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In this Issue:

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Language, Discourse and Gender Identity

Identities are constituted and reconstituted by language, which gives the illusion that linguistic organization reflects a definitive sense of belonging in a neatly structured world. Since mid-twentieth century, however, language has increasingly started to be suspected, as its neutrality has constantly been under attack by theoreticians who see it as reflecting and strengthening hierarchical social orders that oppress certain groups and individuals that fall outside the established norms. Gender scholars, especially, now approach language as a "discourse" that either fits or subverts the aims of patriarchy. They claim that gender discourse has been barely unalterable for centuries, when subversion was fairly easy to silence and invisibilize. But in the last half century gender discourse acquired a name and a presence and marked the way for minorized groups to form and voice their different identities and in Bronwyn Davies's words "multiple ways of being." (1990:502)

The current Messenger issue will concentrate on both the role of language in creating gendered identities and alternative "discourses" that envisage the existence and possibility of plural and variable existences and worlds that challenge traditional sexed and gendered polarities.

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Poetic Language and Gender Semiotics in Edna St. Vincent Millay

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Abstract. The prolific literary production of the American poet, playwright and feminist activist Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) was overlooked by critics and scholars up to the last decades of the twentieth century. Millay was for several years the symbol of the New Woman of the 1920s. Her poetic language and her rebellious attitude were the perfect trigger for a huge amount of American teenagers who were tired of the inherited moralist social norms and conservative moors of their society. Millay's fresh and revitalizing lines bespeak mainly the popular will to undermine the traditional gender roles by means of a combination of conservative poetic patters and subversive ideas.

Keywords: Edna St. Vincent Millay, poetic language, semiotics, intermediality

1. Introduction

The American poet, actress and playwright Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950) was one of the most emblematic and charismatic female writers of the Roaring Twenties. Her skill with the verse and her insurgent personality soon placed her among the favorite poets of the young Americans of the early 20th century. As an actress she joined the Provincetown Players, where some of her plays were performed. In 1923 she married Eugen Jan Boissevain, a Dutch businessman who left his career to manage Edna's. They moved together to a 300-acres farm near Austerlitz that they called: "Steepletop" (*Selected Poetry* vi). Her open treatment of formerly taboo topics such as homosexual love soon turned her into a poet who held the voice of youngsters in America who, back then, started to enjoy the moment of glory of the USA, of freedom and of the emergence of the idea of the New Woman. In fact, it must be said, Millay was a social activist who eagerly aimed at trespassing the traditional role ascribed to women – i.e., the domestic sphere –, however, some of her later poetry points at an incipient change in her mentality. In fact, the utterly rebellious tone of her poetry and the traditional lyrism in her poems called the attention of one influential poet, scholar and editor of *Poetry* magazine Harriet Monroe, who compared Millay with the immortal Sappho of Lesbos, calling the former: "the greatest woman poet since Sappho" (*Early Poems* 156).

One of the most intimate and illustrating accounts of this type of situations (too common in her life) is described in the book: *What Lips My Lips Have Kissed: The Loves and Love Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (2001) by Daniel Mark Epstein. Epstein tells with impressive detail of a curious meeting between Millay and John Peale Bishop around the year 1921, by the time he fell desperately in love with her. Playing with her two lovers – one recently gone away from her, Edmund Wilson, and the other one eager to win her heart, Bishop – was a pastime in which she indulged frequently at a time when she enjoyed great social and critical appraisal (Epstein 146-147). As Epstein narrates in his biography of

Millay, Bishop, deceived from her ill-natured love as he was, even claimed that her desire was akin to that of a man's (Epstein 151). This statement is as true for her personal, private life (the female writer) as it is for her poetic 'I' (her poetic persona). Her poem "Witch-Wife" visibly relates the love triangle of these three authors when Millay, assuming a male persona in this poem deplores that "she will never be all mine" (ll. 2, 12) because the epitome of the New Woman is unattainable for the narrator.

Regarding Millay's lifestyle, it may be said that it was of an odd nature: some paradoxes in her personality such as her will to get married before the age of thirty counteracted the liberal and feminist ideals that she projected in her writing. In his book: *Blood Too Bright: Floyd Dell Remembers Edna St. Vincent Millay* Jerri Dell gathers many texts written by her grandfather, the American scholar and writer Floyd Dell in which this writer remembers Edna's charms and says that they most probably stem from her "being a sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde" (Dell n/p) in relation to the baffling opposites (e.g., harlot and nun) in her poem "The Singing-Woman." The poem that this study examines offers paradoxical views on the nature of female subjectivity. "Witch-Wife" describes a woman whose physical attributes make them appealing (i.e., her hair, her sweet talk and candid manners). Those same properties make her dangerous for her lover.

Halfway between the Edwardian style and the modern times she incarnates, Millay found her place in the literary and artistic scene of the early 20th century. As Robert Johnson put it in "A Moment's Monument" from Freedman's book: *Millay at 100: A Critical Reappraisal*, the connection of Millay with the Victorian era stands on the basis of the composition of the sonnet: "Victorian thinking holds that the sonnet can stand as the moment's 'monument.' Millay's sonnets stand as monuments to the very attempt of the mind to erect a stable insight of words, while experience seems ever to be slipping away" (125). This is the reason why Millay combines its loose and careless tone within the parameters of the sonnet and yet maintaining the interest in the most intimate and private experience in all her poems.

Some of her poems are the literary evidence that exemplifies the immensely free personality and manners of this young American. In many of her works, Millay situates her poetic voice on the side of the female character. For instance, one of the clearest cases of female characterization of a traditionally male narrator appears in her poem: "An Ancient Gesture," where the poetic voice tells of the myth of the Odyssey from Penelope's eyes. From the very first lines of the poem, Millay clearly states that this old story no longer belongs to the (male) hero, and that the same obstacles and sadness that Ulysses felt when he left his home and his wife may be compared to hers upon his departure. Thus the poem begins: "I thought, as I wiped my eyes on the corner of my apron: / Penelope did this too" (ll. 1-2). In this poem, the emphasis is put on the depth and truth of her feelings as a woman, long neglected by critics and readers of this myth throughout history in favor of those of the male adventurer and hero, Odysseus. Much as Bishop had said about Millay when he complained that she 'desired' as a man would do, her female protagonist also suffers, but hers are real tears, and his are the echo of her misery, since: "He learned it from Penelope… / Penelope, who really cried" (ll. 16-17).

In another poem, Millay does, however, deal with topics such as love deception and disappointment, as in: "She is Overheard Singing," in which the female voice claims that her "true love's a rover!" (l. 4) after she enumerates the good and bad qualities of the lovers of a group of women: Sue, Prue and Agatha. Interestingly, this poem shares the 'melodic' tone with "The Singing-Woman" as both female narrators speak of personal situations while expanding their experiences beyond their own lives with the use of the general female voice.[1] This is a literary resource which, as mentioned before, owes very much to the ancient Classical poets like Homer. Their narrative poems carry with them the voices of almost all its characters and still resonate in 20th century poetry, as Millay's lyrism proves. She detaches herself from the later poetic style of some American writers such as the American poet and essayist Adrienne Rich who provided a great dimension to female matters in poems like: "Translations," where she claims that any woman from any place in the world is "obsessed / with Love, our subject" (ll. 7-8), giving voice to all women.

This article intends to examine Millay's poetry from a literary feminist perspective together with an intermedial approach to her poem: "Witch-Wife." For this aim, the first section in this research draws primarily on the notions of the semiotic *chora* as defined by Julia Kristeva, a concept which is closely connected with her theory of the symbolic space and the semiotic in language and in poetry, two notions that are discussed in the second section. The third part studies the role of women in nature as presented in folktales and popular culture based on Clarissa Pinkola Estés' book: *Women Who Run with the Wolves*: *Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. In this section, the archetype of the witch is compared to that of the fairy in Millay's semi-autobiographical poem: "The Singing-Woman from the Wood's Edge." To the former analysis, the fourth part of this study adds an interdisciplinary analysis of "Witch-Wife" as adapted to the comic format by the graphic artist Julian Peters in order to find and interpret new readings of Millay's poetry. Finally, the overall conclusions round up the main statements and ideas explored hereafter aiming to provide modern light to the life and poetry of this American poet.

2. The core of identity: a vessel in invisible ties

Poetry unfolds in the realm of signifiers – the linguistic signs – which point at signifieds that do not necessarily pre-exist their linguistic expression or that do not exist at all. This is the case of the poem discussed in hereafter, which presents a veridical woman in imaginary terms (comparing her with a witch). The case of "The Singing-Woman" shows a real woman (for the description, we could believe that she may actually exist) but she is certainly not real inasmuch as she is described as a witch. Hence, she is not true: the characters is real (she presents veridical attributes) but the analogies and metaphors use by the persona bespeak an unreal character (a witch). There is to a certain extent mimesis operating here as we have "the construction of an object [a poem with its fantasy elements], not

[1] For a more extensive analysis of the relevance of women in Millay's poetry as presented auto-biographically, see Abril-Hernández "Revisiting Edna St. Vincent Millay, the Forgotten Authoress who Marked a Generation" (complete reference at the end of this article).

according to truth but to *verisimilitude*, to the extent that the object is posited as such (hence separate, noted but not denoted); it is, however, internally dependent on a subject of enunciation who is unlike the transcendental ego in that he does not suppress the semiotic *chora* but instead raises the *chora* to the status of signifier, which may or may not obey the norms of grammatical locution. Such is the *connoted* mimetic object" (Kristeva 57). Meaning in these instances is moving in a semiotic flow that implies the existence of semiotic language (this notion will be examined in depth later on). In "Witch-Wife" Millay subverts the real image she depicts with the very title of the poem.

These poetic inferences, interpretations and cross-cultural dialogue with the poet who imagined these lines come about in the space introduced by the *chora*. In her definition of this notion Kristeva draws on Plato's philosophy of the boundless movement of energy that enables growth, life: "we borrow the term *chora* from Plato's *Timaeus* to denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (Kristeva 25). Thus, we come to perceive the need to hold poetry as the central system of communication in order to ensure the openness of the signifying chain of signs that, in the hands of a poet, generate the deepest and most accurate representation of the organic essence of the world. Being free was always Millay's premise in her personal life as well as in her art. Her rebellious attitude was nonetheless, not a drawback but the impulse that fueled her creative genius. She even dares the passing of time in her poem: "Midnight Oil": "The years that Time takes off my life, / He'll take from the other end!" (ll. 3-4), which holds a challenging attitude towards the ravages of time and transforms them into the momentum for her artistic desire to be remembered, immortalized through her poetry. The linguistic signs in this poem are the material traces of the *chora* which constantly renew and re-generate the meaning potential of every line.

