearance is similar to that of a female/woman. In the first page of the novel, Barakat starts directly by depicting Khalil's legs. She writes: "Khalil's legs were not long enough" (2006, p.3). This first line draws the reader's attention to Khalil's physical appearance, prompting them to wonder why Barakat begins the novel in this manner and why such a depiction is used in the first place. Readers will notice that Barakat repeatedly describes Khalil's physical appearance as they go through the book:

> Khalil has wide eyes, lost somewhere between gold and green, which make one fancy, for example, that he is a little taller than he actually is. The way he moves his body, always cutting short a movement before it comes to an end...the deliberate way he moves his body, perhaps because of his intense shyness, gives his face something of a maturity it does not naturally possess... when one looks at his narrow shoulders, no wider than the little pillow where he lays his head, one is led to question the wisdom of Mother Nature when, sometimes, she stops a stage and fails to send on hidden desires to their appointed ends. (2006, p.11)

As a result, such a portrayal demonstrates that Khalil may be perceived as a woman, or rather as androgynous. One could argue that this point calls into question Khalil's gender identity in this regard. In so doing, the representation of gender, as well as the manifestation of gender construction and performativity in Khalil's character, may become quite clear through Khalil's daily performances in their private space: their tidy room. In addition to this feminine description of Khalil's physical appearance and body, it is worth noting that the narrator, whose gender identity is revealed at the end of the novel as a woman, acknowledges that Khalil is feminine, stating that "Khalil…remained alone in his narrow passing place, in a stagnant, feminine state of submission to a purely vegetable life" (2006, p.12).

Essentially, it is worth noting that Khalil is portrayed as a non-normative subject, implying that their sexual preferences do not fit into the heterosexuality mold of their society. However, Khalil's gender performances as a regular woman, housewife, mother, and most of the time as a divorcee who appears quite sensitive, soft, and calm throughout the novel perplexes the reader in the sense that their sexual inclinations as a homosexual and their ambiguous gender identity raises the question of who Khalil is and how they can be identified. Undoubtedly, the reader might draw attention to the fact that Hoda Barakat allows her character to act and behave like a woman by depicting their daily life, cooking, cleaning, ironing clothes, and waiting patiently for male lovers to knock on the door of their room.

Notably, Khalil's behavior as well as performances may appear strange or out of the ordinary, as they do not fit into the stereotypes of Arab masculinity. Khalil despises war, bombs, and bloodshed. Instead, they prefer to pay close attention to the cleanliness and organization of their room, just as women do:

> Whenever a battle draws to an end, Khalil feels the need for order and cleanliness and the feeling grows, spreads until it becomes almost an obsession. After every battle, his room is clean and fresh again like new…The line of the striped blanket on the bed is exactly parallel to the ground.

> On the table with the gas lamp is a newspaper, still folded, and the whiteness of its pages, like the gleam of the dishes and little cups on the clean polish edges hidden away in the corner, suggest a woman, a housewife—or a snow-white maid—has lived for some time, quietly, in this little house. (2006, pp.9–10)

In Arab societies and cultures, women are unquestionably assigned to maintain the tidiness and cleanliness of their properties and houses. Taking on that role is seen as their salvation, allowing them to happily meet the needs of their families. Similarly, Khalil finds their own comfort by adopting the role of a woman. Here, it is obvious that cleaning, knitting, and cooking are all seen to be womanly in the sense that if someone keeps acting like that, they could easily be identified as a woman. Unconsciously, Khalil is taking this role; they keep performing these acts on a daily basis, and this is the best example of what Butler means by the performativity of gender. This point is made clear in the novel where the narrator comments, "it occurred to him to make a cup of tea but he preferred to make the room tidy, taking pleasure in its matchless order a little longer…whenever he cast an eye over the shining room, he felt happy and satisfied, even exhilarated" (2006, p.10). In light of Khalil's feminine performances, Butler's interpretation of gender performativity is the best example of demonstrating that gender is defined by what someone does rather than who they are:

> Khalil began to roll out the rounds of dough…he lit the gas oven and turned over the little aluminum tray he kept specifically for bread since loaves had begun to get scarce in the shops and the line of people waiting in front of the bakeries had begun to get longer…he cooked two loaves then covered the remaining balls of dough with a damp cloth…the smell of fresh bread filled his room. He chopped a small onion and put it in the frying pan with a little oil… he fetched two eggs from the fridge and began looking in his bag for a ripe, red tomato. He turned down the flame

after he had stirred the onion, then began emptying out the contents of his bag and washing the vegetables in the plastic bowl and poured the water into the bucket by the lavatory for the next time he used it. (Barakat, 2006, p.34)

Finally, by the end of the novel, Khalil has adopted a new gender identity that appears to be quite different from the feminine side they maintained throughout the novel. Khalil decides to play the gender that was assigned to them at birth. In this regard, Khalil develops into a man involved in political matters. Even with regard to their sexual desires, they attempt to engage in a heterosexual relationship in order to demonstrate that they belong to the masculinity expected of them by their patriarchal society. One could argue that people's most intimate acts are constantly scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies, as demonstrated in Khalil in the novel's conclusion when they seek to reclaim their assigned gender as male and masculine. This point is clearly shown in the novel when the narrator reveals her gender as well as Khalil's new gender and physical appearance:

> I went up to the rear window...Khalil had a mustache and a pair of sunglasses. Where are you going, I asked, and he did not hear me. It's me, I told him, and he did not turn around. The car moved off and, from the back window, Khalil seemed broad shouldered in his brown leather jacket...
>
> You've changed so much since I described you in the first pages.
>
> Khalil is gone, he has become a man who laughs. And I remain a woman who writes.Khalil: my darling hero.
>
> my darling hero... (2006, p.209)

As a result of this depiction, we can see that Khalil's gender is fluid, which corresponds to Butler's statement that "gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from

which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (1990, p.179).

Conclusion

To summarize, *The Stone of Laughter* is a vivid example that demonstrates and portrays the complexities of gender identity and its fluidity, particularly in the context of Arabic literature, culture, and society. Khalil's daily performances clearly demonstrate Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which constructs the gender they are and the gender they feel in themselves and from the inside, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. Having said that, Hoda Barakat is one of the most courageous Arab writers seeking to challenge their patriarchal societies through challenging and daring literary writings. Without a doubt, the Arabic novel has earned a prominent place among local and international literary scholars, critics, and readers who recognize its important role in challenging norms and exposing taboos.

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Elizana Coltman

Baba Yaga: Wise (Wo)Man, Baby Eater

Baba Yaga is one of the most used and recognizable stock characters or archetypes[1] within Slavic folklore. This is in spite of Baba Yaga's dichotomous role; s/he acts as a chimera within the tradition, at once being the wise wo/man guarding the water of life and the cannibalistic witch with a skeleton gate and monstrous signifiers. Johns states in *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale*: "Most folktale characters in European traditions (with a consistent name and set of typical characteristics) behave in predictably unambiguous ways in relation to the hero or heroine: They either help or hinder" (2010, p.3). It is a very unique position, then, that Baba Yaga both helps and hinders, queering the largest binary within folklore: good and evil. While these binaries are often rigid within folklore, Baba Yaga's flagrant disregard for them epitomizes her/his position as queer of the normative. S/he[2] also queers the norms of society, most notably through a disregard for and queering of the gender binary enforced within Western society. This paper considers two readings of Baba Yaga's gender – as the queered feminine and both/neither within the binary – and the ramifications of such representation within homophobic societies, as well as a brief discussion of this within heteronormative ones.

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1 - Baba Yaga exists both as an individual and as a collective, or archetype, wherein either the character is "Baba Yaga" or "a Baba Yaga" or the "Baba Yaga sisters." Depending on the tale, the phrasing might change but all are "Baba Yaga."

2 - As Baba Yaga queers gender in multiple ways, this paper will be utilizing combined pronouns to refer to her/him, with the feminine pronoun at the forefront.

To do so, this paper will first consider the ways in which the etymology and origins of Baba Yaga support these readings, analyzing the liminality of her/his character historically. This includes a discussion of Baba Yaga's position within folklore utilizing Propp's tale roles, which grant her/him unique power to queer these binaries of folklore, succeeding in queering other binaries and having the power and position to do so through the role of tester. In this analysis, the paper will utilize literary analysis of three tales taken from *Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales*[3] that feature Baba Yaga heavily. In the first, "The Stepdaughter and the Stepmother's Daughter" ("The Stepdaughter"), Baba Yaga is both helpful and hindering; in the second, "Finist the Bright Falcon II" ("Finist"), Baba Yaga is only helpful; finally, in the third, "Ivanushka," Baba Yaga is solely hindering. The final aspect of this paper considers the ways in which Baba Yaga's existence as this queer character within the folklore of homophobic societies is enabled by the concept of "monstrous queer." I argue that the "monstrous queer" narrative, combined with Baba Yaga's liminal existence, allows for both positive and negative representation of queerness, which is unique within societies that deny the positive aspects of queer existence.

What is the Monstrous Queer?

Before analyzing Baba Yaga, it is important to outline the ways in which "queer" and "monstrous queer" are going to be utilized. The monstrous queer is a well understood concept within literature, doubly linked. Monstrosity is intrinsically connected to queerness,

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3 - While folktales can be altered to suit changes in morals and the same folktales can be told with vastly different meanings, keeping to one book and these three tales does not hinder the analysis of Baba Yaga as the secondary sources used have a wider range of texts to explore these shifts within the cannon. Further, there is no space lost by expanding outside of this source, while being able to track her ambiguousness within a single version of the canon of Slavic Folklore and removing the shifting cultural biases are factors in the analysis.

straying from the normative, and queerness has a negative valuation as monstrous, especially in homophobic societies. To break it down somewhat, "queer" in this context is a political existence outside of the normative structures. This existence must be based upon consent, self-determinacy, and safety in considering the present society, but as Baba Yaga is also monstrous, the safety of others is less of a focus in this argument, though her/his safety is still paramount. Monstrosity is the "embodiment of what (and who) families and society name[s] 'ugly,' 'dangerous,' and 'perverse'" (Harris and Holman Jones, 2016, p.520). To be queer of the normative is often deemed ugly, dangerous, and perverse, and monstrosity needs to be queer of the normative to be labeled as such, hence the link between the two. With Baba Yaga specifically, this essay considers what Harris and Holman Jones discuss in relation to Frankenstein's monster, where "the 'monster' functions as a liminal zone of gender, not merely the disavowed dimensions of manhood, but the unspeakable limits of femininity as well" (Harris and Holman Jones, 2016, p.518). S/he exists both as a monster and a nurturer, embodying most clearly the "unspeakable limits of femininity" while also refusing being purely feminine, acting within the liminal zone of both/neither as well. Understanding this application of the monstrous queer, a final note on the tales utilized will be made before continuing.

The Tales

In "The Stepdaughter," the main character is poorly treated by her stepmother routinely, and she sends her to the river to wash a thread, stating, "If you let the threads sink to the bottom, then don't bother coming home!" (Forrester, 2013, p.132). The main character ends up losing the thread in the water and goes into the forest, stumbling upon Baba Yaga's hut. After stating the incantation to enter—"Little house, little house! Stand with your back to the woods, your front to me!" (p.132)—she enters the hut and meets Baba Yaga. After Baba Yaga states the common phrase, "Fie, fie, fie! I can smell a Russian soul. What are you up to, girl, doing a deed or fleeing a deed?"

she explains what happened and Baba Yaga makes her complete three tasks: heat her/his bathhouse, bring water in a sieve, and wash her/his children and Baba Yaga (p.132). Though each task presents the girl with challenges—she cannot burn the bones that Baba Yaga has for firewood, a sieve is inappropriate for carrying water, and Baba Yaga's children are "worms, frogs, rats, and all sorts of insects"—she is given advice by a sparrow and follows it (Forrester, 2013, p.134). After completing the tasks, she and Baba Yaga have tea and Baba Yaga gives her a trunk full of money from her/his cellar. She returns to her family and her father is overjoyed. The girl's stepmother then sends her daughter to Baba Yaga. This girl swats away the sparrow, and is unable to heat the bathhouse or carry water in a sieve, and when Baba Yaga sends her/his children, she squashes some and the rest return to Baba Yaga to tell her/him what the girl has done. Baba Yaga has tea with her and sends her away with a trunk that, when opened, burns her and her mother to death (p.134).