In "Witch-Wife" the motility that characterizes the semiotics of the *chora* are symbolized by the wavy effect in the lines of this poem: the stylistic arrangements of the twelve lines that make up this poem offer a tantalizing movement with all even lines indented to the right. This shifting of the lines on the page offers a hypnotizing flow of the letters in the poem. The left-and-right movement is also, in a way, a representation of the *chora* since it makes visible the movement beneath the lines representing the space of dynamism and perpetual change. Ruth Robbins declares in her book *Literary Feminisms* that: "in as much as the *chora* 'is' anything, it is a metaphor and a rhetorical device which expresses the idea that meaning may exist in places where it cannot be defined or abstracted" (130). Indeed, in the case of this poem and of poetry in general, the place which encapsulates meaning and the impossibility to define it is the underlying force of the poetic language. In other words, this space of constant renewal of meaning bears with it the capacity to call upon things which are not there and which very probably only exist in the poet's mind. The *chora* is, in this respect, the asynchronous connection between the creating mind and the reader immersed in the rhythmic musicality of a poem.

In reading this poem, the possible interpretations multiply as we come to compare it with the extrovert, extravagant and temperamental personality of Millay in her youngest age. As Goddu claims in her biography: "Vincent had hair the color of fire and a personality to match. From her earliest years, she was a girl

of strong emotions – exuberant laughter and intense rage. There was never anything calm about Vincent; her sisters used to say that she had a bee chasing her. In her fury she could be terrifying" (n/p). With such a bustling desire to live and learn, Millay was unsurprisingly one of the leading 'modern women' at the bohemian town of Greenwich Village and her fame as an "It Girl" (Goddu n/p) only raised after her first collections of poetry. Her life was certainly an unlimited source of inspiration for her poetry, sometimes even dedicating her sonnets to her sisters such as "To Kathleen," where Millay reflects upon the feeble life of a poet who has to "starve, freeze, and fashion verses" (l. 3) since only love for her family and for the beauty of the world urge her to address her poem: "to / Such things as flowers and song and you," (l. 3-4) in reference to her sister.

The *chora* in the poem "Witch-Wife" holds a not-so-evident connection with the rebel young Millay of her youth, who has grown to be an independent woman, a 'witch.' The *chora* here is thus an endless thread that connects the young, naughty child she was, the whimsical grown-up she was at the moment of writing this poem, and the wicked witch she portrays in it. There is a continuum between these three identities which, in fact, makes readers and critics alike envision a larger side to this playful and cheerful member of the Greenwich Village group of artists among which she felt in her element. We cannot separate the three subjects in Millay stated before from the woman we know given that each one adds something to her subject in process, which is the essence of the *chora*: to enable a space for the organic growth and expression of our evolution in life and through art. This poem and its semioses represent the *chora* for the side of her subjectivity that she wanted to project to the public: the child, the woman and the witch are all one and the same Millay in different periods of her life.

For Kristeva the *chora* is "no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him" (Kristeva 28). Indeed, at no point are subjects in a stage of stasis as regards their subjectivity – for which it is called a process of becoming – but we sometimes do have the impression that there is a certain stillness. The fine pen of poets uncovers the incessant flow of semiotic resignifications (i.e., the invisible *chora*) underneath the seemingly undisrupted subject. This poem states and negates simultaneously as it mentions and elicits the identity of the speaker, the narrator and the mysterious woman. Therefore, the number of possible meanings ascribed to them multiplies, resulting in an increasing chain of semiotic resignifications that perpetually regenerates its poetic external referents. The next section deepens in the possibility of a seemingly static system of meaning (i.e., written language) to offer an array of mutable meanings, that is, the rapport between the symbolic and the semiotic applied to this poem.

3. The unexplicit symbolic and the organic semiotic in "Witch-Wife"

This section turns to the artistic outcome of the creative process of the subject's self-expression in literature in close connection with the poetic language. This point delves with the two flows of semiotic meaning at stake in any creative process: the semiotic (related to women) and the symbolic (related to men) from

Kristeva's theory. Women have, admittedly, been regarded as life-giving bodies more than as creators of art, an interesting correlation between the artistic skill and the body that has called the attention of some feminist scholars. This is one of the premises of the cornerstone of poststructuralist feminist studies: *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) in which Judith Butler examines queer theories and language in the light of the physical attributes ascribed to the genders and how our exterior (body) shapes our subjectivity (our language and our perception of ourselves). In her study she draws on the French feminists (mainly Kristeva) and her revolutionary notions about the speaking subject as an outcome of the negotiation of one's own perception, the perception that others have about us and the language used to mediate those identity transactions. Butler resumes Kristeva's understanding of language as a derivate of the "materiality of bodily life (...) a primary act of displacement and condensation" (Butler 69).

In line with those theories of the speaking subject, its bodily materiality and its need to verbalize their 'process of becoming,' we come across two distinct sides of language: the symbolic and the semiotic. These take the form of the phenotext and the genotext, respectively, a differentiation which is made most evident in the case of poetic language, as Kristeva argues (92-93). Thus, we distinguish between the form of a linguistic manifestation (e.g., a written poem) and the encoding and decoding processes performed by authors and readers; form and matter. It is strictly in poetry where language's two sides (the form or phenotext, and the internal processes at stake or genotext) take shape. In bringing up this distinction in poetic language, we note that Edna St. Vincent Millay played a most arresting game. The external form of some of her poems bears the history of poetry in them (e.g., the ballad form in "The Ballad of the Harp Weaver" and the Romantic borrowing of the sonnet with its complicate metrics) while their content is stunningly childish at first sight. But let us explore this paradox from the lens of the physical body of a poem (what Kristeva called the 'symbolic') and the processes associated to it (the 'semiotic'):

> What we shall call a genotext will include semiotic underlying foundation. We shall use the term *phenotext* to denote language that serves to communicate, which linguistics describes in terms of "competence" and "performance." The phenotext is constantly split up and divided, and is irreducible to the semiotic process that works through the genotext. The phenotext is a structure (...); it obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee. The genotext, on the other hand, is a process; it moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders and constitutes a *path* that is not restricted to the two poles of univocal information between two full-fledged subjects. If these two terms – genotext and phenotext – could be translated into a metalanguage that would convey the difference between them, one might say that the genotext is a matter of topology, whereas the phenotext is one of algebra. (Italics in the original; Kristeva 87)

Since Kristeva identifies the visible aspect of poetic communication as the poem there is so much in Millay left for readers to fill; that is to say, the words in her poems always imply much more than they say. This poet plays language's game but she plays it with her own rules. Already in her first collection of poems, the delicate grief of the speaker in "Kin to Sorrow" makes readers pose their curious

eyes in its lines. Just sixteen lines that employ a self-reflective mechanism where the narrator wonders: "Am I kin to Sorrow, / That so oft / Falls the knocker of my door – " (ll. 1-3). As a victim of her pain, the narrator invokes natural imagery in the manner of Emily Dickinson in stating: "And what does Sorrow care / For the rosemary / Or the marigolds there?" (ll. 10-12). The form of the poem is akin to a poetic cry yet it has a colloquial tone in spite of the depth of its theme. The end of this poem offers the striking resolution, interrupted by the embodiment of Sorrow: "Am I kin to Sorrow? / Are we kin? / That so oft upon my door— / *Oh, come in*!" (ll. 13-16).

The very scene that Millay depicts in the previous lines is abruptly interrupted by this not-so-unexpected arrival at her door. The symbolic order in this poem is the written language that is in close contact with the semiotic, the genotext, since it gives the impression that the author's written text has been cut short in the middle of the creative process (of the encoding process of the genotext). Hence, one is misguided into thinking that there is more in this poem which has been omitted. This is just one of the instances of the use of the semiotic in poetic language: modelling the streams of meaning, playing with the readers' expectations and, in her case, very often with the socially accepted norms, too. Her intention is to disrupt and reshape the symbolic, to give it a new, more open dimension. "Kin to Sorrow" is an instance of a lament where the speaking subject's lyrical stream of consciousness is disrupted, silenced in the presence of that which has caused the narrator's pain in the first place. Millay voluntarily silences many things in her poems in a more overt manner (as in the poem just mentioned) or in a more subtle manner. The latter case is illustrated by "Witch-Wife," a perennial song to the self where that which constitutes the core of the poem is just that which is silenced. In the scenario where the phenotext is incomplete (or intentionally veiled) readers are compelled to reach the meaning behind it, the genotext hidden under inexistent lines in a poem.

From the perspective of readers, "Witch-Wife" puts at work our poetic skills to understand some lines such as: "She is neither pink nor pale" (l. 1) from each one's genotextual poetic toolkit. In order to engage readers into her poems she defines her witch-wife in negative terms by saying that which she is not. Yet, this is what Millay intended her readers to do, to choose their own poetic interpretation: this woman is neither alive (pink) nor dead (pale), or maybe she is neither a lustful woman (pink) nor a prude (pale). The phenotext is not clear about the manner of reading these lines and Millay could note care less about imbuing explicit meaning into her poetry, which she avoided by turning instead to vivid metaphors, fantastic imagery and musical resources to deceive readers into thinking that they will find absolute meaning in her poems. Readers receive only the phenotext in Millay's poetry, and this is not even complete or explicit (as shown before). The genotext runs wild in an invisible torrent of semiotic chains, merging and expelling connotative allusions to every written word in this poem: is this poem reminiscent of the witches that fantastic literature has pictured as voluptuous vampires that the Romantic tradition restored to the imaginary?

The former are indeed only some of the possible readings that we can ascribe to this poem. However, all the signs that make it up contribute to the mystery of this woman and her equally unknown observer. Words and silences operate in this piece of literature veiling and unveiling a bewitching woman whose deceptive

passivity is symbolized by her voice, which is: "a string of colored beads / Or steps leading into the sea" (ll. 7-8). What is remarkable is the simplicity of the language (its symbolic manifestation) and the many interpretations it can have (the semiotic side): the sea may be the space that swallows life as in certain novels such as Chopin's *The Awakening* [1] or an attempt to emulate the magnificence and immensity of this element. The previous lines account for Millay's understanding of the text as an open-ended process of significations and resignifications, a vessel or recipient of different interpretations. The different forms of interconnection between the form and the processes of creation and understanding of a work of literature are at the origin of the difference between discourses:

> These two modalities [the semiotic and the symbolic] are inseparable within the *signifying process* that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called "natural" language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic. On the other hand, there are nonverbal signifying systems that are constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic (music, for example). But (...) this exclusivity is relative, precisely because of the necessary dialectic between the two modalities of the signifying process, which is constitutive of the subject. Because the subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either "exclusively" semiotic or "exclusively" symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both. (Italics in the original; Kristeva 24)

For her notions of semiotic and symbolic order, Kristeva draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis and frames her theory "within the constraints of a practice – the *text* – is only of secondary interest to psychoanalysis" (italics in the original; Kristeva 24); that is, she focuses on the text as the artistic outcome of the speaking subject's process of becoming. In this manner, the poems are studied as the resulting artifacts of the subject's poetic energy, the embodiment of the desires and restraints of an author. The process of interpreting a poem is as open as the linguistic signs that form it, so that a word can establish semantic and phonetic chains with other words (intra-textual semioses) and with external objects (extra-textual semioses). This is the basis of the poetic language, as the elusive witch-wife in the preceding poem exemplifies. The next section explores the connection between women and nature (especially with the motif of the witch) in line with Estés' feminist approach to folktales and Western cultures. The comparison between the witch in this poem and the lady in the woods in Millay's poem: "The Singing-Woman from the Wood's Edge" sheds contemporary light on the two sides of the continuum of femininity: the witch and the fairy.

4. Women in nature; the nature of women

Women have been traditionally connected with the cyclical stages of birth and re-birth of nature in view of their condition as 'givers of life,' a thesis followed by

[1] As Viola Parente-Čapková states in her essay: "Narcissuses, Medusas, Ophelias… Water Imagery and Femininity in the Texts by Two Decadent Women Writers": "Water has been traditionally connected with life, birth and re-birth, creation and creativity, but also with death and oblivion" (189).

some ecofeminist scholars who draw on the basis of the exploitation of the female body as a machine at the service of the male power (such as Karen J. Warren). Some studies about the link between women and nature have followed the spiritualist, essentialist line of research finding tight bonds between the imaginary of the female and that of nature. Literature has certainly fed on this connection deepening on the topic of nature and its elements and how they relate to or act upon women. Often, this has led to a comparison of women to witches, dangerous and evil inhabitants of dark woods at some points in history – such as in the Salem Witch Trials of the late seventeenth century in Massachusetts. For happenings as sad and uninformed as these have women found in nature sometimes a safe shelter from socio-patriarchal constraints and, other times, a safe gateway for self-expression and freedom. In any case, the connection between women and nature has also been examined from a spiritual stance. This is the case of the American writer and Jungian psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés, who published in 1992 her book: *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. This volume is her most relevant contribution to the study of the feminist psyche and it lies in her study of folklore literature. The stories she discusses aim at showing how a feminist reading of the symbolic order – traditional tales and stories – can reshape women's role in society if we only change the semiotic order – the approach to the underlying meaning in these narratives.

In her book, Estés presents folktales where women have been either disregarded as secondary characters or interpreted under the male-dominated theories which demonized them or else underestimated their value in narratives such as: "La Loba," "Bluebeard" or "The Handless Maiden." Millay was fascinated by folktales and she showed it by introducing magical, spiritual and imaginary intertextual references in her poems. In her poem: "Doubt no More that Oberon" Millay calls for a new reading of Shakespeare's most famous comedy (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in a setting that evokes the carefree and merry tone of the Bard's play. Even in the plays she wrote, Millay demonstrates an enormous interest in classical folklore often incorporating sexual innuendos such as in *The Princess Marries the Page. A Play in One Act* (1917), a play in verse she wrote as an undergraduate student at Vassar College. As Thomas Fahy declares in his book: *Staging Modern American Life: Popular Culture in the Experimental Theatre of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos*: "this fairy tale incorporates numerous elements from conventional tales, such as the courtly setting, a long-haired princess in a tower, a page who turns out to be a prince, an apple, a dark forest, and talk of fairies" (n/p). But, contrary to what this Disney-like scenario may seem, Millay was far from the idea of presenting her princess as a damsel in distress. Instead, "Millay's fairytale [displays] a modern sensibility, casting women as independent, assertive, and creative but also her [the princess'] hunger presents sexual desire in women as natural, as something that should be expressed without embarrassment" (Fahy n/p).

Millay subverts traditional female roles and gives them an entirely new dimension making readers question the value of the oral and written narratives we have received as life lessons without questioning them. Such is the case of "Witch-Wife" where the danger of this wife stems from the fact that she has certain sensuous or sexual features that make her fit into the idea of what a witch

is, according to the cultural imaginary. But Estés invites readers to reconsider why witches have long raised feelings of fear and attraction especially to men. According to her,

> Like the word wild, the word witch has come to be understood as a pejorative, but long ago it was an appellation given to both old and young women healers (...). This was before cultures carrying the one-God-only religious image began to overwhelm the older pantheistic cultures which understood the Deity through multiple religious images of the universe and all its phenomena. But regardless, the ogress, the witch, the wild nature, and whatever other creatures and integral aspects the culture finds awful in the psyches of women are the very blessed things which women often need most to retrieve and bring to the surface. (68)

Estés makes a call for women to bring to life their lost bond with that which is not imposed on them by society, to retrieve the natural in them and, in this way, to come to terms with the witch and wilderness. We understand the symbolic order of language as the acoustic or written signs 'witch' or 'wild,' and the semiotic order as the meaning they evoke in us. What we come across now is a vindication of the dynamic essence of the feminine by allowing new associations of these concepts – yet not only new ones, as the historical meaning of 'witch' implies – to mingle, adapt and renovate our poetic imaginary.

"The Singing-Woman" features a landscape that posits a subject in a threshold but let us focus now on the role of the forest. Estés finds that in entering the forest, a woman initiates a journey, thus presenting this step as an initiatory journey (64). This scholar claims that the forest shows a psychoanalytic side whereby women who enter into it often undergo an individual process of introspection so that in "consenting to venture into the locus of deep initiation (entering the forest), and beginning to experience the new and dangerous-feeling numen of being in one's intuitive power [women learn] to develop sensitivity as regards direction to the mysterious unconscious and relying solely on one's inner senses" (64). And she states that the capability we have as humans to feel that we are alive is most connected with our physical ability to sense that we are trespassing any limit: "without body there would be no sensations of crossing thresholds (...). The body is the rocket launcher. In its nose capsule, the soul looks out the window into the mysterious starry night and is dazzled" (151).

Hence, although we certainly need the invisible organic flow of (semiotic) meaning in our everyday lives we still need a material basis, which in poetry translates as the written word, with the aim of building the majestic poems that have resonated throughout history. Both are interdependent and yet, both are in constant process of change. Estés – and Millay for her part – shows that this mutability is not unique to the semiotic (typically linked to the feminine) but that it must also exist in the symbolic (the body and the specific literary manifestation of the poem). This theory connects again with Butler's queer theory when she compares the female body to artistic expression (language) (Butler 98). Women's work of art and her body are thus artifacts on which they act upon and which they use to express their identity and their place in the world. The witch-wife from Millay's poem is wise, that is clear, since she is free and she is well aware of this fact, which stimulates her attractiveness in her lovers' eyes and her value as a woman. But it is equally powerful the seemingly naïve "fiend's god-daughter" that

we encounter in "The Singing-Woman." The narrator warns readers from the beginning about her awkward personality arguing that: "there comes to birth no common spawn / From the love of a priest for a leprechaun" (ll. 13-14) so that she is unique because she was born like this. Let us turn now to the apparently less dangerous (from a male's perspective) female stereotype, though still tied to nature: the fairy.

In "The Singing-Woman" the narrator compares her mother-daughter love relationship to that of a "pixie-mother (...) for her baby" (l. 10) after calling her mother a leprechaun (ll. 2, 14). Estés identifies a rapport between fairies in folk narratives to wisdom and argues further that the apparently naïve beings – she puts the example of the doll – are, in fact, those that represent deepest female wisdom: "the doll is related to the symbols of leprechaun, elf, pixie, fairy, and dwarf. In fairy tales these represent a deep throb of wisdom within the culture of the psyche. They are those creatures which go on with the canny and interior work, who are tireless" (65). This poem presents a milder vision of women, less sensually aggressive as the witch in "Witch-Wife" and yet, they are identically free, independent and they keep a bond with the realm of the spirit, the soul that, as Estés laments, women have lost in favor of a moral of materiality (65). This doll, fairy or leprechaun exists in all women in the forms of their "inner reason, inner knowing, and inner consciousness" (65). This is the lost bond that the female heroines and narrators in Millay have discovered and thanks to it, they can wander freely on the wood's edge and rejoice their 'witchery.' These varying interpretations of "Witch-Wife" are further developed by the graphic creator Julian Peters in his contemporary, comic reading of this poem analyzed in the section presented hereafter.

5. Intermedial "Witch-Wife": showing the unsaid

For the semiotic study of female representations in Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Witch-Wife" this article uses some works of intermediality. Will Eisner's book: *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) where this scholar stresses comics' ergodicity because "[t]he format of the comic book presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills" (8). This American writer emphasizes the "focus" in his panels, which is of great help in exploring the female protagonist's identity in the poem: "Witch-Wife." Scott McCloud wrote in 1993 *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* building on Eisner's study. In this book McCloud legitimizes comics in their role of art vehicles. One of Scott McCloud's most interesting contribution is the graphic representation of time in comics. Together with Will Eisner and Scott McCloud it is worth mentioning Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, who published *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. This book was an inspirational and useful manual for the interpretation and analysis of images from the point of view of semiotics of multimodality in communication studies.

In the graphic adaptation of "Witch-Wife" designed by Julian Peters readers first come across an initial panel where the very images of the double-ended candles frame the title of this poem. This is a clear intertextual and intermedial reference to Millay's rebellious poem "First Fig," which starts: "My candle burns

at both ends" (l. 1). Beside this remark, the font of the title in Peters' adaptation tries to imitate the gothic style that would make readers think of this woman as a witch, as Millay indicates, being this visual resource enhanced by the image of the female lips drawn just under the title (see Figure 1 below). Kress and van Leeuwen identified the interactive metafunction, that is, visual contact from the observer toward the images, together with social distance. Peters' graphic adaptation of Millay's poem has no panels where the character's gaze is directed to viewers, indicating closeness among the characters so that readers are mere viewers, observers of the woman. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, gaze enables engagement between the work of art and the viewer (117), an involvement that owes to the readers' imagination as for traditional literature (Hutcheon 23) and to different perception mechanisms regarding the visual mode.