In "Finist," there is a middle daughter who is in love with Finist the Bright Falcon. He visits her every night and gives her expensive items of clothes, jewelry, and more (Forrester, 2013, p.20). When her eldest and youngest sister discover this, they hide knives in her windowsill so that Finist is cut and decides to leave the middle sister for good (pp.21–22). When it is clear he will not return, the middle daughter chooses to search for him. She goes through three woods, wearing an iron cap, an iron crutch, and an iron loaf each time, and stopping at a Baba Yaga's house after these items wear out. After stating the incantation mentioned above and the Baba Yaga asking her/his phrase, she explains to each Baba Yaga what she is doing and is offered food, a place to sleep, and an object to help her on her way. The first object is a gold mallet and ten diamond nails, the second is a gold saucer with a diamond ball, and the third is Baba Yaga's swift horse that eats hot embers. Each Baba Yaga instructs her not to take anything from Finist's current bride for the items, only request to see Finist (pp.23–24). Finist's bride makes him sleep with a magic pin each time the middle daughter sees him, and she weeps over his sleeping form, attempting to wake him. It is only on the third time that she happens to remove

the magic pin (pp.25–26). After this she explains what happened, and Finist asks the people of rank in his kingdom, "with which life should I spend all my days—with that one, who sold me, or with this one, who bought me?" (p.27). The middle daughter and Finist then marry, while his other bride is hanged and shot (p.27).

The last tale, "Ivanushka," starts with Ivanushka, who goes sailing until his mother calls for him. One day, Baba Yaga called for him, but he would not come to her/him until s/he had a blacksmith forge Baba Yaga a voice like Ivanushka's mother's (Forrester, 2013, p.45). Once Baba Yaga took Ivanushka back to her/his hut, Ivanushka's mother sent her maid to look for Ivanushka and, after refusing to help a girl spin some flax and to help another wind thread, the maid finds Baba Yaga's hut and Ivanushka (p.45). Again, the incantation to enter the house is said and Baba Yaga asks her/his question, then Baba Yaga instructs the maid to search her/his head for gunpowder (p.46). Once Baba Yaga falls asleep, the maid pours pitch into her/his eyes and stuffs them with cotton, then runs off with Ivanushka. However, when she asks for help from the two girls that she earlier refused help to, Baba Yaga's cat wakes her/him, and s/he finds the maid with the help of the girls with the flax and thread. Baba Yaga then cuts the maid into pieces. This also happens with a second maid who is sent for Ivanushka (p.47). The third maid helps the two girls with their chores, receiving a ball of thread for the second girl and a pat of butter to keep the cat quiet when she pours the pitch over Baba Yaga's eyes and stuffs them with cotton. While running from Baba Yaga, the third maid is hidden by the two girls she helped and is able to return Ivanushka to his mother, while Baba Yaga pinches her/his cat to death (p.48).

Etymology and Origins

Before approaching the tales, this essay will consider the foundations of Baba Yaga's character. Baba Yaga is an archeological site, both within the development of the etymology of "Baba" and "Yaga" and the physical space s/he occupies. Baba Yaga strays from

tradition within Slavic folklore, having a name and being a regular part of many folktales. Even the main character is often not granted this luxury, as "in the wondertale, the hero does not normally have a name" (Propp, 1984, p.27). The ability to track the etymology of Baba Yaga's name is therefore both distinctive and insightful. The etymological tracking of "Baba" denotes cultural changes, and those changes are what turn Baba Yaga into the "queered feminine" and "both/neither" within the Western gender binary. "Yaga," alternatively, links her/him to gods and other cultural characters that exist within the space of both/neither gender of the binaries, and has multiple dichotomous possibilities of meaning, highlighting the liminality of Baba Yaga's character. Finally, in discussing the links of her/his character to sites, animals, and objects will highlight this liminality and how Baba Yaga's existence is a monstrous queer one, and how, in spite of this, her/his role within the society s/he exists on the fringes of is highly regarded and important.

Baba, like wondertales themselves, tracks the shift of culture. Wondertales are "derive[d] from ancient religions" then modified by modern religion and culture (Propp, 1984, p.86). Baba's etymology changes in relation to religion and culture, from the "long history of matriarchy and goddess worship" to the "villainy and the demonization of women" (Pilinovsky, 2005, p.49). This tracks from the meaning of Baba as midwife, sorceress, and fortune teller in Old Russian to a negative term for women or effeminate men in modern Russian (Johns, 2010, p.9). Johns states that her/his:

> unique features and behavior are seen as reflections of her origin or of cultural institutions or customs belonging to a distant past; the different aspects of Baba Yaga's image are attributed to different historical periods, reflecting archaic original features and later additions (2010, p.5).

Changes in society changed her/his role, but the base of the "archaic original" remains even through the "later additions," and it is this archaic original that is queered as the culture changes away from that goddess worship toward patriarchal concepts of power.

Baba tracks the cultural changes that shift from the matriarchal origins to a monstrous queer wo/man, especially if that wo/man is older, unmarried, childless, and powerful in her/his own right. Baba Yaga defies the idea that being childless makes her/him "a kind of shameful secret" (Geiger Zeman and Zeman, 2014, p.223), but in doing so s/he must exist as monstrous within the new cultural opinion and queer the position of the feminine within culture.

Unlike "Baba," the etymology of "Yaga" is still hotly debated to this day. Because the etymology is unclear, it has "inspired several different interpretations among linguists" (Johns, 2010, p.10). These interpretations elucidate Baba Yaga's current position within individuals' minds, including the range of her/his character and the possible links to other folklore and mythology. Yaga embodies the dichotomous nature of Baba Yaga's character, with interpretations including yelling, raging, burning fiercely, snake, and torture, as well as doubt, pain, worry, doing something slowly, and mother (Johns, 2010, p.10). All these iterations of meaning, from mother to snake, relate to Baba Yaga in some way or another. On one hand, s/he is tricky, trying to give heroes impossible tasks like carrying water in a sieve (Forrester, 2013, p.134). On the other, s/he cares for the heroes and is often called "granny" (p.23), placing her/him in a nurturing role. These interpretations show Baba Yaga's role as not evil or good but both, which follows the concept of her/his character starting off as a sorceress, matriarch, and wise woman, then turning into a cannibalistic villain, an old woman without children outside of "worms, frogs, rats, and all sorts of insects" (p.134). This liminality extends to Baba Yaga's gender; Yaga embodies both genders in the final etymology where Yaga is "related to Greek Jason, Roman Janus, and the ancient Indian deities Yama and Yami" (Johns, 2010, p.10). From relating to the purely masculine Jason of the Argonauts to the multi-gendered deity Janus and the mortal male and female twins Yama and Yami, s/he refuses to be categorized into the purely "feminine" gender category. While the links to Jason and Yama and Yami are interesting, the link to Janus offers the best representation of this queerness. Janus is the Roman god related to transitional periods and beginnings as well as having two faces: one female or feminine,

the other male or masculine. This idea of Baba Yaga as existing as both/neither is emphasized by the symbolism of her/his mortar and pestle, symbolizing "both a womb and a phallus" (Murphey, 2018, p.211). These dichotomies coexist in a singular character in both ancient Roman religion and Slavic folklore, emphasizing the existence of an individual as both/neither rather than either/or.

Both of these readings, queered feminine and both/neither, are supported by the props and space that Baba Yaga exists within. From the placement of Baba Yaga's hut on the edge of society and the woods to the symbolism and objects within the hut and the links to different aspects of human life, s/he is separated from a society beholden to her/him. As such, s/he becomes "inscrutable and so powerful that she does not owe allegiance to the Devil or God or even to her storytellers" (Zipes, 2013, p.viii). This power and ability to be inscrutable are in part because of Baba Yaga's location within these folktales and in relation to aspects of human life. This includes occupying the domain of the Leshii or forest god/spirit. This occupation is not total, however, as Baba Yaga's hut is often both on the edge of a forest and deep within it at the same time. An example of this is when the heroine in "Finist" walks through the forest for so long "the iron shoes were already getting worn, the iron cap was wearing out, the crutch was breaking, the loaf was gnawed away" (Forrester, 2013, p.23). Yet the incantation asks the hut to turn its back on the forest, suggesting that it is instead on the edge of the forest. This hut, standing atop a chicken foot—or two—and fenced in by human bones turns the iconic grandma's house in the woods, like the witch's gingerbread house in "Hansel and Gretel" or the grandma's cottage in "Little Red Cap," into a monstrous sight. It also turns a traditionally stationary object—a home—mobile. The monstrous and wild nature of the hut protects Baba Yaga and allows her/him to be maternal as well, with symbolism of life and death existing in tandem. Further, the position, both fully within the realm outside human control and somehow still on the edges of the forest and society, relates to the ways Baba Yaga is integral to the story and society as the wise wo/man; powerful yet not beholden to that same society that relies on her/him.

This power directly relates to the hut relating to the transitional "initiation huts" or izbushkii, with individuals entering as children, getting symbolically eaten, and exiting the hut as adults (Pilinovsky, 2005, p.37). This symbolic consumption relates to Baba Yaga's cannibalism of young children, but it is the gaining of knowledge that enables them to exit her/his hut as "adults," wiser to the world around them. This is emphasized with Baba Yaga's association with death, as s/he is often considered the "guardian who lives at the gateway to the land of the dead" (Johns, 2010, p.22). However, s/he is also associated with the crow and "Czech children's songs associate the crow with childbirth, which, in turn, corresponds to Baba Yaga/Holda's role as keeper and releaser of children's souls" (p.18). In this, Baba Yaga exerts dominance over literal life and death through association and monstrous cannibalism as well as the figurative death of innocence and childhood for children to mature into adults. This enables her/him to have the symbols of life and death, nurturing and decay, wrapped into the area around Baba Yaga and her/his character and society's need for her/him.

The Tester in Folklore

Baba Yaga is both the villain and the donor in Propp's tale roles, which seems to refute the concept that s/he is "the most archaic, classic form of the donor figure" (Johns, 2010, p.22) as Propp believed, but as they are two sides of the same function the concept holds. This explains how Baba Yaga can be a symbol of hope for the listener and reader of folktales; while s/he is dichotomous, s/he is consistent in her/his dichotomies, and therefore will always fulfill the role s/he is placed in in narratives. Baba Yaga's ability to queer Slavic folklore's dichotomy gives her/him the unique role of "tester," ensuring the other characters are worthy in different ways to complete their tasks and get their rewards.

Propp's tale roles, as Johns calls them, are integral in understanding Baba Yaga's position within folklore. There are seven functions that characters in folktales can fulfill: "the hero, the donor,

the helper, villain, dispatcher, the sought-for-person, and the false hero" (Johns, 2010, p.3). The hero is the main character, attempting to accomplish a goal in the narrative, while the sought-for-person—sometimes a sought-for-object—tends to be that goal. An example of this is in "Finist" where the middle daughter is the hero searching for Finist, or the sought-for-person (Forrester, 2013, p.23). The false hero attempts to take the place of accomplishing the goal of the hero but fails. This is usually a result of being a bad person, which can be seen in "Ivanushka" with the first two maids refusing to help those they ask help from (p.45), and failing their mission as a result. The dispatcher is the character that sends the hero on their journey, for example the stepmother in "The Stepdaughter" (p.132). There are two roles that are similar in Propp's functions: the donor and the helper. The helper, however, gives advice or completes tasks for the hero, like the sparrow in "The Stepdaughter" (p.132), while the donor gives the hero a magical item that helps them complete their goal, like Baba Yaga in "Finist" (p.23). Finally, the villain is the character "who harms or seeks to harm" (Johns, 2010, p.3) the hero. Though not all tales have every role, all characters in the folktales can be categorized into one or more category, as will be seen with Baba Yaga in "The Stepdaughter," where s/he exists as both the donor and the villain.