Fig. 1. "Witch-Wife."

Fig. 2. "Witch-Wife."

The frame size of the panels speaks of the with the woman and her suitors. The majority of close-ups represent the woman in different forms (such a rose, and a weaver taken from a fairytale) (see the bottom panels in Figure 1) and the medium-shots and long-shots are more often used to represent the woman that is the object of male desire in company of her male suitors as depicted in the middle panels in Figure 1 and the fourth panel in Figure 2 above. This change in the distance of the woman with the readers/observers makes sense if we consider the fact that she seems to be perceived paradoxically from the outside, which in fact, bears a more insightful knowledge of the witch-wife than it seems.

Kress and van Leeuwen identified some principles of composition that they apply to multimodal texts. These principles are: framing, salience and information value (177). The information value of the human figures on the left-

hand panel just under the title panel in Figure 1 shows us the perspective of the narrator (corresponding to the male speaking voice). The man is placed on the right of the panel next to the woman (who is clearly drawn as Millay herself), a space in the panel devoted to the new information (Kress and van Leeuwen 197). The lady, for her part, is depicted as a dangerously bewitching temptress for whom the man is her prey on the left hand of the image. Yet, as the story advances, the next panel shows the woman in the right middle of the panel, with one man at each side, depicting the woman in the center of the image, a part which receives the focus of attention in visual and poetic terms, as Kress and van Leeuwen agree (197).

Regarding salience, it is worth noting that certain aspects of an image are perceived before others due to: "the appearance of a human figure or a potent cultural symbol" (Kress and van Leeuwen 202), among other factors. The woman in the comic shows a somehow unique physical appearance that evokes some kind of danger for her lover, a woman who presents some features that recall the stereotype of the *femme fatale*. Regarding framing, we can see that the majority of the panels in the comic have frames around them. Julian Peters version of this poem uses this device a lot in his work, which helps to understand why no frames in the visual language of images accounts for a sense of group identity, as Kress and van Leeuwen put it (203). This in turn provide another interpretation of Edna St. Vincent Millay's perception of her female personas in her poetry: her intention was to express her own feelings and thoughts. Only in very few cases in the comic are the panels depicted as loose images on the page, without a frame. This indicates that the time when the poem is taking place is not bound to any specific moment in history, but rather, that it is not limited to one temporal framework, more often showing the lady in them (see first panel in Fig. 2 and the fourth panel in Fig. 2, where she also appears with her male companion on a car).

Time in this poem is frozen from the very first line by making use of the present tense, the unnamed narrator is endowing his witch-wife with a realm that makes her eternal, unbound by world constraints. Peters' comic shows this stillness in the temporal flow in the form of visibly separated panels with large gutters and loose captions between them thus producing a sequence of frozen moments or moments to which time limits do not apply (McCloud 101). Though timeless, the woman in this poem is not static; it is precisely because she survives time that she is a dynamic subject who is: "polyvalent, polylogical, plural, unfixed" (Robbins 127). The resulting feeling is that the woman depicted by Millay is immortal, in line with witches' capacity for magical tricks beyond human laws, as figured by the imaginary. Millay is also playing with time when she has her narrator moan: "she never will be all mine" (l. 12), thus extending the time limits beyond human reach as if he could plunge into the future and see his misery living away from his beloved one. For that reason, this artist makes the panel frames that present the woman's attributes within rectangular lines that are also straight, avoiding the curved edges used to represent a time that has passed, as the scholar McCloud notes (44).

The protagonist's voice in "Witch-Wife" is mediated by that of the narrator. Although readers may have the feeling that there is more than the narrator tells about her (as it is): at no point in the poem do we hear the woman's voice and, consequently, there is no speech balloon allotted for her where she can provide

her own perspective and justification for her deeds. The woman here is the center of male attention on the part of the speaker and, nonetheless, she is not given a voice by the author. This stands as one more apparently paradoxical poetic device whereby Millay presents her heroine in a game of inner-outer mirrors contrasting what men see in her and what readers have to figure she would say about her and them. It is made visible in the comic adaptation, where, although subtle, there is no image depicting Millay opening her mouth (literally as well as metaphorically).

The author behind the male narrator, counteracts, somehow, the absence of a voice of this woman's own. This has to say Kristeva as regards the ostensible inactivity of a subject by turning his or her actions into his or her new way of self-expression:

> In calling the text a practice we must not forget that it is a new practice, radically different from the mechanistic practice of a null and void, atomistic subject who refuses to acknowledge that he is a subject of language. Against such a "practice," the text as signifying practice points toward the possibility – which is a jouissance – of a *subject who speaks his being put in process/on trial through action*. In other words and conversely, the text restores to "mute" practice the jouissance that constitutes it but which can only become jouissance through language. (Italics in the original; *Revolution in Poetic Language* 210)

It is a major evidence that, in this poem, Millay is on the woman's side, who, although deprived of a voice of her own, counts on Millay's because this 'evil' woman-temptress enacts Millay's own poetic self. The symbolic in this poem (i.e., the form it takes with an apparent invisibility of this woman) and the semiotic (unsaid) language in it invite Millay's readers to revisit her poetry in line of the author's male and female characters and the issue of perspective in them.

6. Conclusion

This research has explored the speaking subject in Millay's poetry as regards the portrayal of women in her poem: "Witch-Wife," its connection with Kristeva's *chora* and semiotic space, the role of women in nature connected with the image of the fairy and a modern transposition of "Witch-Wife" to the graphic format. The constant flow of inferences at stake in this poem come hand in hand with the image that Millay wanted to show publicly. This is an image of strength in any and every circumstance and of self-control. A feeling that is what ultimately brings her to admit that she is her own master, no one else can tell her what to do or even what she is. She knows that the path to self-discovery and a better understanding of herself cannot be attained but with an introspective voyage into herself. The willingly playful (little explicit) overtone of "Witch-Wife" indicates that the poet is indeed in full mastery of her creative genius and her sense of 'I.' The organic and mutable chains of signification and resignification in this poem point at the sigs within and outside it, too, to the life of their author and her time.

The natural setting in the poem "The Singing-Woman," as Estés' study has demonstrated, provides the perfect framework for the discovery of woman's internal eye in the form of a spiritual quest of her sense of 'I.' Although the imaginary beings in this poem show an innocent side of her life as a child, the animals from the real world indicate that life is also dangerous (e.g., the adder,

the frog). They are normally connected in the popular imaginary to witches and this, in turn takes us back to the previous poem. Interpreted from Millay's poetics, women are never presented as secondary characters (not even when, as in "Witch-Wife," they do not have a voice). Nature works here as the symbolic externalization of her narrator's semiotic flow of signs in the form of memories, cross-cultural elements and biographical references. Thus, the subject in this poem can be interpreted as the infant version of the witch-woman in the homonymous piece, in the form of a novelistic prequel to the present life of this woman. We could hence draw a fine line that runs from the child in "The Singing-Woman" (who actually sings her woes to her fellow creatures in the wood) to the determined, free 'witch' in the second poem, represented by Millay herself.

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It's a Man's World

Re-examination of the Female Perspective in Chopin's "Désirée's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour"

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the portrayal of the female perspective in a largely male-dominated society of the Old South in Kate Chopin's short stories: "Désirée's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour". The paper relies on the new historicist approach for the analysis of race and gender in Chopin's "Désirée's Baby" and marriage as a burden in "The Story of an Hour". The paper concludes that the aforementioned issues did not only cause the re-inscription and interrogation of the female perspective but a major proliferation in the works of Kate Chopin as one of the predecessors to feminist writing.

Keywords: Chopin, gender, new historicism, "Désirée's Baby", "The Story of an Hour"

Introduction

The world of the Old South within the territories of the United States of America portrays a large number of stories worth telling. However, not many of these tales perpetuate a happy ending, and moreover, many entwine aspects of racial and/or gender inequality on various levels. This phenomenon can be observed in a number of works which are considered a part of the American literary canon. In many of these pieces, a character's gender or skin-hue will dictate their development or even the eventual fate within the boundaries of the narrative framework. Gender, especially, plays a prominent role for certain characters. Writings of Kate Chopin exemplify some of the aforementioned elements of race and gender, and her narrative works pose a number of questions which reflect the nineteenth-century socio-cultural background of the American society. Chopin's writing skills allowed her to use her tales as an artistic canvas on which she would draw the perfect lines which grant the readership a more prominent insight into the cultural backdrop of her own age. The authoress was able to successfully present different perspectives when the female psyche is concerned, allowing the readers to experience the issues of race and gender in different ways – for one is never enough. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to elaborate on the position of the female gender within the, primarily, male-dominated world exemplified by Chopin's selected narratives. Gender, especially female, played an important role within a single community, due to the fact that: "Gender tends to denote the social and cultural role of each sex within a given society" (Newman, "Sex and gender: What is the difference?").

This analysis of Chopin's writing relies on new historicism, a rather contemporary literary theory that recognizes socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts as determining factors in literary writing. In other words, new historicism propounds the embeddedness of history in literature, as outlined in Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher's book *Practicing New Historicism*:

> We are intensely interested in tracking the social energies that circulate very broadly through a culture, flowing back and forth between margins and center, passing from zones designated as art to zones apparently indifferent or hostile to art, pressing up from below to transform exalted spheres and down from on high to colonize the low. (13)

As mentioned above, Kate Chopin's works have garnered attention in terms of the socio-cultural and socio-historical occurrences and their relatedness to the contemporary world. Most of Kate Chopin's literary oeuvre is nowadays categorized as regionalist writing or local color fiction. Critics and scholars put a strong emphasis on the difference between regionalism and local color, as explained by Ferris and Wilson in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Literature-Recreation*:

> Although the terms *regionalism* and *local color* are sometimes used interchangeably, regionalism generally has broader connotations. Whereas local color is often applied to a specific literary mode that flourished in the late 19th century, regionalism implies a recognition from the colonial period to the present of differences among specific areas of the country. Additionally, regionalism refers to an intellectual movement encompassing regional consciousness beginning in the 1930s. (867)

Broadly speaking, the aim of the local color technique is to portray all features of a particular region such as dialect, landscape, ((post-) colonial) customs or common behavioral patterns. One of the most lauded examples of local color writing is Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884, 1885). The thematic concerns in local color fiction specifically those of female writers, such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Kate Chopin, extend to the interrogation of the position of women in the society. The aforementioned ideas have been influential on the modern world's perception of race and gender and the overall comprehension of human relationships.