Baba Yaga's ability to exist on these two poles is how s/he can fulfill Propp's belief that Baba Yaga is the classic and oldest form of the donor figure. Propp discusses how many of the functions are two sides of the same coin, using the true and false heroes as examples: "the [true hero] accomplishes the task and is rewarded, the [false hero] fails and is punished" (Propp, 1984, p.75). Knowing that there are functions that exist on opposite poles, it is easy to see, considering the definitions of the villain and the donor, how they are on two sides of the same function. The donor offers help in the form of a magical object and the villain attempts to harm the hero. Their functioning as opposite poles can be seen as 'help' and 'hinder'. S/he does occasionally—in the role of the donor—act as the secondary dispatcher. For example, when s/he states, "There now—go with God to see my middle sister" (Forrester, 2013, p.23) in "Finist." However, as Baba Yaga is not the initial dispatcher and neutral in the role, it is of less importance than the donor and villain positions.

In "Finist," Baba Yaga is a donor. S/he gives the heroine a "precious gift" (p.23) three times, each of which will help her reach her goal. One is a fast horse that eats glowing coals, suggesting that this is the "magical item" that the donor gives. There is no instance of villainy by Baba Yaga in this tale, which makes sense as the princess Finist is married to is the villain, after the sisters act as sub-villains to be the unwitting dispatchers. This is not to say that Baba Yaga is incapable of being both the villain and the donor in a single tale, as is the case in "The Stepdaughter." For the stepdaughter, Baba Yaga is a donor as, "'There are two trunks in my cellar,' she said. 'A red one and a blue one. Take the red one for yourself'" (p.134), and the red trunk is found to be full of riches. However, Baba Yaga becomes the villain to the stepmother's daughter, giving her the other trunk, which has "fire in it" and burns the stepmother and her daughter to death. The important difference here is that s/he is the donor to the heroine, who treats the helper with kindness and does not abuse Baba Yaga's "children." S/he is the villain to the false hero, who hits the helper and squashes many of Baba Yaga's "children" (p.134). In "Ivanushka" s/he steps away from the role of donor and becomes a "pure" villain to the sought-for-person, the false heroines, and the heroine. First, s/he grabs Ivanushka—the sought-for-person— and drags him off, then s/he cuts up both false heroines when s/he catches them and attempts to do the same to the heroine but is foiled as the helpers hide her and Ivanushka. Though Propp states that a donor's gift "is not always voluntary" (1984, p.77), it is something that could help the hero or heroine reach their goal, not the sought-for-person or goal itself. Therefore, the pat of butter given to the maid by the fair maiden in "Ivanushka" to help her escape without Baba Yaga's cat alerting the ved'ma is a more accurate description of the donor role. Understanding Baba Yaga's role as donor and villain—occasionally at the same time—illustrates the dichotomous nature of her/him in both individual tales and folklore as a whole. S/he is able to act outside of the traditional binary of folklore, while still being an easily recognizable part of it.

This liminal space Baba Yaga occupies allows her/him the unique capacity to be the "tester." Other characters must choose between good or evil; Baba Yaga does not. In this role of tester, Baba

Yaga is able to be "a collective mirror" (Geiger Zeman and Zeman, 2014, p.243) that offers hope to the listener or reader. Not the kind of hope that Zipes discusses:

> that Baba Yaga may be a symbol of hope because she is so ambiguous, as often frightening as benevolent. But hope may be best generated when a wise woman does not mince her words, and a true Baba Yaga is never one to mince her words (2013, p.xii).

Rather, Baba Yaga is a symbol of the hope that the false hero will get what is coming to them, the heroine will succeed despite the challenges, or hope that Baba Yaga, like times before, will be defeated again by the hero's wit. Baba Yaga's ambiguity and honesty aid her/him in this role, but it is not the sole reason for the outcome.

Her/his ability to test is twofold, depending on the role s/he is playing in the specific story. S/he can be the tester of resolve, as in "Finist" where s/he tells the heroine both, "You'll have a long way to go" and "Don't you take anything" (Forrester, 2013, p.23). This tests her resolve in the face of adversity in the shape of distance, and in the face of bribery or corruption of her goal, in the shape of being tempted by money. Alternatively, s/he can be "the tester of manners, conduct, and deportment. Ill-mannered heroes in Russian folktales rarely remain as such" (Pilinovsky, 2005, p.39). A good example of Baba Yaga in this role is within "The Stepdaughter" where her/his test is won or failed based on the heroine conducting herself properly and not swatting away the helper or squashing Baba Yaga's children.

In fact, these tests are related to the symbolic tests of the initiation huts in Russia. Baba Yaga her/himself symbolizes this ritual and its liminal space of not-child, not-adult. First, the hero or heroine must say an incantation to enter the house, then Baba Yaga asks a version of the question "are you doing a deed or fleeing a deed" (Forrester, 2013, p.48). The hero or heroine is then given a task to complete or an initiation into her/his graces. The concept of being in the middle of a deed, or in the middle of fleeing from one, further suggests liminality. Through the initiation process, Baba

Yaga often threatens to eat the hero or heroine, which offers a direct correlation between her/him and the monster that "symbolically consumes" those who enter the hut. It is only by completing Baba Yaga's tests that the hero or heroine can move out of the liminal space of "doing or fleeing" a deed and into the conclusion of the folktale, completing one.

In this role, Baba Yaga is both ostracized from society and an integral part of it, and her position as the monster within the izbushkii embodies the way in which Jones and Harris claim that the monster is a mirror (Harris and Holman Jones, 2016, p.522). Baba Yaga acts as a place of self-discovery, where "there is labour to be done in both the looking and the seeing," as well as a "vulnerability in reflection, in standing before yourself, and others, looking back" (Harris and Holman Jones, 2016, p.522). This power is a direct result of Baba Yaga's monstrous nature, but the monster also cares for the individuals in this vulnerable position, both monstering and mothering, representing the "paradoxical locus of life and death" (Forrester, 2013, p.2). This is one of the many ways Baba Yaga embodies the queered feminine, and it is vital in explaining her/his position within Slavic folklore.

The Perks of Being a Monster

Baba Yaga's monstrosity in tandem with her/his queerness ostracizes and protects her/him. While Baba Yaga can and does die in the folktales, s/he is powerful and useful in narrations and always returns, a character that refuses to be killed or erased from the narrative and, as a result, is "deathless" like her counterpoint, Koschei. S/he does what generic ved'mas (witches) cannot, and therefore the storytellers cannot remove her/him from the story. While useful, s/he is deemed a monster, holding a negative queer representation that shields her/him from the erasure of her/his positive representation, being a wise wo/man, nurturing, and good as well as evil. The

dichotomous nature of Baba Yaga means that positive representation can take place in homophobic societies as the monstrous nature of her/his character protects Baba Yaga. S/he is the monstrous queer with a fulfilling and happy life that society cannot destroy.

Even within less homophobic societies, representations of Baba Yaga refuse to bend to the stereotypes and classifications of queer people in popular media. Her/his monstrous nature protects Baba Yaga from being commodified into something palatable to the mainstream. Yaksich argues that:

> Mass media "has to balance the need of majority interests against those of specialized minorities." It is a reflection of the homogenized middle whose "tyranny of audience ratings and readership studies forces a consistency on content that is designed to attract the most by screening content for its audiences" (2005, p.27)

Baba Yaga is not attractive, and to strip her/him of her/his monstrous nature would be to strip the use of her/his character within the folklore. S/he must exist as the monster cannibal alongside the wise and nurturing wise wo/man, otherwise s/he is no longer recognizable as Baba Yaga and does not hold the role of tester that other characters are unable to. The queerness must exist in both the positive and negative representations and must not be turned into one of the palatable stereotypes designed to please the audience. Baba Yaga's monstrous queer nature protects her/him from being beholden to the market, the readership, and the storytellers, allowing for a queer existence outside of the stereotypes that "screen" consumers "from the non-stereotypical aspects of the gay community" (Yaksich, 2005, p.27). S/he is the messy depiction of queer individuals as multifaceted and non-stereotypical that works against this kind of representation.

Conclusion

Representation within homophobic societies is rarely positive for queer individuals. Therefore, Baba Yaga's ability to exist on dual aspects of the binary of good and evil enables the existence of positive representation. This comes at a cost of simultaneous negative representation but allows for a narrative outside of the bounds of stereotypes and purely negative representation. While "monstrous qualities ... give rise to queer policing and vilification even today" (Harris and Holman Jones, 2016, p.520), it is the monstrous qualities of Baba Yaga that gave her/him the opportunity to exist as a positive representation as well. Though this does not discount the harm of negative representations on society, it does present an alternative to flat characters on either side of the spectrum—as positive stereotypes or villainous—and presents opportunities to see queerness begrudgingly accepted by—if not completely within—a society of binaries. Slavic folklore defines rigid parameters to be "good" or "evil," and Baba Yaga refuses to be contained in either. S/he exists as both/neither, in the same way that s/he exists as both/neither gender. This breaking of binaries and queering of femininity allows individuals outside of the bounds of binary-based gender within society to see themselves represented, and to see a possible way to exist in spite of the classifications they do not fit within.

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Aaron Hammes

Mourning and the Trans/Gender Novel

Delimiting the Gender Novel

"Gender transition seems to fascinate just about everyone who hasn't gone through it," writes Casey Plett, offering simultaneously a reason why one might (or might not) read a novel written about trans subjects and why one might (or might not) write one. When Plett penned her 2015 essay "Rise of the Gender Novel," there were few instances of widely-circulated novels penned by transgender authors, many of which have fallen out of publication today. Perhaps the two most championed, Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* and Imogen Binnie's *Nevada*, are out of print, yet freely accessible online as of 2022. Plett's essay begins as an analysis of (cis-authored) novels concerning gender transition or nonconformity, a phenomenon she terms the "gender novel," which has resulted in awards and accolades from many corners. In Binnie's *Nevada*, though, Plett sees quite a different take on the "fascination" with gender transition—a flawed protagonist who is designed for neither pity nor uplift, an ending which hardly speaks to a rosy future of understanding or the neoliberal diversity fiction of "tolerance," but instead the relatively low bar of a "story that is decidedly human."

Seven years on and we have seen what could easily be termed an explosion of novels written by and about transgender subjects, not least Plett's own 2019 novel-length fiction debut, *Little Fish*, and Torrey Peters' *New York Times* bestselling *Detransition, Baby*. I am less interested, then, in retracing the missteps (such as the ubiquitous casting of cis actors in trans roles for film and television) or flat-

out transphobia (J.K. Rowling being the most obvious instance) in trans representation and discourse around transgender people in the arts. Instead, I want to consider how the trans/gender novel encounters specific generic tropes, presenting and confounding, deterritorializing, or strategically eliding the expectations of often phobic public majorities.

Plett observes that "gender novels" present premature death as a one-way conduit, seeking out "perfect victims" and staging trans subjects as objects of pity or fantasy, or both. Furthermore, Plett points out that many of these novels (her examples include Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Kim Fu's *For Today I Am A Boy*) also use violence and loss as singular events to be overcome, rather than "a lifelong reality that brings with it an array of dangers and traumas." Plett here begs a certain set of narratological/thematic questions: how does one depict a "lifelong reality" in the space of a novel? Or is the trans/gender novel beholden to do so at all? Plett's own example of *Nevada* does not, in fact, feature any direct instances of physical violence, but is rife with microaggressions, internalized fears regarding the possibility of violence in quotidian situations, and the dull traumas of dysmorphia and general bodily frustration. Transwoman Maria is not suicidal, she is simply irritated and sometimes despondent regarding seemingly obligatory decisions regarding sex-gender presentation. Plett's *Little Fish* more directly addresses moments of real and potential physical and emotional violence, with protagonist Wendy and her transwoman chosen family navigating individual phobias and aggressions (with potential sexual partners and sex-work clients) and those more institutional (access to hormones, job (in)security). But Plett's handling of the most "substantial" act of loss, friend Sophie's presumed suicide, suggests that this element of queer and trans reality is neither quotidian and insignificant nor formative and earth-shattering—it is a single element of a more complicated tapestry of experience, asking less "why did she do it?" and perhaps more "how do others not?"

Trans novels have encountered this reality particularly broadly in the science fiction and fantasy genres (see, for instance, Kai Cheng Thom's trans femme street gang in *Fierce Femmes and*

Notorious Liars, Rivers Solomon's class rebellion in space *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, or Sybil Lamb's apocalyptic *I've Got A Time Bomb* for three very different instances of trans persistence in the face of quotidian violence). This inquiry does not suggest hetero/cisnormative mourning is somehow monolithic, nor is the literary/aesthetic presentation thereof singular and formulaic. The Gender Novel, in my estimation, operates neither through contrastive presentations of gendered experience nor simply extrapolating cisnormative experiences onto non-cis subjects. Instead, I consider how Gender Novel conventions flatten and reduce trans experiences of loss through assumptive logics which render trans subjects either repositories of trauma and overcoming (or not), or caricatures of confusion or resolve, whose every experience is uniquely conditioned through experiences of transition. These logics require backstory, explanation, justification, and (gendered) reflection. The following brief inquiry concerns three trans/gender novels which center on trans and Two-Spirit protagonists encountering loss which is not obviously related to their subject position, even as this subject position both inflects how they encounter this loss and in various ways decenters it in the narrative.

Jonny Appleseed and Iterations of Rez Death

There is only a whisper of transition narrative in Joshua Whitehead's *Jonny Appleseed*—moments of disidentification from Jonny's past include his being more interested in Buffy St. Marie than the historical Johnny Appleseed (11), or looking at a photograph of an indigenous woman and reflecting "*I could be that*. I thought," which cascades into his thinking "my mind was becoming a fun house of femininity" (16, author's emphasis). Nevertheless, Jonny's subject position as "urban NDN, Two-Spirit femmeboy" (45) is mostly unquestioned and unquestionable in the novel, and yet each of the three deaths Jonny experiences ripples differently through his sense of self and subject position. The tropes Whitehead plays with here are as much chronological as affective; his novel questions and

deforms hetero/chrononormative markers of time's passage, as well as sex-gender embodiment as a progressive, linear process. Jack Halberstam notes the ways in which "reproductive time and family time are, above all, heteronormative time/space constructs" (18), and further that there exist (dominant, phobic) narrative temporal drives that attempt to "pin [trans subjects] down [...] within the logic of heteronormative time" (88). Whitehead uses family and reservation ("rez") time especially to challenge this pinning down, allowing Jonny to experience loss and (non)mourning as less irruptive and more horizontal, elements of his Two-Spirit subject position but not causally formal of or directly resultant from it.

Jonny's embodiment of time is conditioned by rez time, family or NDN time, and the expansion or contraction (foreshortening or elongation) of time in his amative and sex-working experiences of sex-gender. The handling of death—sometimes perfunctory, others expansive—is reflective of the precarity of life and the ways in which death is so often not the marker of a "natural" end or telos for a life. For trans subjects, this is another manifestation of not only the prematurity of death and latent violence from phobic public institutions—a necropolitical existence, for many—but also the continuous nature of transition and sex-gender itself. Death is not self-perfecting and does not automatically speak to life "well-lived"; sex-gender is equally not de facto, particularly when social, political, and medical institutions dictate its identifications and the effects thereof from without. For the trans/gender novel, the continuity of transition and the latency-activity spectrum of death are opportunities for narrative blending of identity and compression or expansion of time that do not rely upon progressivist tropes of the bildungsroman. What lessons Jonny (or the protagonists of the other novels under consideration) takes away from death are ambiguous at best; his own "growth" and "education" are not only nonlinear, they are ambivalent, reflected in remembered wisdom and past harms.

The novel's first two deaths are those of men in Jonny's life, neither particularly impactful nor formative in his development or subject formation. The consequence of these deaths is simply to reinforce Jonny's family life as dominated by women, primarily

his mother and kokum (grandmother). In the Gender Novel, this might be read as fomenting Jonny's sex-gender flexibility—living under a matriarchy makes women out of men, or some such gross reduction; in this novel, it is not. The narrative leaps past any heady origin story for Jonny's sexuality, noting plaintively: "I figured out I was gay when I was eight" (7). The other thing he figures out young is that he does not like his birth name, as Jonny was named after his father, whose existence is summed up and extinguished in a single line: "a residential school survivor, alcoholic, and would-be country star" from whom Jonny never heard again after he left, and finds out later "he died in a fire on another rez" (9). Jonny's conclusion? "I really don't care." Whitehead gives Jonny's father no formative power, and demonstrates the dispatch with which Jonny dispenses elements of his history that hold no affective resonance for him. There is no tragedy here, and the novel offers nothing beyond the matter-of-fact. At the end of this opening chapter, we meet stepfather Roger, who pastes the departing Jonny with the epithet "apple," an indigenous person "red on the outside [...] and white on the inside" (11). The procession of fathers is not tragic, sad, or ironic; instead, the movement of these men through Jonny's life is a quotidian element of his own transience and the overall lack of value on masculine/cis-male guidance in the novel.

Jonny's reason to return to the rez in the course of the narrative is equally plaintive, which Whitehead challenges his reader to square with one of Jonny's recurring dreams: "See, my stepdad died this morning. These days, I keep dreaming of Armageddon" (33). There's nothing more to Roger's death than that—the force that brings Jonny back to the rez and the flood of memories that comes with that journey, and, somehow, dreams of the end of the world. "Armageddon" is an interesting choice for Jonny's dream of the end of the world—it is Biblical and ancient, yet emanates from a gathering of armies in the Book of Revelation. Jonny's eschatology lies in his own regathering with friend/paramour Tias and rejoining the matriarchy in the flesh. That Roger's death would prompt this marshalling of forces does not even rise to the level of ironic, it is simply a prosaic reality that could happen at any time. It deserves neither scorn nor fanfare.

Kokum's own death is somewhat more indistinct, her memory hanging over the entirety of the novel, but Roger's funeral is combined with a celebration of her birthday. Jonny reflects on his lack of desire to return to the rez from the city, on how he "wanted so much to hate Roger, and hate my mom for loving him, and hate the home that squeezed the queer right out of its languages" (213). Roger beats Jonny for his queer impulses; Jonny's mother is indifferent; Kokum understands Jonny as Two-Spirit with all the importance that holds in their Peguis tradition and community. These three deaths are elemental to what Jonny refers to as "NDN time" (219), but it is only Kokum's that Jonny mourns, and that comes in the final pages of the text, far after her actual passing, at what seems to be a first visitation to her gravesite. Premature loss is assumed in both rez and queer life, and the text leaves both the reader and Jonny mostly unresolved with this final explosion of pent-up grief.

Grey Dread and Small Beauties

Death is the ostensible driver for the narrative of Jia Qing Wilson-Yang's *Small beauty*, protagonist Mei having lost her aunt and cousin in relatively swift succession. But while the short novel opens with Mei having been holed up in aunt Bernadette's cabin for weeks, taking possession upon the latter's passing, it rocks between analeptic time and the careful, rationed relaying of memories without any overt direction as to the significance of their organization. It makes for an architecture that is clearly not concerned with (and if anything perhaps obscures) causal, progressivist order that would seek to explain the transphobic attack which nearly took Mei's life and her later suicide attempt after cousin Sandy's death. To disentangle the narrative threads of the novel and render them linear would have a dual effect as regards the Gender Novel. On the one hand, the relative randomness of the irruptions of violence and death would only be heightened—each of these (very much including Mei's attempt to take her own life) feels accidental, out-of-time, unpremeditated, without particular

material consequence beyond Mei's affective reactions. On the other, Wilson-Yang leaves the reader the elements of the Gender Novel in the pronounced elisions, and rendering each loss in chronological order would reinforce a progressivist, linear sense of cause-and-effect. Not unlike Jonny's non-education, there are no hard-fought lessons in these losses or experiences of violence for Mei. Wilson-Yang forces the reader to impart their own logic—or abandon it altogether—in both assigning value to death and mourning, and connecting them to Mei's trans subject position. She is attacked for being trans, her queer aunt dies from the creep of illness, her alpha male cousin's life is instantaneously ended by nature. There is nothing instructive about any of these events, per se, nor in Mei's reaction or non-reaction to them.

Mei's story is one of displacement both from more conservative elements of her Chinese migrant culture and any more expansive queer community. We do not discover the cause of Sandy's death until nearly the end of the novel, but despite that withholding, the reader can infer its suddenness as he is portrayed as paternal, young, and strong throughout his interactions with the younger Mei. His passing is due to a lightning strike, as immediate as could be, not unlike the immediacy of the attack on Mei, an unwanted flirtation turning violent in a flash. The narrative makes no effort to equate or even compare these events, and the Gender Novel's presentation of them is left wanting. For instance, there is no sense that Mei feels uniquely unsafe before the attack, though she calls upon specific tactics to handle it in the moments leading up to it. The Gender Novel fetishizes resilience or helplessness in the face of misogyny and transphobic violence; *Small Beauty* offers neither. Similarly, Sandy's vengeance against Mei's attackers is not portrayed as machismo or particularly heroic; it is instead a simple matter of course, offered without comment. Its inclusion in the narrative simply speaks to the ubiquity of potential violence and the ways in which it can be expressed by "both sides" in transphobic interactions—the aggressor and the aggressed. And yet, the economy of violence remains unclear, ambiguous, over-potential, and under-expressed. To attempt to directly convey

violence and death as always possible would exhaust the narrative; instead, these trans/gender novels impart both the randomness and inconclusive nature of trauma and mourning.

As with *Jonny Appleseed*, any "logic" of sex-gender transition is absent from *Small Beauty*, as is any endemic, explanatory cause for the deaths before or during the narrative. Mei's assault certainly results from first not being read and then being revealed as trans, but Wilson-Yang's touch is so light as to disallow the event from becoming definitive or coloring the remainder of the novel. Again, the impressionistic nature of the anti-chronology is marked here; the events of the narrative bloom out horizontally and inflect on each other, rather than either chaining together chronologically or dropping into analeptic memory and returning to "the present" of the narrative. The most tangible results of the attack on Mei's life are discovering a trans elder in Connie and being presented with a further example of Sandy's commitment to Mei, as well as his own latent violence as he goes to seek unsolicited revenge on her behalf. Whereas Jonny traces a lineage through Two-Spirit within his tribal community, Mei disidentifies with the kind of conservative, queerphobic Chinese household in which she is raised by her absentee mother and grandmother. Instead, Mei finds the sex-working Annette and the trans drop-in center patron Connie. After the suicide attempt, Mei reflects on "the constant search for community or retreat from it," something consistent with Jonny's experience. Sandy seems best able to account for Mei as trans femme, both strong and in need of his protection, regardless of her not asking for it. His death is beyond premature, it is utterly out-of-time with his life trajectory. Of Connie, on the other hand, Mei thinks: "How amazing it is to meet someone like you who's older, when you've been living with the idea that no one like you ever *gets* to be older" (158). Connie's persistence in time is in direct contradistinction to Sandy's sudden end.

But Mei's experiences as trans woman and the shearing off of the majority of her biological family line in Canada are gathered around another sort of elder, and a different valence of family, in Bernadette's lover Diane. The revelation of queerness in another of

the women in her family is a curiosity to Mei, but the presence of Bernadette's surrogate daughter in her small town is irresistible to Diane. What could be a feminine mourning unit in a Gender Novel, though, is something far more complicated and far less maudlin or melodramatic here. Diane represents a stripe of rural butch lesbian transphobia that is at a genuine loss as to how to account for Mei. Gayle Rubin's influential concept of sex-gender "border wars" (161) comes to mind. Bernadette initiates what Rubin terms a "less obvious" form "of sexual political conflict," which would be foreign territory to the Gender Novel that could only work from binaries. Bernadette hopes Mei is "just confused" (54), assuring her, "you can't just go ahead and make a woman" (55). Mei's remaining living tie to her deceased family is someone who cannot comprehend a trans existence, failing to recognize the symmetry when Diane tells Mei that the major problem within her and Bernadette's relationship was that the latter "just never understood herself" (94), as a lesbian, presumably. The Gender Novel would never stage this friction between stone or butch lesbian epistemology and a trans feminine subject who could not be further from their experience—it is not a conflict that registers in the cis (generally masculine) v trans/gender nonconforming/gender nonbinary (highly feminized) dichotomy. When Diane finally, and somewhat shockingly, apologizes for her transphobia, Mei judges it to be sincere and accepts, but not before she wonders aloud, "Why should I have to be relatable to get respect?" (121). The Gender Novel is a conduit of relatability; the trans/gender novel disidentifies with the majoritarian conception of respectability altogether. Mei's mourning is for a community she never really had, and however she has actualized herself to that reality in the end, it will not change her comportment to a phobic world as a trans child of migrancy. The trans/gender novel gives her space for mourning on her own, in a rural cabin, and lets the interaction and commiseration come to her. Mei is neither pure victim of nor triumphal over death and transphobia.