In Chopin's "Désirée's Baby", it becomes apparent that the subjugation of women is based on their gender and race. Furthermore, the authoress presents a notion of gender-tension between the two sides, and how the protagonist had to face a rather cruel fate at the whim of her racist husband, simply because a veil of secrets had not been lifted until it was too late. Désirée became an outcast, forced out of her marital home because her husband Armand initially believed her to be 'racially impure' due to her mysterious heritage. On the other hand, the character of Madame Valmondé can be perceived as a woman ahead her own time. In a world full of subjugation and stereotyping on the basis of one's gender, Madame Valmondé stands as a highly discerning character who on occasions can be examined as a pure contrast to her adoptive daughter Désirée. Madame Valmondé is a female character never fully immersed into the world of male domination; hence she is someone who is not subdued by the societal norms which dictated the female position. In addition, "Désirée's Baby" observes

miscegenation as a consequence of sexual exploitation of female slaves that was a common practice.

Kate Chopin likewise addressed the negative connotations of marriage, and one of her short stories also revolves around the inner, most intimate elements of the female psyche, exemplified through the personality of Louise, the protagonist of "The Story of an Hour". The authoresses tackled the idea of how burdensome matrimony may be for both parties, regardless of the gender. Although this narrative does not explicitly explain how Brently might have mistreated his wife Louise (if at all), both Désirée and Louise in the end endure tragic fates, yet they somehow still appear to be liberated from the hegemony imposed by the male sex. Even though the period of the nineteenth century has long passed, it is still of paramount importance to understand the importance of giving voice to the female cause, whereas Chopin's works contribute greatly to such a task, and allow more depth for the understanding of the female perspective.

"Désirée's Baby": The Crossroad of Gender and Race

The mid-nineteenth century was marked by a number of demands for the enfranchisement of women reaching its apotheosis in the Seneca Falls Convention organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The Convention raised a number of issues pertaining to the educational as well as the economic and familial prospects and responsibilities of women ("Seneca Falls Convention"). One of the driving forces of the women's rights movement was the abolitionist movement that argued for the end of slavery. The two movements bonded along the lines of freedom. In her works Kate Chopin interweaves both race and the position of women. The matter is further complicated if the point at issue concerns women of color, as is the case with Chopin's "Désirée's Baby".

"Désirée's Baby" is reported to have been written on 24 November in 1882. It was first published in *Vogue* on 14 January in 1893. A year after, "Désirée's Baby" was included and published in the collection of short stories by Chopin titled Bayou Folk. *Vogue* praised Chopin as:

> A beautiful woman, whose portrait fails to convey a tithe of the charm of her expressively lovely face, has been an honored contributor to Vogue almost from its first number. ... Mrs. Chopin is daring in her choice of themes, but exquisitely refined in the treatment of them, and her literary style is a model of terse and finished diction. ("Kate Chopin and Vogue")

Situated in Louisiana before the Civil War, "Désirée's Baby" deals with the plight of the title character, Désirée, after she was found as a baby in front of the Valmondé mansion. Désirée's unknown origins do not prevent the Valmondés to accept her as their own child. Similarly, Armand Aubigny, a wealthy planter and owner of L'Abri, does not mind Désirée's obscure origins and marries her in the antebellum period when race and social order played an important role. The reversal of the story occurs when Désirée gives birth to a baby boy who starts displaying dark skin features. Armand interprets the color of the boy's skin as a sign of Désirée's racial impurity. Désirée leaves with the baby and goes to bayou. The resolution of the story does not reveal whether Désirée committed suicide or

not. However, the ending unveils that it is Armand who is partly black by his mother.

The marriage of Désirée and Armand traces back to "when she stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow she had lain asleep, eighteen years before, that Armand Aubigny riding by and seeing her there, had fallen in love with her." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 182). The formulation of the quotation above reveals that it was Armand who fell in love and the one to choose which concurs well with the nineteenth century precepts of male-female relationships. When he was reminded of Désirée's unknown parentage by Désirée's adoptive father, Armand took on the patron-like behavior, as visible from the following quote:

> Armand looked into her eyes and did not care. He was reminded that she was nameless. What did it matter about a name when he could give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana? He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 182)

Armand is the one to give his surname, assuming that it would make her more worthy in the eyes of others. In addition, possessing "one of the oldest and proudest" surnames makes Armand's decision of marrying Désirée beyond doubt. Furthermore, Désirée's wishes are not mentioned in the passage that describes the period before their marriage. She is rather presented as an object traded between Armand and Monsieur Valmondé who "wanted things well considered: that is, the girl's obscure origin" (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 182). It seems that Monsieur Valmondé does not want to jeopardize his own position in the community if Désirée's origins were to dishonor Armand's name. Hence, the emphasis is on the mutual respect and what they perceive to be solidarity between men. Descriptions of Désirée further reinforce the image of a perfect daughter who is "beautiful and gentle, affectionate and sincere - the idol of Valmondé" (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 182).

The image of Désirée as feeble and gentle is more elaborately developed in her marriage with Armand: "When he frowned she trembled, but loved him. When he smiled, she asked no greater blessing of God." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 184). All Désirée's action and mood depends on those of her husband. Her world is crushed after Armand's behavior to her is changed:

> When he spoke to her, it was with averted eyes, from which the old love-light seemed to have gone out. He absented himself from home; and when there, avoided her presence and that of her child, without excuse. And the very spirit of Satan seemed suddenly to take hold of him in his dealings with the slaves. Désirée was miserable enough to die. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 184)

The behavior of both of them indicates that Armand is the axis around which their lives revolve. Désirée's physical appearance, such as "The young mother was recovering slowly, and lay full length, in her soft white muslins and laces, upon a couch." or "She sat in her room, one hot afternoon, in her peignoir, listlessly drawing through her fingers the strands of her long, silky brown hair that hung about her shoulders." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 183-184), suggest an almost angelic behavior that was expected of women of the time. From 1854 to 1862, Coventry Patmore, an English writer and critic, published a

narrative poem titled "The Angel in the House" in which he described his wife Emily as the paragon of femininity and virtue. The poem was highly popular in the English-speaking world. The term 'angel in the house' later became appropriated as a standard up to which all women should strive. In other words, complete dedication and subservience to husband and the household was expected. Any type of trespassing of the boundaries was considered unchaste ("Angel in The House by Coventry Patmore"). The above-mentioned dualistic norms are highly exclusive since they argue for one of two extremes. In the case of women, one either complies with the expectations and earns the title of a good woman or fails to meet the requirements thus earning the status of an outcast. The same logic was applied to races. If not fully white, people were shunned and enslaved. Hence, no wonder that women rights movement representatives were the same who were involved in the abolitionist movements.

In "Désirée's Baby" the above-mentioned standards of women and race become intertwined after the childbirth when Désirée is identified as a member of the black race through her child. Madame Valmondé is the first to notice that something is different with the baby:

> "This is not the baby!" she exclaimed, in startled tones. ... Madame Valmondé had never removed her eyes from the child. She lifted it and walked with it over to the window that was lightest. She scanned the baby narrowly, then looked as searchingly at Zandrine, whose face was turned to gaze across the fields. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 183)

By looking at Zandrine, Madame Valmondé wants either to compare the child to Zandrine or to check if she noticed anything unusual. Madame Valmondé asks Désirée about Armand's attitude to the baby and Désirée replies:

> Oh, Armand is the proudest father in the parish, I believe, chiefly because it is a boy, to bear his name; though he says not - that he would have loved a girl as well. But I know it isn't true. I know he says that to please me. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 183)

Désirée acknowledges that Armand revels in the fact that the child is a boy. Similarly, Armand assumes that Désirée would like to have a girl more than a boy. Désirée's and Armand's opinions, respectively, perpetuate centuries-long gender convention: women prefer female children whereas men prefer male children more. Moreover, Désirée brings up an important aspect of the society of the day and a widely held opinion which is that male children should inherit the family's possessions whereas girls were expected to marry.

In contrast, Madame Valmondé displays a liberal and accepting attitude in her response to Désirée's letter in which she asks for help: "My own Désirée: Come home to Valmondé; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 185). Madame Valmondé invites Désirée to come back with a child at a time when divorced and abandoned women were shunned by the society, thus outdistancing the socio-cultural norms. Furthermore, Madame Valmondé makes no mention of Désirée's father. It can be inferred that Madame Valmondé is her own decision maker. Her character is consistent with the previously mentioned fact that women rights movement representatives were also pro-abolitionist.

Another example of Désirée fitting into the role of a frail woman, as mentioned above this was a common gender norm, is when she notices that something about the baby is changed and she asks Armand to clarify the situation to her:

> "Armand," she called to him, in a voice which must have stabbed him, if he was human. But he did not notice. "Armand," she said again. Then she rose and tottered towards him. "Armand," she panted once more, clutching his arm, "look at our child. What does it mean? Tell me." He coldly but gently loosened her fingers from about his arm and thrust the hand away from him. "Tell me what it means!" she cried despairingly. "It means," he answered lightly, "that the child is not white; it means that you are not white." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 184-185)

On the one hand, Armand's behavior is suggestive of possible gaslighting as he is convincing her that she is not white. He is telling her what she is and what she is not. Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al wrote about this type of domination in Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions-Seneca Falls (1848)*:* "He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her conficence [sic] in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life." (4). Désirée loves Armand to the extent that she shows blind obedience as suggested in the following quote:

> My mother, they tell me I am not white. Armand has told me I am not white. For God's sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 185)

On the other hand, for Armand as a man, it seems to go by default that the Désirée is to blame. For Désirée as an "angel in the house", it is by default that Armand is not to blame. Regardless of the hints of Armand's parentage in the form of descriptions of his physiognomy and childhood, there is no instance at which his status is questioned. He blames Désirée for the color of the baby's skin, considering it an insult:

> He thought Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him; and felt, somehow, that he was paying Him back in kind when he stabbed thus into his wife's soul. Moreover he no longer loved her, because of the unconscious injury she had brought upon his home and his name." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 185)

In addition, Armand's behavior indicates that his system of values, in which he prefers one race over the other, is greater than his love for Désirée. Unlike his father, Armand is not able to transcend the ideas of race that he associates with superior-inferior relationship. It has been argued that Armand's cruelty is reflected not only in his termination of marriage with Désirée but also with the clear assertion that he does not want to acknowledge the baby. Nonetheless, the latter is quite plausible taking into consideration that he possibly fathered the quadroon boy who fans the baby. It is the quadroon boy that has a revelatory impact on Désirée:

One of La Blanche's little quadroon boys - half naked too - stood fanning the child slowly with a fan of peacock feathers. Désirée's eyes had been fixed absently

and sadly upon the baby, while she was striving to penetrate the threatening mist that she felt closing about her. She looked from her child to the boy who stood beside him, and back again; over and over. "Ah!" It was a cry that she could not help; which she was not conscious of having uttered. The blood turned like ice in her veins, and a clammy moisture gathered upon her face. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 184)

It seems that Désirée did not contemplate the fatherhood of La Blanche's children up to this moment although she does give the impression of being familiar with it earlier in the story. Chopin gives a hint of Désirée's cognizance of the above-mentioned fact at the very beginning of the story: "And the way he cries," went on Désirée, "is deafening. Armand heard him the other day as far away as La Blanche's cabin." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 183). Attention has often been drawn to the sexual exploitation of slave women, as is the case with La Blanche. Although there is no further detail on Armand's sexual exploitation of La Blanche and probably other slave women in his ownership, such horrors have frequently been described in both fiction and non-fiction. For the sake of illustration, the following excerpt from Tony Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008), a slave narrative, is more than relevant:

> I don't know who is your father. It was too dark to see any of them. They came at night and took we three including Bess to a curing shed. Shadows of men sat on barrels, then stood. They said they were told to break we in. There is no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below. (Morrison 142-143)

The children born as a result of colonial miscegenation, mulattos, quadroons, or octoroons, would also be slaves without any recognition by the father, evident in the quadroon boy's position. In 1935, Langston Hughes produced a play titled *Mulatto: A Tragedy of the Deep South* which speaks of identity issues in children fathered by the owner of the plantation. The play also speaks of the treatment of the female slave, Cora, who lives with her owner but is never accepted as neither wife nor mistress due to social constraints though there are signs of affection on the part of her master. In "Désirée's Baby", it cannot pass unnoticed that Armand, among a number of slaves he owns, mentions La Blanche to make a point of Désirée's "dark" skin:

> "It is a lie; it is not true, I am white! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair," seizing his wrist. "Look at my hand; whiter than yours, Armand,"" she laughed hysterically. "As white as La Blanche's," he returned cruelly; and went away leaving her alone with their child. (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 185)

The passage above is denotative of Armand's lineage by his mother, as explained in the letter found at the end of the story:

> "But above all," she wrote, "night and day, I thank the good God for having so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his mother, who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery." (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 186)

The letter implies that a love-like relationship did exist between his father and mother who was black, which makes the character of Armand's father antithetical

to that of Armand. While this may be true, the fact that Armand's father had an estranged wife suggests that he did comply with certain social standards. In spite of the frequent interpretation of the last passage in the story as a moment of truth for Armand, it is not certain whether he knew of the letter before or not. Could it be that Armand knew of his bloodline and internalized the inferiority complex to the extent of naming his black slave La Blanche (the slave owners often christened their slaves with renaming)? This hypothesis becomes clearer with the translation of La Blanche's name from French which means "The White Woman" (Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* 494). In the same vein, his insistence to marry Désirée despite her unknown origins might be suggestive of his knowledge of the fact that his mother is black or racially mixed. However, Armand's actions are never questioned in any way. A significant amount of literature puts forward that even the reader does not question either his actions or physiognomy but tends to suspect Désirée. In her book titled *Unveiling Kate Chopin* (1999), Emily Toth holds that:

> Kate Chopin had more than one real-life model for Armand Aubigny. Her own father, Thomas O'Flaherty, was a powerful man who ruled over a large household---including a thoroughly dependent wife whom he had married hastily, and a young woman slave by whom he may have had children. (145)

The analysis of "Désirée's Baby" intimates that, unlike some of her contemporaries, Kate Chopin does not minimize the number of her female characters in comparison to male characters to discuss the woman question. This story has a larger number of women than men. Apart from presenting women who were shaped by the social norms of their time, Chopin introduces that character of Madame Valmondé as a woman ahead of her time in some aspects, as outlined in the discussion. It is more than plausible that Chopin managed to portray different female characters since she herself was raised by a number of women and subsequently raised her six children on her own ("Biography, Kate Chopin"). Therefore, it can be concluded that Chopin's "Désirée's Baby" paves way for a number of interpretations in terms of race and gender which has been a burning issue over the past few centuries.

The Burden of Marriage in Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

Self-determined female characters have been a part of the literary canon written in English throughout many centuries. Both in the British and American literary canon, one is able to explore a number of female characters which held their ground against all those subjugating norms of conduct asserted by the male-dominated population. In other words, a large number of writers have created such fictional personalities which either influenced or completely changed the world largely dominated by men. From William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë in English literature, all the way to the likes of Kate Chopin or Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the American literary canon. Chopin depicted a number of female characters who epitomize the subjugated spouse in their own marital clusters, and such examples can be observed in her works such as *The Awakening* (1899), "Désirée's Baby" (1893) and her very short narrative piece dubbed "The Story of an Hour". Naturally, such narrative works formulate a much

clearer picture of the position of women and the inequality among genders within the territories of the Old South in America. By perceiving the aforementioned narrative stories as the very mouthpiece through which Chopin rendered certain portions of the American society, readers are granted greater insight into the 'world of men'. Moreover, this chapter will focus primarily on "The Story of an Hour" in order to better understand how the forbidden longing for liberty arises within the mind of the main character, but also how matrimony, as a social institution, affects women who appear to live their own lives by the music of the husband's flute.

When the socio-cultural context of the nineteenth-century American society is taken into account, it should be noted that one document stands out as the beacon of light and the monumental letter of equality for the American citizens. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence presented the idea of equality for all citizens of the United States of America. By this proclamation, everyone is allowed to retain their right to live, possess liberty and pursue their happiness. In the eighteenth century, or more precisely in 1776, the document stated the following: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" ("Declaration of Independence: A Transcription"). However, even the wording is ambiguous herein. Primarily, this document allows liberty, freedom, equality and it renders the permission to prosper when the people living in the US are concerned. But if one re-reads the same lines, the question arises of whether only all *men* are created equal. Did Jefferson intend only for the male population to be granted liberty and unalienable rights? Did the American society place males on the pedestal since only they had been created equal amongst each other, while women were born unequal and not endowed with the same set of rights as men? Some of these enquiries can be traced in Kate Chopin's literary opus.

In "The Story of an Hour", and in her other works as well, Chopin offers and/or describes those instances which shatter the standardized social norms, as such, but also in turn, these moments give birth to self-desire, self-recognition, and likewise in Chopin's fictive world, create consequent despair and self-alienation. Therefore, "The Story of an Hour", written and published in 1894, exemplifies some of the aforementioned aspects.

> [...] Chopin offers concentrated descriptions of moments that shatter social complacency, that quickening of consciousness which gives birth to self-desire, self-recognition, and, in Chopin's fictive world, consequent despair and self-alienation. Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," written 19 April 1894, is undoubtedly her most famous and intense reading in this line. (Papke 51)

Ergo, Kate Chopin's writings can serve as a more concrete and detailed insight when it comes to the outward realm of women in the nineteenth century, but her authorship also presents a more profound depiction of the inner psychological and/or emotional element of her heroines. In this case, the protagonist of "The Story of an Hour" is a woman called Louise Mallard. The short story analyses the stream of ideas, the growing desire for liberation and the contemplation of one woman who, at least in her own mind, moved farther away from the societal norms in order imagine a better life for herself – however, this newly-formed

existence would not be tied to her spouse, but rather, she would be able to live solely and unequivocally for herself.

The storyline of this narrative is a rather simple one. It revolves around the plot situated in one-hour timeframe, as the very title implies. The story, in essence, captures Louise's complicated reaction once she learns her husband is dead. "The Story of an Hour" opens up with Richards and Josephine who try to find a way in which they would be able to break the news to Louise. This news – Louise's husband Brently perished in a railroad disaster. Josephine is worried that this tragic news would endanger Louise's weak heart condition. However, the wife's mental response is unusual. Instead of grieving for her husband, she retreats upstairs and slowly but surely starts developing thoughts of liberation. Initially, she refuses to allow herself this freedom of thought, but the same message reaches her through the scenery outside of the window frame and from the outside. The nature outside charges Louise with fresh energy, but more importantly, she also starts experiencing hope. She starts realizing that the world itself is sending her such veiled instructions or hints, and the protagonist of the story pieces such hints together. Chopin does not state directly that Louise is overly happy with Brently's death, per se. It is obvious that she is not done weeping for him, but his demise allows Louise freedom to breed her self-determination. She imagines how all the oncoming years would be reserved solely for her; she would take life into her own hands. Louise leaves behind her marriage, and the shackles which held her back during her matrimony. She believes she is finally free. Yet, her happiness does not last forever, because very soon, Brently Mallard returns. He is alive and well and the story behind his demise was nothing else but a misinformation. His mundane appearance is contrasted to Louise's as she walks down the stairs. While she is coming down the stairs triumphantly, Louise is utterly bewildered once she notices her husband. Her strength wanes and her heart stops. However, ironically, the physicians believe that she died from joy – in other words, the doctors conclude that Louise died from overwhelming happiness created by her husband's return. Nonetheless, the readers can observe the ironic twist, since Louise died from the shock of losing her newly-gained freedom. Louise briefly experienced the sense of joy, imagining herself in control of her life, and with the removal of such intense happiness, the protagonist quickly lost her life (Sustana, "Analysis of 'The Story of an Hour' by Kate Chopin").

Chopin presents the story of a heroine who, at least within the course of one hour, manages to harbor thoughts of a life created in an alternative sphere. That is, Chopin presents Louise's inner bravery to imagine how Louise's life, as a widow, would suit her much better than her current reality as a wife. By being so courageous, although internally, Louise is able to stand against the norms of society, and she even questions the standardized qualities of matrimony, whereas the protagonist simply sees marriage as something which confines her. With her growing imagination and desire, in the process of what would nowadays be dubbed as brainstorming, Louise removes the 'mind-forged manacles'. With her growing determination, the heroine of Chopin's narrative begins 'looking outside the box', and she likewise shatters the self-imposed social and intellectual restrictions. Louise removes the coils of these mental chains, these psychological handcuffs, which one of the most prominent poets of the English Romanticism

called 'mind-forged manacles'. "Self-imposed social and intellectual restrictions deprive humans of experiencing nature and the true human spirit. The "mind-forg'd manacles" represent Blake's perception of self-limitation and the denigration of the human imagination" (Whitney, "The 'Mind-Forg'd Manacles' of Blake's Poetry"). Thus, one is able to draw parallels between Blake's poetry, his socio-political ideas, and Kate Chopin's authorship in the nineteenth-century timeframe.