Little Blue Momento Mori

Hazel Jane Plante's *Little Blue Encyclopedia (for Vivian)* opens with a statement of its contents that is almost immediately qualified: "This book is about *Little Blue*, a television series that's adored by a small cluster of people" (1). But three sentences later, "This books is as much about Vivian as it is about *Little Blue*." Unlike the other two novels under consideration, Vivian's death is referenced on the first page, and there is nothing unclear about the work as tribute and working through loss along a split timeline of memories of Vivian and the present-day assembling of the encyclopedia. The Gender Novel would perhaps offer us tragic and touching parallels between the two which both exotify and (heavy scare quote) "normalize" the trans experience of community mourning. This novel does neither of those, instead interlacing the presentation of mourning time with that of the television show and the progress of Vivian and the narrator's friendship. *Little Blue Encyclopedia* includes two further timelines, one researching and curating the titular reference guide, an alphabetical compendium of people and places in the fictional television show *Little Blue*, and the other concerning those entries themselves, around which the narrative is ostensibly "structured." Alphabetical is, of course, an arbitrary organization principle, and some of the last entries are required to understand some of the earliest, making following the exact plot and interaction of characters in the invented television program somewhat of a difficult task. But this is a feint, regardless, as the narrator attempts to tell her story with Vivian, recognizing how little of her friend she knew outside of their direct interactions, and pay tribute in a manner sufficiently obsessive as to reflect Vivian's love of the show.

The most pointed mourning moment in this novel, the one that could most easily lapse into presumptive cliché regarding the certainty of premature trans death, is near the end, as the narrator—still unnamed in the penultimate "Y" section"—"finds herself" rereading a poem entitled "To My Trans Friends Who Have Also Considered Suicide." Plante is baiting the reader into some Gender

Novel trope assumptions, which "statistically speaking" would not be so unjustified—the rates of suicide attempt for trans folks are unconscionably high. Despite the context of reading this poem, the narrator will not reveal the exact cause of her friend's death, though she thinks "it's important to say that Viv didn't commit suicide" (182). Still, the silence is also important as "we aren't defined by how we happen to die." But of course, we don't necessarily get to define ourselves, in life or in death, and we don't all have friends like Zelda to help do it for us. In a certain sense, the Gender Novel is about pure representation: whether or not trans subjects are further othered or superficially made "relatable," it is the representation itself that is primary. In the trans/gender novel, perhaps it is more either about presentation—the primary act of signing and signifying at once—or else de-presentation, deterritorializing, and declaiming majoritarian presumptions. Jonny deterritorializes sex-gender from abusive fathers and NDN matriarchy onto sex work and his queer relationship with Tias. Mei presents mourning as a kind of narcotic, justifying lapsing into a rural, solitary existence that seems to suit her, rather than being a tragic effect of loss, transness, or woman-ness. The narrator of *Little Blue Encyclopedia* concludes the chapter, speaking of trans women killed for just living their lives: "I want to know who they were, how they lived, who and what they loved in this world" (183). Her version of Vivian's story, read against the glossary of Vivian's favorite television show, is much more intertext than metatext—it leaves the reader to their own associations between the odd characters of the short-lived program and Vivian's place in the narrator's life.

The final "Z" chapter contains a brief entry for minor character "Lucas Zito," then relays the narrator's name, "Zelda," for the first time, before concluding with a short eulogy that went undelivered at Vivian's funeral. It is the closest to finality that we get in any of these mourning novels, and yet this is only one of the four narrative chronologies noted above. The Lucas Zito entry refers back to Tindra North ("N") and Thurman Park ("P"), which in turn refer to others and their corresponding letters. Furthermore, Vivian's death is in some ways the chronological center of the narrative,

as one of the threads concerns her life with Zelda, and another is Zelda's life after Vivian's passing. The point is that there is little that is particularly final about Vivian's death, even the completion of the encyclopedia, which simply offers the reader a mobius strip entrée into the world of *Little Blue*. Mourning is an inversion of time in the trans/gender novel, as it is both quotidian and uniquely unsatisfying as an ending. Each of these novels is the center of a story with a prehistory which is shrouded and an afterlife which is at best uncertain. Their characters are neither defeated nor empowered by death, and they analogize the incompleteness of mourning to the persistence of trans-becoming: never a telos, always in-progress and subject to somatic alteration. Zelda's life after completing the encyclopedia and telling the tale of her research into two of Vivian's loves ("Little Blue" and Britpop music) is no less uncertain than either of the other protagonists considered above.

Toward a Trans/Gender Novel of Loss

The common elements of these trans/gender novels of loss occur in a few different registers. At the thematic level, each novel considers "significant" deaths at various levels of remove from their protagonists. Characters react variously to these losses, but in each case they are forced to contend with an important affective presence in their life being taken rather suddenly—even the death of Jonny's aged kokum is not suggested as being foreordained or expected. These presentations render death an imminent possibility and loss a lifelong burden, as each of these protagonists is somewhere between their mid-20s and early 30s. But even Vivian's death in *Little Blue Encyclopedia* is not suggested as being related to her sex-gender expression or identity, and thus none of the novels promotes any direct or indirect relationship between the deaths themselves and the protagonists' subject position. Violence and aggression may be quotidian realities, and each protagonist faces instances of discrimination, ignorance, or abuse, but death itself is somewhat random and unmotivated in these novels.

Relatedly, there is no attempt in the trans/gender novel of loss at normalization; not of death, and not of transition. Parallel to the refusal to foreshadow death and ensuing despair is the almost wholesale elision of the transition narrative. The Gender Novel could not abide these oversights, seeking as it does neat, explanatory connections between subject position and narrative events; in this instance, how transness would condition not only how the universe interacts with the subject, but how the subject interacts with their universe. Of course, being trans, being read as trans, and considering what being trans means do condition these interactions, just as being cis, Black, brown, or white, differently physically/cognitively/affectively abled would. But the Gender Novel promotes sex-gender agnosticism or transition as both the governing structure of valuation—good things and bad (though mostly bad) are the result/consequence/effect of being trans—and the ethical anchor of the character at hand. In her essay, Plett points to a series of "flat" characters who "remain gentle and stoic in the face of difficulty," though there is no reason J.K. Rowling's pseudonymously penned *Troubled Blood* could not be considered the "dark side" of the Gender Novel, with its murderous, gender-confused antagonist. The death of a loved one is the perfect staging for both valuative and ethical consequences: it is another injustice, indignity, or tragedy for the Gender Novel protagonist to overcome; it offers the opportunity to display goodness and grace; and it can persist as a memorial anchor for future behavior. The Gender Novel is bildungsroman, and bildungsroman must be instructive; it justifies events more than a little by virtue of what the protagonist learns from them. The deaths in these trans/gender novels of loss do none of these. There is certainly active mourning, but if anything, the losses are somewhat inexplicable, unmooring the trans characters from someone on whom they counted, and perhaps forcing them to square their next moves in the absence of an ally or co-conspirator.

Finally, these trans/gender novels offer no prehistory and no prescribed ending. There is no telos to transition, nor any sense that the deaths within them trigger any particular rebirth. The scrambling of time in each is perhaps related to them being novels

of middles, slices of time rather than clear chrononormative arcs. *Johnny Appleseed* moves through time according to its protagonist's sex work and reluctant attempt to return to the rez, along with the memories that accompany that journey. But as the novel closes with an out-of-time reflection on kokum, and Jonny's impressionistic dreams more broadly, it leaves the reader to consider what kind of composite portrait they've been given. Jonny's musing on his own Two-Spirit experience is itself a kind of composite, and the deaths in the novel are little more than elements of his perpetual transition, which neither begins nor ends in the time of the narrative. The action of *Small Beauty* is instigated by a death, but the loss of Mei's aunt is dwarfed in importance by the loss of her cousin, and neither death receives any prolonged attention in the narrative. The scrambling of time in this novel has the effect of deemphasizing linear time and progressivist cause-and-effect regarding both death and transition. Rather than flattening Mei's character into a set of presumptions and tropes—the sum of parts rather than a complicated and changing whole—this structure levels time into a set of interlocking moments and durations, markers of the perpetuity of sex-gender transition and the inapplicability of cisnormative time. *Little Blue Encyclopedia* is perhaps the easiest arc to discern: as the narrator considers transition, she meets Vivian, who helps her come out, offers a model of trans friendship and homosocial closeness, and dies, seemingly suddenly. But not only are these moments wholly "out of order" in the novel, they are hardly privileged over any of the other "small" memories with Vivian, daily annoyances in the present, the construction of the encyclopedia, or glossary of characters in "Little Blue." In each of the trans/gender novels, the reader is left to decide what is important or formative, and the (imperfect) protagonists seem to be reluctant stars of their own movies.

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Part 5.
Time and Place:
Perspectives on Transcendence

Josephine Mercy

The Question of Gender Equality in Religious Extremist Groups and Religious Cults: a Study with Reference to the Lives of Dr Tara Westover and Ms Faith Jones

Introduction

The 21st century has several factors that affect our daily life and prevent us from truly experiencing liberty. Topics such as racism, rape, infanticide, and gender-based violence plague our world. The latter has been addressed by many across the globe as one of the prominent issues that each individual faces on a regular basis. The part that gender plays in religious extremist groups and cults is a thought-provoking area that could be discussed to further understand the place that men give women in cult groups.

Religious Extremist Groups

Religious extremist groups use violence and force, in the name of religion, to cause intellectual, physical, and spiritual damage. Religious terrorism, for instance, has become a growing concern in the 21st century. They operate on the notion that violence done in the name of God is not a crime but an act of obedience on their part. Many religious extremist groups are also identified as cults.

Educated by Dr Tara Westover is a powerful memoir that traces the childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of the writer. Westover was born into a Mormon family that believed in conspiracy theories. They stayed secluded from the society and the children were forbidden from receiving formal education. They strongly believed that education would take a person away from the fold of God. This idea is not biblical. Westover struggled to understand the love of God that was taught to her from her childhood.

Her father had visions of the End of Days and Y2K Armageddon. He was an authoritative figure in the family:

> His word was law, and the women in the family timorously obeyed him. Gene's relation to the larger culture was typically conflicted: He felt at once victimized and threatened by it, and also—probably defensively—superior to it. (Weisel-Bar, 2019)

She was nine years old when her mother agreed to apply for her birth certificate. Despite their efforts, none of Westover's family members could recall the exact day in September that she was born. Tara knew how to read but was taught primarily to understand the *Book of Mormon*.

Later in life, Westover left her home to pursue her dreams. What is impressive is that three children of the family, Westover included, received PhDs. The other children did not finish high school. The book records her journey from imprisonment to freedom that she found in education.

Westover's parents compromised a few principles of the Bible to suit their personal beliefs. The family understood the scripture through the perception of Westover's father, Gene. He was a man driven by his ambitions. He was also a strong believer that hospitals and doctors are tools of the enemy:

> God couldn't abide faithlessness, Dad said. That's why the most hateful sinners were those who wouldn't make up their minds, who used herbs and medication both, who

came to Mother on Wednesday and saw their doctor on Friday—or, as Dad put it, "Who worship at the altar of God one day and offer a sacrifice to Satan the next." These people were like the ancient Israelites because they'd been given a true religion but hankered after false idols. "Doctors and pills," Dad said, nearly shouting. "That's their god, and they whore after it." (Westover, 2018, p.43)

Despite the fervor and reverence expressed for God, Gene was a different person within. He professed his faith but his actions condemned him. Even the very religion he practiced would convict his actions and find him guilty.

Westover was not allowed to make her own decisions. She did not realize that she was being controlled and dominated by the people around her in her childhood and adolescence. Though she did not believe everything that was told to her by others, she believed she had no choice but to do what was expected of her:

> Not knowing for certain, but refusing to give way to those who claim certainty, was a privilege I had never allowed myself. My life was narrated for me by others. Their voices were forceful, emphatic, absolute. It had never occurred to me that my voice might be as strong as theirs. (2018, p.216)

Emotional cut-off is something that is seen in the memoir. When women opposed the expectations of the family, they were shunned. Westover's mother was cut off from her own family after getting engaged to Gene. Westover recollects how she barely knew her uncles and aunties in her childhood.

On the other hand, Westover and her brother Tyler used emotional cut-off to get a break and seek lost opportunities. Tyler left home at an early age and rarely came home. He was building a new life for himself and that instilled curiosity and awe in the mind of Westover:

> I have almost no memory of him until five years later, when I am fifteen, and he bursts into my life at a critical moment. By then we are strangers. It would be many years before I would understand what leaving that day had cost him, and how little he had understood about where he was going. (2018, p.62).

When Tara herself left home, she sent a letter to her father explaining the reasons for her actions. She wasn't proud of that letter but decided to send it nevertheless:

> It's filled with words like "thug" and "tyrant," and it goes on for pages, a torrent of frustration and abuse. That is how I told my parents I was cutting off contact with them. Between insults and fits of temper, I said I needed a year to heal myself; then perhaps I could return to their mad world to try to make sense of it. (2018, p.337)

The people in the memoir, especially the women, are portrayed as compliant. She saw her mother, Faye, being submissive and protective of her husband. Faye would twist tales, support her husband's accusations against her daughter, and even try to justify the acts of her abusive son, Shawn, because she saw total submission as an act of obedience.

Shawn had abused Westover over a period of time. He was known to be a bully in his community. However, he was rarely confronted by his parents. As a man, he was expected to be resilient and tough. On the other hand, Westover was expected to imitate her mother and keep her peace at all times.

Shawn's relationship with Westover was strained and unfriendly. One day, he burst out saying, "I see you for what you are … You pretend to be saintly and churchish. But I see you. I see how you prance around with Charles like a prostitute" (2018, p.131). He proceeded to call her a "whore" and a "slut."

In another instance, Westover hid from her boyfriend Charles because she did not want the latter to see her covered in soot and grime. Shawn, however, wanted to maximize her humiliation and dragged her outside. He assaulted her in front of many onlookers and broke her wrist and ankle.

Though Westover was a victim, she blamed herself for her brother's behavior. Years later, she realized that it was easier to blame herself because she saw a few defects in herself.

The "Theory of Religion" proposed by Stark and Bainbridge elucidates the probabilities as to why people believe in God and practice religion:

> The Stark-Bainbridge theory of religion is an attempt to explain many of the phenomena that have occupied the attention of sociologists of religion since the founding of the discipline in the nineteenth century. Thus, Stark and Bainbridge take as explicanda the emergence of gods in societies and their numbers and scope; the emergence and development in societies of the roles of priests and magicians; the emergence and evolution of cult and sect movements; and finally, the phenomenon of secularization. (Simpson, 1990)

The understanding is that religious people believe in compensation. Compensators, as proposed by Stark and Bainbridge, have different meanings. Credible compensators, in the case of highly desired rewards, are created by assuming the existence of an active supernatural force.

Compensation in this context could refer to how people are expected to tolerate shame and cruelty to uphold the values they profess to practice. This is often done with the belief that pleasing God by bearing all the shame that the world can give will only make them more worthy of the glory they will receive in heaven. It is also quite ironic to realize that only women were taught to be subservient in the face of such abuse.

It could be said that, just like any other abuse victim, Westover took solace in finding logic in the abuse she suffered. This is typical of many religious extremist groups as the women are inherently expected to take the blame, even if fault is not theirs.

The application of Neutralization Theory to this memoir provides an idea of how the leader and followers of a particular group justify their acts. Neutralization Theory explains how the deviants seek to justify the reasons for the deviance. They provide alternative explanations and definitions to suit the need of defending their cause. There are five major types of neutralization:

1. Denial of responsibility

2. Denial of injury

3. Denial of the victim

4. Condemnation of the condemners

5. Appeal to higher loyalties (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert, 2012, pp.781)

Denial of responsibility states that the deviant believes that compromising certain values is natural and that anyone would do it. Gene and Faye were negligent of Shawn's actions because they denied the responsibility of holding him accountable. Westover was expected to understand Shawn's sickness and move on.

Denial of injury states that deviance does not cause harm and hence is acceptable. Westover always laughed the pain away because she strongly believed in the fact that she had no need to confront her emotions to set things right. Such an attitude was expected of women.

Denial of the victim projects the idea that punishment is well deserved. Condemnation of the condemners goes hand in hand with Denial of the victim. It states that those who are offended condemn the deviants because the offenders are shifting the blame in an unfair manner. When Westover took the matter of abuse to her

punishment, they were shocked and refused to accept it. Westover knew that voicing the violence done against her would eventually lead to her being exiled.

The memoir records how Tyler's wife Stefanie encouraged her husband to write a letter to Westover. The letter read thus:

> Our parents are held down by chains of abuse, manipulation, and control ... They see change as dangerous and will exile anyone who asks for it. This is a perverted idea of family loyalty ... They claim faith, but this is not what the gospel teaches. Keep safe. We love you. (2018, pp.340)

The next type is Appeal to higher loyalties: "The appeal to higher loyalties is a technique of neutralization by which the delinquent purports that loyalty to others is more important than the demands of the larger society" (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert, 2012, pp.785). The offender makes the claim that certain offences were done for the greater good even if the action has broken the rules of the law. It is quite shocking to realize that Gene and Faye were ignorant of the destruction they were causing in their children's lives. They even considered their actions to be morally right.

Gender Inequality In Cults

The definition of a cult refers to deviance in the theological, political, or other beliefs that aim at attaining personal goals set by an individual or a group. A cult often lacks a structure and function under the leadership of its leader. Most are considered to be a source of threat, though they outwardly seem to promote individualism and self-worth. Their treatment of human beings has been seen as cruel and inhumane by experts. Women especially are used as sex traps to lure potential and influential men to the groups. Some examples of infamous cults are the Manson Family and the Children of God.

Modern cults are known to promote individualism and self-worth. The members have a sense of belonging to their group or community, and at times go to extremes to prove their loyalty. It is to be noted that not all cult movements end up being fatal. Some, like the Unification Church, are dominated by a leader whose word is accepted as the law. In such groups, immediate obedience and complete subjugation is expected of the members.

The leaders are self-appointed and ensure that their followers think of them as outstanding personalities, possibly divine, as some sort of a savior. Many leaders are said to be "charismatic" because of their domineering nature. They have their own views that stand as controversial to the normally accepted doctrines. The members are expected to be completely devoted to their leaders, and are often expected to leave their families as proof of their allegiance.

The continuum of influence and persuasion of the leaders on their members has evolved as a mystery for decades. Questions as to how the members willingly surrender their wives to a leader who abuses them, give millions of dollars to help a nomad who proclaims themselves to be a leader, kill their own children because they are ordered to or practice sexual abstinence while following a promiscuous guru have been often debated. It often seems nonsensical to outsiders who see these calamities that are devoid of sense and logic.

Rooted in misogyny, the Children of God was founded by Faith Jones' grandfather. This group, like many others, forbid formal education for the children. Following the pattern of a traditional cult group, the people here were secluded from the society and were under strict control.

According to Margaret Thaler Singer, there are six primary conditions that need to be fulfilled by cultists to gain access to the minds of the followers. It is important to note that all these conditions were met by the Children of God:

1. Keep the person unaware that there is an agenda to control or change the person

2. Control time and physical environment

3. Create a sense of powerlessness, fear and dependency

4. Suppress old behavior and attitudes

5. Instill new behavior and attitudes

6. Put forth a closed system of logic (Singer, 2003, p.63)

No one was encouraged to question the founder, David Berg. A closed system of logic is practiced in cults. In the article "Persuasion and Coercion: A Critical Review of Philosophical and Empirical Approaches," Penny Powers explains this process.

> Cult conversion by cognitive restructuring, however, does not involve physical coercion but results in deeper and more lasting changes in beliefs and attitudes because the receiver is brought to cognitive agreement with the worldview being presented. Cult members have not lost their ability to think and reason, but are brought to believe that doing so is a bad thing and therefore do not question their new beliefs. (2007, p.133)

The members of the cult were expected to read "Mo Letters," the only literature permitted by the group leaders. Over 25 years, around three thousand "Mo Letters" were published. These letters usually dwell on controversial topics such as child–adult sexuality, the dreams and visions of the founder, and the practice of "Flirty Fishing," also referred to as FF.

The leader of a cult depends largely on their philosophy of life to attract people. Without a credible foundation, their group is prone to fail under the pressure of other cults that are built on strong philosophies. An amalgamation of ideas taken from various sources gives a way for cults to choose what would suit them and then leave out the rest. In the article "Psychology of Religion," Schaub talks of how Bridges' *The Religion of Experience* sees this as a point of much importance:

> The author is impressed by the need of "a principle which shall bind together all the members of the nation, and, in time, all the nations of the earth." Realizing that this calls for the discovery of "some fresh standpoint from which the doctrines and disciplines of all faiths may be seen in a new light and re-valued," he is led to inquire concerning the needs which have urged men into religious fellowships, and induced them to elaborate the various inadequate philosophies called theologies, and the numerous systems of worship, prayer and sacrament. (Schaub, 1926)

FF was the practice of women of the group luring prominent men. The group operated on their belief of love. According to them, the gift of sex is freely given to all by God, and those who do not use it for God's glory will be condemned for their disobedience. Married and unmarried women alike were encouraged to go out "fishing" to catch souls for Jesus. The babies that were born out of such relationships were endearingly called "Jesus babies."

Though a few women were uncomfortable with the idea, they were coerced into doing it to prove their allegiance to God and their cult leader. Faith Jones records the details of her mother's reluctance to have a relationship with an Asian, though he was a kind man. When she got pregnant, she hoped that he would not be the father, but the baby was a spitting image of him. She was initially embarrassed about it.

Children were encouraged to play games imitating sexual intimacy with their friends. Such "games" were considered to be cute and innocent. As girls grew up, they realized why they were prompted to play such games. Sex was expected of women, even minors.

The founder wrote a series of comics especially for children. The teen model for these children was the protagonist from one of his stories titled "Heaven's Girl." It is the story of Marie Claire, a fifteen year old with supernatural powers and a vision about the End Times.

She is eventually gang-raped by a troop of Antichrist soldiers before being tossed into a lion's den. She escapes from the den unharmed. Marie Claire uses sex as a tool to propagate the message of Christ"

> Heaven's Girl submits willingly to the rape and whispers in the soldiers' ears about Jesus ... Over and over, Heaven's Girl escapes the Antichrist, using sex to survive and gain influential protectors, leading God's people and performing the miracles of Moses: starting storms, calming storms, calling fire, blinding her enemies, all with her shepherd's staff ... They are much more exciting than the Picture Bible we've read a million times. (Jones. 2021, pp.109)

The followers of this cult were encouraged to emulate the "Heaven's Girl" to win souls for Christ.Women, including Faith Jones, were raped multiple times but it was not called "rape." Only years later did Jones understand the meaning behind consent and respect in the context of sexual relationships.Like Tara Westover, the women in these groups believed that they did not have a voice of their own.

Max Weber believed that the only reason religion can be justified is because it acts as an escape route from the present world for the people who believe in God and supernatural workings. Germans, during the time of World War I, retained their hope because of religion. According to Weber, the purpose and beauty of life is reassured in religion. Religion, according to Weber, serves many functions. Amongst the many, some are reiterated over time to enable a perfect understanding of the sociologists' view of religions.

1. Relief from suffering

2. Reassurance of meaning

3. Salvation as a cause for motivation

The Children of God, like many other cults, posed as a system that provided relief amidst the struggles of this world. Though the system inherently assaults women, the followers were excellently brainwashed. They were able to follow the rules without complaint because time and again they were informed of the blessings of those who obey without grumbling. In order to please their founder, David Berg, they sacrificed their happiness for his pleasure.

Women were subtly coerced into having sexual relationships. They were informed that such obedience would please God and keep them focused on the mission as their singular goal in life.