Louise's sister Josephine informed Louise of Brently's death. Allegedly, he was killed in a railroad accident, and taking into account Louise's condition: "It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing" (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 1). The idea of concealment and hidden truths is evident from the very opening of the short story. Once her grief had withered and her tears subsided, the heroine moved upstairs and sat in her armchair, observing the scenery outside. However, the readers are soon able to easily detect certain discrepancies between her public, outward demeanor, and her inner, intimate opinions. Louise actually creates an enactment of her complete grief. In other words, the emotions which she projected for public, and the medium of her tears used to transmit her sorrow did not in actuality reflect her deepest sensations. Louise Mallard is forced to pretend that she is saddened by this news in front of her sister and her husband's friend, although deep inside, she grows more and more excited with the thought of being liberated from her marriage once and for all.

> "The Story of an Hour" focuses on the reaction of the character Mrs. Mallard to the news that she has become a widow. The distinction between public behavior and private emotion extends to inside the home; Louise is forced to pretend, even in front of her sister and friend, to mask her happiness at the years ahead of her. She is happy to gain freedom, even at the price of the death of her husband. As she grieves her husband's death outwardly, she is excited on the inside, which Chopin shows us through her thoughts. (Rajakumar and Rajeswar 180)

It would appear that Louise's gender dictates her rules of conduct; that is, her role as a woman in the nineteenth-century American society, and moreover her position of wife in her own marriage would force her to lament her husband's passing. Nevertheless, the situation is surmised in a totally different manner – she is outwardly mournful, yet inside, Louise is gleaming. Therefore, "The Story of an Hour" evokes discussions relating to social and cultural gender roles, and as Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar and Geetha Rajeswar explain: "In the nineteenth century, American women divorcees and spinsters were viewed negatively" (183). From this notion, it becomes obvious that a woman's gender plays an important part, because a particular woman is viewed negatively if she is not married or if she is divorced from her husband. In any case, a woman is perceived in regard to her man. It is her (non)-marital status that dictates her position in the society, and Chopin represents these facts in a number of her works brilliantly. Thus, the American community of the nineteenth century definitely appears as a gender-divided environment, whereas women experience the highest degree of inequality. That society is predominantly a male dominion, a man's world.

Once Louise returns upstairs and the events transpiring around her begin to sink in, she suddenly feels that something is coming to her. A revelation of some sort, epiphany in other words. She waits for it, fearfully:

> There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air." (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 2)

In this portion of fear and awe which is gradually piercing her, it is obvious that she is removing her mental chains, the restrictions of her gender, as well as her inner, most desperate desires of her heart. Catherine Sustana explains that the entire scenery symbolizes this brief effect of freedom, and Chopin emphasizes this part. Firstly, she was unable to fight her oncoming joy. Her own mind-forged manacles were being destroyed and the authority of her society was slowly dismantled. The spring outside symbolizes the birth of a new life, a life in this sense where Louise could live happily, without any restraints of her matrimony. She starts thinking intelligently, even though social norms might have prevented her from doing so ("Analysis of 'The Story of an Hour' by Kate Chopin"). Louise, in this sense, is going against the grain and Chopin elaborates on this notion by describing:

> She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window. (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 1)

This new arrival of spring symbolizes revitalization; it alludes to rebirth and a new start. Just as Louise starts harboring thoughts of a better existence, so does the season of spring change places with winter and it brings hope of a better tomorrow. When lexemes and phrases are closely analyzed, Chopin inserted such words which demonstrate liberty, both metaphorically and literally. In one passage, the authoress describes: "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!"" (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 2). The repetition of the word 'free' stresses this importance of getting out of something, in this case, her marriage. She is now liberated from this institution, and she is capable of living her life in the best possible fashion. Such words escape her lips, just as she now believes she is escaping her own past and her previous life. ""Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering." (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 2). The authoress elaborates on this notion how every part of her existence, every part of the main character as a woman would be freed; her mind is released, her body unclutched. She would now be her own identity, her own mind and body. Henceforth she would construct her own identity, as it would no longer be constructed for her.

Kate Chopin also depicts a particular stray in Louise's stream of thoughts. Moreover, it appears at certain moments in the narrative that Louise actually returns in mind to her (allegedly deceased) husband. She evidently contemplates

love, and stresses the notion that there were, indeed, instances when she loved Brently. Certain images of Brently are recalled to Louise's memory, for example: "She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead" (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 2). The main character realizes that her tears are not yet fully gone – better to say, that some of her emotions are still there, because she would have to mourn for him a bit more. What should be vividly noted in this segment is the fact that Chopin, or Louise in this case, does not openly list or categorize any offences which her husband might have committed.

In some following lines, Louise contemplates the notion that: "There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature" (Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 2). One should note the use of phrases – both *men* and *women* – is listed in this particular regard. Chopin plays with the linguistic categories of gender in these words, by juxtaposing them with one another. Sustana elaborates on the idea a powerful will of some sort which would influence or sway other individuals would no longer exist. Furthermore, Sustana adds that since it becomes apparent that Chopin never fully explained whether Brently truly mistreated Louise, it seems that marriage, as such, was an unpleasant and unwanted experience for both men and women. The implication lies herein; matrimony could be nothing else but a tedious, stifling process for both parties involved ("Analysis of 'The Story of an Hour' by Kate Chopin").

The motif of repression is ever-so-prevailing throughout the narrative. It is only through her realization that Louise starts to think, to feel, to rejoice at her new opportunities. She has been given a chance of a better life. Ashley Robinson explains that just like Louise, many women of nineteenth century were, indeed, victims of repression. Just because of their gender, women had a certain set of rules which they ought to follow. The female gender was supposed to be demure, gentle, and passive, which often went against women's personal desires ("The Story of an Hour: Summary and Analysis"). Nevertheless, Louise now felt her own triumph, she would start anew. She would now live all those oncoming years for herself. However, a surprise was on her doorstep, and in this particular regard, the surprise is there literally.

Brently Mallard returned home. He was never at the place of the accident, and was alive and well. Coming down the stairs filled with her personally victory, Louise was utterly shocked when she saw him, and her heart stopped. Her poor heart condition now became prominent, and the shock killed her. However, the doctors said: "... she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills". Sustana emphasizes that Louise was robbed of her short-lived liberty, she was now yet again denied the right to live freely, without her husband. Brently returned, and his wife now perished due to the fact that her happiness was stripped away. She would never live in the manner which she saw fit, she would not be free for as long as Brently is alive. The physicians misdiagnosed her passing, believing her to be dead because of some overwhelming joy, yet this was not the case ("Analysis of 'The Story of an Hour' by Kate Chopin"). Furthermore, Louise's sudden passing could be perceived as a form of her long-desired freedom. Perhaps not in the manner which she imagined, but it seems that her ultimate fate was the only way

to get out of her marital situation. Death would be her door to escape marriage (Rajakumar & Rajeswar 183). Yet, such 'deviances' in female behavior were not uncommon in literary descriptions of the nineteenth century American canon. Another notable example of wrong treatment imposed on the female gender can be observed in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper". Just like the narrator of that work, Louise finally finds her liberation, but in a completely different manner. The woman in Gilman's work has been diagnosed as, somewhat, mentally instable, although she eventually departs from her husband. Those women who were not perceived as docile, thus submissive to men, were observed as taking more masculine power than allowed, and were, therefore, perceived as overly manly. They gained a notorious reputation, and the woman in "The Yellow Wallpaper" might have been confined to the enclosed space because her demeanor and intellectual pursuits were too introspective (Marland, "The Yellow Wallpaper"). Thus, both women can be perceived as characters misdiagnosed by the professional medical workers, which emphasizes the notion of how much the female gender was misunderstood during the course of the nineteenth century.

Kate Chopin brilliantly exemplified the dismal position of women in America, and how many were more often than not undermined simply because of their gender, never being allowed to conduct their lives freely. Stories as "Desiree's Baby", "The Story of an Hour" or even *The Awakening* allow for the creation of an overview through which readers are able to understand how much the English-speaking world has changed over the course of few centuries. Even though the twentieth century saw the biggest upheavals regarding women's rights, many things have not yet been tackled. Was it a high hope for a low heaven when the female gender is concerned? Emancipation of women, in truth, contributed greatly to female equality since Chopin's own time, but pride and prejudice against women will prevail for as long as a single community is perceived as a male-dominated environment. So, the question remains: is it a man's world after all?

Conclusion

The single most marked observation that emerged from the analysis of Chopin's short stories is that her fiction is a convolution of different issues that burdened nineteenth century America, which is the reason why the new historicist approach was used in the paper. The thematic issues in "Désirée's Baby" extend from gender to race issues. A well-known fact about most nineteenth century societies is that social norms dictated the superiority of male over female gender as well as the superiority of white over the black race. To rebuke the aforementioned perceptions, Chopin created characters who are wholly/partly black and whose manners are the epitomes of desirable and/or expected male-female behavior of the day. The characters of Désirée and Armand with their behavior perfectly fit into such description. Quite the opposite, the character of Madame Valmondé is unconventional to a certain extent as if it were Chopin herself who entered the story. In "The Story of an Hour" Chopin tackles the institution of marriage and its effects on female and male genders. The story also explores the possibilities of freedom from marriage, as exemplified with the character of Louise. The focus of

the story is the gender oppression imposed by marriage which in turn causes the repression of individual desires. Although patronizing, the nineteenth century socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts shaped Chopin's literary output and made her one of the precursors of feminist writing.

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The Story Behind the Ink[1]

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Abstract. The objective of this study is to describe the ways in which tattoos can be seen as *acts of identity* through personal discourse and a form of visual communication within a community of practice. This paper includes descriptive qualitative and quantitative research of people and their relationship with their tattoo(s) and their identity. The data of this study was obtained through a questionnaire broadcast online both in French and in English, for tattoo bearers of all genders. The goal of the survey consisted in discussing the individual story behind each tattoo and its wearer: is the story a matter of agency, identity, gender, social class, ethnicity, personal expression of experiences, emotions, grief, or a mixture of two or more reasons? How can tattoos be regarded as a form of language that shapes the self and identity of individuals?