Christianity is driven by the belief that it is God's will for the people of the world to attain salvation and acknowledge God as their personal savior. The Children of God cult not only promoted "Flirty Fishing" but also discouraged women from backing out:

> This is Flirty Fishing, which the Family women have been practicing for nearly ten years now. Grandpa says having sex with the Fish demonstrates your ultimate commitment to God and to Jesus: "HOOK THEM THROUGH HER FLESH! Crucify her flesh, Lord, on the Barb of Thy Spirit! O God, even if it penetrates, and crucify her flesh, impale her on the point of Thy Spirit that she may die, that those that feed of her flesh may be caught to live!" (Jones, 2021, p.55)

The sole mission of women was to submit their flesh to the will of God. This meant that they were forced to have sexual relations with men they were not interested in. The idea of helping people attain salvation, by whatever means, was their source of motivation.

Conclusion

Through a literary, theological, and sociological perspective, it is possible to see the pitiful state of women in these dangerous groups. It is of paramount importance to note the importance of education in the lives of these women. Education liberated them to see the truth. Apart from the fact that it gave them hope and a sense of accomplishment, it also helped them break the yoke of bondage. The strength of these women lies in the fact that the story of their lives is paving the way for other women to share their stories and be liberated in the process. The hope is that education may sort out the gender inequality, even in the working dynamics of religious extremist groups and religious cults.

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Liana Kupreishvili

"How to Politely Check Women's Genitals":
Medical Textbooks on Sex in Russian Empire

Introduction

In the autumn of 1843, tsarist authorities organized a trial medical-police committee (vrachebno-politseiskii komitet) for St. Petersburg under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD)[1] Medical Department, and in 1844 created a similar committee for Moscow. Several cities, including Moscow, Minsk, and Nizhnii Novgorod, developed their own locally tailored regulation systems, but at least theoretically, most of the Russian Empire conformed to the model created by the ministry (Bernstein, 1995, p.20).

Based on the documents, we can assume that Georgia's regulations were formally introduced after implementing new social and economic changes and the legal formalization of police supervision (Nadzor) in the Russian Empire in 1882. The protocol for the supervision of prostitution and the fight against venereal diseases in Tbilisi was drawn up by city-council representatives

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1 - The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the most important ministry in the imperial government. From the 1830s, the ministry was responsible for maintaining the "principle of religious toleration as far as this toleration corresponded to state interest" (Lieven, 2006, p.156).

from the national-health commission. The decision was made to create a medical-police commission in Georgia under the Medical Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Its purpose was to monitor women involved in prostitution and provide timely medical assistance to eliminate syphilis in the cities of Georgia.

In 1898 the administration of Tiflis[2] applied to the 1867 decree of MVD, according to which, the supervision of prostitution in the city should be transferred to the hands of a particular collegial institution to which "both the medical and the administrative part of supervision could be subordinated."[3] The decree officially transferred control of the problem to the jurisdiction of public institutions of the city. The project, developed in 1898, was sent for approval by Governor Paul Bernhard Demetrius Rausch von Traubenberg (1905–1907) in April 1906, and was approved only in 1909 by the new Governor of Tiflis, Mikhail Alexandrovich Lozinsky (1907–1911). Like other cities of the Russian Empire, Tiflis started modifying some paragraphs, instructions, and circulars in the regulation decrees of the MVD for the entire empire from 1903.[4]

Along with the legalization of prostitution, the Russian Empire began active work on the creation of special literature. By the beginning of the 20th century, it was obvious that the system of the state, medical, and police control didn't effectively regulate prostitution. Nonetheless, it gave rise to a secret, neglected sex trade, and didn't prevent the spread of venereal diseases. Public opinion rang the alarm. Social order started accumulating new knowledge on the topic by not only collecting official administrative information but also widening the scope of the control by obtaining

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2 - The administrative center of the Tiflis province (Тифлисская губерния) of the Russian Empire (1801–1917).

3 - *Materiali po voprosu ob organizacii nadzora za prostitucii v gor. Tiflis i borbi s venericheskimi bolezniami*. Tifliskii gorodskoi komitet po borbe s sifilisom i drugimi venericheskimi bolezniami. Tf. (1909, p.2).

4 - Provision on the organization of supervision of urban prostitution in the empire, approved on October 3, 1903, by the Minister of the Interior Zinoviev, was also used in Tbilisi province (Tiflisskaia *gubernia*).

more objective information; a lot of surveys with prostitutes and their consumers (military personnel, students, factory workers) were carried out throughout the country.

In this period, publications were divided into the following themes:

1. Identification of prostitution as a social phenomenon, reasons of appearance, history of the development of prostitution from ancient times to the 19th century, and problems connected to the definition. In the Russian Empire, prostitution took on a symbolic importance as one of the malignant aspects of urban life. However, because policies promoting industrialization were associated with the West, prostitution also became another lens through which to view "westernization"[5] (Bernstein, 1995, p.8).

2. Characteristics of the sex trade abroad, which allowed legislators to talk about the need for additional control mechanisms and medical workers to come forward with the idea of establishing sexuality studies as a special science, "which should no longer be considered an appendage of any other science." A purely medical view of sexual life was not enough to understand its many-sided connection with all areas of human life, although medicine was still perceived as a forming core of sexuality. This connection, taken as a whole, was the content of a special "science of sexual life" (Bloch, 1913, p.iv). The task of the latter was to study both socio-physiological, and cultural-historical relations of the sexes, and, by studying the primitive and modern human, to search for the gender-related ideas of humankind. That's how the homogenous biological-social

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5 - "If it was possible and even common in European Russian cities to place brothels on the central streets, it was simply because the morals of the local population contrasted with the passionate and expansive nature of the people of the South," explains one of the residents of a district of Tbilisi in his request for the relocation of the brothel from 1897. *Tbilisi Police Department, Requests and Complaints* (1800–1917, p.19).

phenomenon of sexual life created a firm ground for new science at the beginning of the 20th century. The works of Ferdinand Freiherr von Reitzenstein, Sigmund Freud, and Iwan Bloch were actively discussed by the public.

3. Territorial mobilization in the Russian Empire, in colonized lands, Caucasus, Poland, and Ukraine. The distribution between cities and villages.

   The important source that gives us detailed information on this topic is the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, The first and only census performed in the Russian Empire. The results of the census were published in 89 volumes (119 books) under the general title "The First General Census of the Population of the Russian Empire in 1897."

   Demographic data showed that prostitutes made up only a fraction of the population of women who were engaged in sexual relations for money and favors. Consequently, official statistics only reflected certain types of prostitutes: those unable to evade medical-police agents, and those in state-licensed brothels. Prostitutes who were discreet about their trade, part-time prostitutes who held jobs, and wealthy prostitutes who could afford the proper bribes were invariably omitted from the official lists and records (Bernstein, 1995, p.94).

4. Organizational questions of prostitution, with the detailed information provided by questionnaires and studies (such as the age of the first sexual contact, ethnicity, age, and marital status). Measures of social control, regulation and abolitionist theories, argumentations of points of view, and practical sides of each approach. By examining prostitutes' social backgrounds and considering what it meant to labor as a female servant, seamstress, or factory worker in late-imperial Russia, they begin to gain insights into the situations which may have impelled some women to prostitution (Bernstein, 1995, p.120).

5. Kinds of prostitution mostly in adults: female, male, and in lesser cases child.[6]

6. Social hygiene: physiological and psychological disorders, venereal diseases of prostitutes.

An important part of the rising awareness of the problem of the sex trade, sexual diseases, and human rights were international conferences:

- 1897 Sankt-Petersburg. The conference on syphilis held in 1897 had been a strictly professional affair, sponsored by the Russian dermatological association with the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a gathering that included only physicians and government medical officials. Of the 450 present, only 2 were women. The 1897 state conference on syphilis recommended medical inspections for "all women of the working class." As put it the following year, "Whoever is familiar with factory life knows the utility and necessity of sanitary exams of factory women." Fedorov used another criterion to give credence to his suspicions. Revealing a stark vision of supply and demand, he argued that clandestine sex existed because the number of registered prostitutes was not "proportionate" to the male population (Engelstein, 1992, p.282).

- Brussels 1899 Anti-slavery and 1902 International Conferences on Syphilis and Venereal diseases

- A large flow of literature, reports, and discussions in the press was caused by the First All-Russian Congress to combat the trafficking of women (1910), which took place in St. Petersburg in 1910.

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6 - Literature about homosexuals and lesbians at the beginning of the 20th century relied not on prostitutes—although lesbian love was often practiced—but on extramarital sexual relations of all kinds of "free love leagues," "pornographic clubs," "temples of Eros and similar petrels of the sexual revolution that bred at the beginning of the century" (Golosenko and Golod, 1998, p.11).

Debates on Health and Morals

By 1909 there were three hospitals in the Tbilisi medical network, two of which were receiving patients with sexually transmitted diseases: 1. Mikhailov hospital, opened in 1868, which for a long time served not only the city, but virtually the whole of Georgia and the Transcaucasus region. In this hospital, patients were often brought from Azerbaijan, Armenia, and even the North Caucasus; 2. A hospital for contagious diseases, intended for the treatment of patients with any infectious illness; 3. Alexandrov Hospital, established relatively earlier in 1891 for patients with venereal diseases. Starting from 1900, Georgian newspapers and well-known publicists paid special attention to the extremely difficult situation in the city due to the lack of hospitals.

By 1908, the number of workers in the Tbilisi province was 11,162, and the majority of the sick were working people. Registered patients at Mikhailov hospital in January 1911 included representatives of the clergy, local officials, foreign diplomats, housewives, women of all classes and statuses, and the most unfortunate minors, mostly males.

There was no age limit, with patients' ages varying from 12 to 64. Despite the existing documentation of the mentioned hospitals, we cannot judge the panic caused by the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the city. The number of patients in the protocols is relatively low, as medical facilities often denied medical assistance to locals due to overcrowding.[7]

Physicians lacked clear notions about the epidemiology of venereal diseases, often confusing moral issues with medical ones (Bernstein, 1995, p.75). Promoting sexual morality, the source of ostentatious virtue and secret debauchery, was obligatory only for the female half of the human race; as late as 1897, a Kalinkin hospital commission inaccurately described non-syphilitic venereal infections (including gonorrhea) as potentially passing after several weeks

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7 - Alexandrov Hospital, for example, was designed for 55 patients only.

without leaving a trace. Chlenov advised men with gonorrhea to sleep on cold, hard beds, refrain from eating rich foods, and avoid not only sexual relations but the sexual excitement induced by pornographic books, pictures, and even female company (Bernstein, 1995).

By the end of the 19th century, a dispute broke out in medical and public circles about the nature, terminology, and measures for suppressing the phenomenon of prostitution. One side believed that a public woman was one who chose prostitution as her profession and did not have or want to acquire means of subsistence in another way. Meanwhile, the other stated that only a woman who lived in a brothel and declared herself to be such could be considered a prostitute. Dr. Kankarovich in *Prostitution and Public Debauchery* (1907) criticizes the use of the term "prostitute" to refer only to street prostitutes and brothels.

"Given that the essence of prostitution is for a woman to take money from a man for sexual intercourse, then the question arises why we do not recognize and regulate women who, in the same way, view men as a source of income and livelihood" (Genee, 1900).

Kankarovich, like other doctors who supported his idea, called for a revision of the definition given in the statutes of various regions of the Russian Empire, and the replacement of the material component with the concept of "perversity":

"Prostitution is primarily a manifestation of debauchery. A prostitute is a woman who commits adultery. No matter how much a prostitute refuses to make money, she remains a prostitute. Are the police putting a woman on the list because she takes money from a man? Of course not! The police have no right to take money from a person if he pays it himself. The most important thing for her is that a prostitute has sex with a man." (1907, p.10)

The ethical or moral kind of consideration of the sexual question was criticized by contemporary doctors and philosophers according to its degenerating and moralizing phraseology, and tendency to transform into mystical asceticism with hypocrisy, or into a reaction directly opposed to ethics. Because of this, the ethical side often

didn't coincide with its social and hygienic side. "Respectable ethical aspirations often run the risk, because of their extreme severity, of not achieving goals at all," notes Auguste Forel (1909). "Yet this difficult area is of fundamental importance."

The first official state policy in imperial Russia saw prostitution as a serious crime against both society and morality. As early as the first half of the 20th century, it became a "necessary evil."

On the Sexual Health of Men

Medical journals and newspapers regularly published articles about medical and police surveillance, the connection between prostitution and venereal diseases, and the sex life of workers throughout the Russian Empire. There were publications on hygiene and sanitation, and venereal and dermatological works, where prostitution was presented as a threat to humanity. Hygiene as a subject was taught in gymnasiums.

The psychological prohibition that did not allow for discussing human corporality lost its absoluteness. Books began to appear on the physiology of marriage and the prevention of pregnancy, and were very popular. Initially published in 1907, the work of the St. Petersburg doctor Karl Drexler *How to Prevent Pregnancy* (1910) had already gone through five editions, although its fifth edition was still banned, and its circulation was arrested. But the ban was short-lived, and soon there was an advertisement announcing the preparation of the sixth edition.

Levinson's popular work *Sins of Youth* was a study of the views, ideas, and theories of prominent European doctors of the early twentieth century (Axel Meyer, Dr. Levilen, and Dr. Licinsky) about sexual deviations and advice on squandering male strength (masturbation) to avoid the consequences.

The book, published in St. Petersburg and popular in Georgian medical circles, contains interesting information about the perception of gender and various biological parameters of men and women of that period by the patriarchal society.

"Women's nature contains those physical and value characteristics that give a man pleasure. Because of this, she enjoys undoubted respect and adoration. In nature, it is from the very beginning intended for a more important function. This is the function—the birth of children, or rather the continuation of the family" (Binder, 1900, p.13).

The main means of artificial stimulation of the sexual weakness of men, according to the medical authorities, were:

1. Pornographic images.

2. Pornographic novels in which sexual lust was "artificially stimulated" by means of descriptive art, and whose illustrations competed with the abovementioned images to incite the public to purchase them.

3. "Alcohol, which weakens the prudence and restraining power of the will directed by higher mortality, and increases gross impulsiveness and libido sexualis. Under its influence, a person becomes enterprising, turning into a voluntary victim of pandering and prostitution, although his sexual potency is weakened by alcohol." (Forel, 1909, p.100)

Physical desire was divided by gender: the desire for cohabitation with a person of the opposite sex and the desire to reproduce. The first, as expected, belonged to the male, and the second to the female (since she has biological organs for storing the fertilized egg).

The medical community was well aware that a ban on prostitution was not in the interests of either the state or the male part of the population at the end of the 19th century, so the following advice was published in medical textbooks and pamphlets for men using the services of a prostitute.

It gave detailed instructions on how to politely check women's genitals and other parts of the body.

Pay attention to

1. The face. As a general rule, avoid sex with women who appear too thin, with a pale and swollen face, with bluish swelling, an eruption at the corners of lips, and a bluish-red eruption on the forehead.

2. Pay attention to the hands and feet, which often have a contagious rash caused by venereal scabies. The disease is highly contagious, and one touch is enough to infect. Also

3. On the chest. Especially on the chest with a dark-red rash.

4. Whole-body. Bluish-brick colored spots on the chest, neck, and abdomen are mainly caused by syphilis (Levinson, 1909).

Additional tips that were more effective and "less offensive to women" included handouts forbidding men to kiss and sleep with a woman of uncertain or questionable health. Also recommended was not wearing someone else's clothes, sleeping in someone else's bed, and using their blanket. It was also recommended to urinate and wash the genitals with cold water and soap immediately after intercourse.

Besides venereal diseases at the end of the 19th century, equally important was the treatment of sexual perversions. Sexual perversions, according to modern doctors, were based mainly on inherited inclinations of the brain or were the result of bad habits. In both cases, there was only one remedy that, through the establishment of good habits, could directly counteract the ailment, and that remedy was a hypnotic suggestion.

In the available sources, those cases in which a doctor was consulted were almost always "pathological" and belonged wholly or partly to hereditary (sometimes auto-suggested) perversions. Therefore, suggestions from medical workers were usually to refrain from the advice to enter into marriage. Doctor Auguste Forel mentions how he was able to turn homosexuality into a sexual attraction to women using hypnotic suggestions (Forel, 1909). On

the male precautions side, a very common remedy was the so-called coitus interruptus (interrupted sex), men who adhere to a sexual routine often using paedicatio mulierum (anal sex), and the simplest and most expedient remedy—a condom.

Forel, like many doctors of his time, recommended the usage of animal intestines:

> You can buy completely fresh cecum calf intestines from a butcher, thoroughly clean and wash them, disinfect them for safety during the day in a solution and then use them in the same way as a purchased dissected condom. They are, perhaps, even more pleasant, since they feel, at least in their fresh state, almost the same as the mucous membrane. They are simply stored in a large wide-mouth jar filled with glycerin and washed in water every time here and after use. They can be used several times; but in the end, cracks and holes form on them, and quite easily and quickly, so they are not so reliable. (Forel, 1909, p.470)

The Hygiene and Sexual Health of Women

One of the biggest obstacles keeping women from treatment, especially those infected with venereal diseases, was the fear of being recognized. Prostitutes who were stigmatized by society refused treatment because it prevented them from earning money, "decent" women, who got infected by their husbands, avoided treatment because of fear of revealing their secret, and it was also scary getting into the vile society of "brothel sluts" in the venereal departments of hospitals.

It must be said that Russian censorship showed rare liberalism concerning the advertising of contraceptives. Women's magazines published information about the latest contraceptives for those who wanted to buy them. The most widespread contraception methods in that period were sponges and closing rings.

Women used a disinfectant-soaked sponge before intercourse, inserting it as deep as possible into the vagina, then pulling it out using a thread attached to it. These sponges were defined as very unreliable by doctors. Medical workers issued articles on this topic advising corrections (widening the sponge surface, instructions of proper insertions), and also about the unreliability of so-called closing rings. Contraceptives were made of rubber, which a woman also inserted into the vagina before intercourse. A popular form of purchasing this kind of product was ordering from catalogs and receiving it by mail.

The most common products that could be listed in hygiene brochures or magazines were different kinds of liquids (wine vinegar, lemon juice, wine [especially red] alcohol soap, chlorinated water, and table salt) to be dissolved in plain/distilled water.

Most brochures for women stressed the fact that marriage was a combination of legal and "acceptable" sex. They also recommend the preferable age gap between spouses, where the husband must have been somewhat older than his wife, on average perhaps 6–12 years. This point was very important for a monogamous long-term marriage.

From a medical point of view, a woman was forbidden to have sex during:

1. Menstruation
2. Pregnancy
3. Postpartum
4. Breastfeeding

On the advice of doctors, frequent sexual intercourse was undesirable. For example, doctors associated the high birth rate and infant mortality with the abnormal sex life of women working in Russian factories.

> "Frequent intercourse in women has other disadvantages,
> they become pregnant quickly, but frequent intercourse
> is believed to prevent pregnancy, as evidenced by

prostitutes, and infertility in them is caused by other, more established causes, such as contraception, improperly treated reproductive organs and the most common genital mutilation and syphilis." (Levinson, 1909)

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The Sexual Health of Prostitutes

The first set of rules, designed for St. Petersburg in 1844, began unequivocally: "A public woman is obliged with all conscientiousness to carry out the rules that have been enacted and shall hereafter be enacted by the committee." Violators risked indeterminate sentences in the workhouse.

From 1906, members of the medical-police committee of Tbilisi were the Policemeister, comprising the head of police (or his assistant), the provincial doctor (or his assistant), and three members of the city council (Gorodskaia duma), chosen by vote; representatives of the Transcaucasian railways; representatives of the military department, city sanitary medical inspector, and a doctor, the head of the city syphilitic hospital.

Brothel owners were required to cover the costs of medical treatment for women working in this institution. There was a fixed amount for each prostitute, which hospitals received each time from the state owners:

1. For one prostitute from an institution of the first category: 1 ruble.

2. From an institution of the second category: 75 kopecks.

3. From an institution of the third category: 50 kopecks.

Even in the medical book, opened for every prostitute in medical institutions, the brothel owner paid 25 kopecks a month.

For the systematic examination of prostitutes, the committees had observation points. They were located in certain districts of the city, and the committee determined the locations. The examination

of prostitutes and other persons at home was prohibited or allowed only in the event of a person's illness. It should be noted that all women who voluntarily expressed a desire to undergo a systematic examination in secret were also examined at the inspection points.

Medical examinations were to be undertaken "unquestioningly" once a week for independent prostitutes (odinochki) and twice weekly for women in brothels. If a prostitute or her examining physician noticed any signs of venereal disease, she was to report immediately to the hospital. The rules rewarded a prostitute's compliance by promising free treatment to women who reported voluntarily.

When it came to disease prevention and personal hygiene, a prostitute's obligations became vague, of dubious benefit, and impossible to enforce. For example, the rules required her to wash "certain parts" of her body as often as possible with cold water. "After relations with a man," she could not take another client before having washed and, if possible, changed her bed linen. As for actual baths, she needed to take only two per week. Because physicians believed that blood served as an ideal conduit for infectious diseases, a prostitute was not to practice her trade during menstruation. A spartan note crept into the rules with cautionary words against too much makeup and perfume. In the realm of extreme administrative fantasy was a rule asserting that "public women are obliged to examine the reproductive parts and underwear of their visitors to protect themselves from infection." Needless to say, the dark, hasty, and often drunken encounters between clients and prostitutes rarely leant themselves to such clinical beginnings.

After registration, in exchange for a passport, prostitutes receive special books printed by the department, with their photograph placed on the inside of the sleeve. The book also contained a copy of the 27 rules, and beyond the seal and belt, there was a part to record the medical examination results with the doctor's signature.

In case of illness, the prostitute was obliged to inform the owner of the brothel, and the independents were obliged to inform the supervisor of the local department. They (the owner, the supervisor) in turn had to verify the fact of venereal disease through a doctor and send the woman to the city venereal disease hospital with her book.

All prostitutes were required to use Esmarkhov utensils after each instance of sexual intercourse. For disinfection, it was also recommended to mix a teaspoon of Lizolan into a glass of water. A prostitute was obliged to keep herself, bed linen, and room unconditionally clean.

Reflecting the dual nature of regulation as both a police and hygienic measure was a rule that demanded prostitutes carry their "medical ticket" at all times. Commonly known as the "yellow ticket" (zheltyi billets), this was a card issued to all registered prostitutes as certification of their trade, and a handy medical guarantee for the interested client.

Conclusion

The constant growth of local publications devoted to hygiene, sexual health, and the treatment of venereal diseases in the Russian Empire was especially noticeable from 1895 to 1916. The first decade of the 20th century produced around two hundred publications, including translations of Western literature predominant in 1908–1910.

Sexually transmitted diseases and their extensive circulation through prostitution played a major role in the discussion of reforms and new approaches to sexual relations. According to Iwan Bloch, a well-known German dermatologist and psychiatrist, syphilis was one of the powerful phenomena that appeared on the threshold of the new century and fundamentally changed the outlook of humankind at once: "He not only significantly contributed to the great innovation in medicine, but also made a real revolution in relations between people, mainly between the sexes. Syphilis has a large share of participation in the development of modern individualism" (Bloch, 1910, p.12).

Between the introduction of state regulation of prostitution in 1843 and the end of Lenin's NEP in 1928, large-scale political and socio-economic contradictions occurred in Russia and its colonies.

We know little about the city life of Tiflis at the beginning of the 20th century. The absence of prostitution in Georgia's historical narrative and the exclusion of marginalized groups from social and economic discourse reflects the selective nature of major historical and national narratives. Events and people contradicting the moral values of the religiously active Orthodox Christian community were simply extracted and forgotten. It is through the existence of medical publications, brochures, and textbooks that we can catch a glimpse of the ongoing struggles and challenges that society faced at the end of the 19th century. Respected medical workers not only criticized medical supervision and the regulation of prostitution from an ethical and hygienic point of view, but also provided perspectives on civil-law relations and gender inequality.

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"Gender and Power" is a compelling book that delves into the complex relationship between gender and power. It provides an in-depth examination of the ways in which gender influences the distribution and exercise of power, as well as the impact that power dynamics have on gender norms, roles, and expectations. Through a series of expertly researched and thought-provoking chapters, the reader is offered a unique perspective on this critical social issue, and a deeper understanding of the many ways in which gender and power intersect and shape our world.