Keywords: Gender, identity, discourse, tattoos

1. Introduction

This article addresses the notions of identity through the marker of tattoos that we consider as a type of language, a form of discourse and visual communication (Belkin & Sheptak, 2018). Identities are conveyed and shaped by language, which means that linguistic organisation reflects a sense of belonging in its inner structure. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, language has been questioned by theoreticians who see language as reflecting and strengthening hierarchical social orders that oppress minorities and individuals that fall outside the dominant norms. Scholars working on Gender and Language Studies now approach language as *discourse* that either fits or subverts patriarchy (Butler, 2011).

This paper will study the ways in which tattoos are used as a form of expression, and as a way of shaping and creating gendered identities. Tattoos will be also addressed as an alternative discourse, or literacy, that shapes the self and the experiences of individuals in a community (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2007; Kirkland 2009). This paper will then address the link between tattoos, identity, and gender, and how tattoos are a matter of expression, of meaning, and of the self through language, pictorial images, and symbols (McDougall, 2012*)*. For the researchers of this present paper, who are specialised in these particular issues, each tattoo has a *story*. By story, we mean a narrative containing a literal meaning and an inner one: related to identity, personal experiences, expressions and emotions. These stories lead us to our main research question: what is the story behind the ink? We will also introduce and discuss the results and data collected.

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The aim of our research project is to explore the personal stories people tell through their tattoos. The data was collected from a survey which was shared on social media, chiefly *Facebook*, for two weeks, which was followed by semi-directed interviews with three of the participants. Finally, we will discuss how people define and relate themselves in relation to the notions of gender and identity through tattoos.

2. Literature review

2.1. The Self and Identity

Within the Social Sciences, the terms *self* and *identity* are used in various contexts. The importance of self and identity in terms of who I am and what I am – is not only a North American but European concept as well. Generally speaking, identity is used to refer to one's social *face*, especially in terms of negative and positive face– how one perceives how one is perceived by others (Goffman, 1973, 1974). Self is generally used to refer to one's sense of "who I am and what I am" (Belkin & Sheptak 2018, p.1). However, these are not dualistic constructs. The concepts of self and identity indeed evolve out of social interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As individuals, we are active participants in our own self/identity construction (Ibid, 1987). The notion of self is important because each individual has a very personal vision of their own self. The self is, therefore, very closely related to the notion of identity, and we notice that individuals do not express their selves in the same way since there is no concrete manner in which to do so.

Expressions of the self, especially self-identity may be conveyed by verbal communication and interaction (McConnell-Ginet, 2007), social interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and also visual communication, such as tattoos on the body (Belkin & Sheptak, 2018). The act of tattooing oneself is often undertaken as part of a significant life change or healing process, and it can be seen as the opportunity "to 'story' the self" (Woodstock, 2014 p. 782). Tattoos can also be regarded as an intersection between self-identity, the body, and society (Belkin & Sheptak, 2018). As a result, tattoos shape the self and the body of the wearer into a communicative body (Ibid, 2018). Tattoos provide clues about the wearer's self-identity, their perceptions of reality, ideology, and worldviews.

In this study, we establish links between the expression of the self and identity of the tattoos wearer, with a particular focus on gender identities. We explore to what extent gender influences a person's choices when deciding on a tattoo. We will discuss gender in relation to identity in the next section.

2.2. Gender and Identity

Gender Studies question gender representations in society by taking into account the notions of masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2009, Winter, 2010). In *Sexing the Body* (2000) Fausto- Sterling developed the idea of Mooney and Ehrardt from the school of North American scholars on gender, namely that gender is a psychological, cultural, and constructed concept: masculine vs feminine (Fausto-Sterling, 2000 [1972]). Furthermore, Fausto-Sterling adds that

Mooney and Erhardt discuss that it is necessary to make a distinction between gender roles and gender identity (Fausto-Sterling, 2000 [1972]). The first category, gender roles, describes the behaviour and gender identity of individuals in the public sphere, whereas the second category, gender identity, describes private and personal experience of self:

> 'Gender role' is everything that a person says and does to indicate to others or to the self the degree that one is either male, or female, or ambivalent (Fausto-Sterling, 2000 [1972], p. 257).
>
> Gender identity is as 'the sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as male, female, or ambivalent. ... Gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public experience of gender identity' (Fausto-Sterling, 2000 [1972] p. 4).

Gender identity may also imply the notions of masculinity and femininity. Those notions are analysed as cultural and social constructions of identity. The term gender is considered by many scholars a polysemic term. According to the context, its meaning may vary. Since the 1960s, North American theoretical studies have emphasized the fact that gender is primarily an identity that is produced by a social system: feeling and being a man or a woman in society (Fausto-Sterling, 2000 [1972]). From a sociological perspective gender is also regarded as a system, particularly, a named system that tends to produce norms that would influence gender roles and social behaviours of individuals (West & Zimmerman, 1987). According to scholars, specialized in Gender Studies, "norms of heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity are cultural and social constructions" (Butler, 1990, p. 25).

Gender Studies in France address the notion of gender as a patriarchal system that aims to naturalise and trigger hierarchy regarding the differences between men and women (Delphy, 2013). This patriarchal system was created in order to ensure that men could dominate women (for instance, in institutions, laws, legal system, education, and politics) (Ibid, 2013). According to some scholars, such as Butler (1990), Scott and Varikas (1988), and Scott (2009) in North America, or Delphy (2013) in France, gender as a system puts power at stake because it is able to produce or oppress gender identities. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler, and later Dorlin in France (2008), claims that "multiple identities (homosexual, transsexual or intersex etc.) are produced and oppressed because they are seen as subversive and deviant from the standard norms imposed by gender system" (Butler, 2004, p.43-44; Dorlin, 2008, p.109-110). As a result, the gender system discussed above produces very strict and tight binary norms. The latter can be confirmed, reproduced or literally subverted.

We will now consider that tattoos embody a direct visual expression of identity that could be expressed and understood in various ways, for instance, the social or political identity, and so on. We will discuss this point in the next section.

2.3. Tattoos and Identity

In 1769 the term *tattoo* was first used in the writings of Captain Cook to describe the manmade pigment designs in the skin of the indigenous people he encountered around Polynesia (Harper, 2001). Later, during the mid-1880s,

tattoos became popular as a form of linguistic expression in North America and Britain, particularly amongst the upper classes (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). Swami and Harris explained that during that time "in the wealthy class, the purpose of tattoos was to impress, and in the working class, tattoos were to express" (Fisher, 2002, p. 95; Swami & Harris, 2012, p. 58). During the 1980s, scientists, and in particular sociologists, began to observe the use of tattoos as a form of protest against capitalism and conservatism within the punk and gay community (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). Therefore, tattoos have long been associated with a person's identity whether it be their origins, social status, sexuality, or their beliefs.

According to Ruffle and Wilson, there are three types of people in relation to tattoos: non-tattooed people, people with hidden tattoos, and people with visible tattoos (2018), which suggests that having a tattoo is not only a choice, but also a choice of whether to display it or not. Thus, tattoos are part of a person's physical identity, which can be hidden or shown depending on context and intimacy. This reflects other aspects of identity, such as political or sexual preferences, that the person may decide to reveal if they choose and within certain contexts.

If we accept the premise that tattoos are a visual representation of identity, we must identify what areas of identity are most linked to tattoos. The reasons for getting a tattoo are as varied as the tattoos themselves. They can be to commemorate events or people (Forbes, 2001; Horne et al., 2007) or personal growth and individuality (Atkinson, 2003; Dickson et al., 2015). Some people use tattoos to show and highlight aspects of their identity and personality for others to see (Dickson et al., 2015). Others turn important life experiences into visual affirmations of their individual or collective identity and/or familial loyalty (Woodstock, 2014). However, not all tattoos have a story to tell; many people often cite getting a tattoo because they "just wanted one" or because they "like[d] the looks [sic] of it" (Dickson et al., 2015, p. 108).

According to a study carried out by Csesznek and Stemate, there are eight main reasons for getting a tattoo: "Beliefs and ideologies, aesthetic reasons, strengthening their identity, strengthening social ties, tribute to social models, curiosity, loss of a loved one, emotional support" (2019, p. 64). These themes are often mentioned in other studies about tattoos which explain the reasons why those themes are used certain ways. Atkinson explains that tattoos can be used as a form of affect management whereby the bearers deal with strong emotions such as grief when losing a loved one (2003). Tattoos allow people to respond to emotions in an active, normative, and measured way (Atkinson 2003; Dickson et al., 2015). Tattoos often represent changes that have a significant impact on the bearer's identity such as the beginning or end of a chapter of someone's life, or a change of profession, or moving country (Atkinson, 2003; Dickson et al., 2015).

Csesznek and Stemate also explored the various themes of tattoos in the 2000s. They found four main categories of tattoos, as follows: "Symbols that they like, personal identity (family or friends), cultural, religious or ideological themes" (2019, p. 64). In a study of tattoos and tattoo parlours, Woodstock concluded that the narratives of the tattoos themselves are, above all, "intimate tales about overcoming illness, recognizing loss, and celebrating life", regardless of the bearer's race, class or gender (2014, p. 783).

Having a tattoo can provide clues about a person's own self-perception of their identity as well as how a person wishes to be perceived by others. There are people who get a tattoo in order to change their image of themselves or to change how they are seen by their peers (Armstrong et al., 2002). Pritchard argues that tattoos are "neither purely one's own nor another's, but rather a kind of split between the individual and the general" (2000, p. 332).

Tattoos are becoming increasingly accepted in society (Sanna, 2016) and in turn more people are getting tattooed, this leads us to believe that more people wish to express themselves and their identity through tattoos. According to a study published in 2010 by Pew Research, 38% of millennials[1] have at least one tattoo and 69% of those have more than one. 32% of generation X is thought to have at least one tattoo (Dimock, 2019). Most tattooed people view tattoos as a means of expression (Forbes, 2001). The choice of tattoo is generally well thought-out and performed whilst sober (Dickson et al., 2015). This reflection proves that tattoos are an integral part of a person's physical identity and rarely the result of impulse and as a result tattoos are linked to the person's idea of their identity and how they wish to turn their identity into a physical and visual demonstration.

In 1996 Gell described tattoos as both the link and the division between the physical body and culture (1996). This means that tattoos can either align a person with the culture they are a part of, such as the Maori tradition, or be a display of rebellion against a more conservative community (Pritchard, 2000). The tattoo bearer will have gone through "the process of *symbolic creativity*" and selected a phrase, image, or marker from the plethora of cultural signs and symbols available to them, and used that "to establish and present their existence, identity and meaning" (Dickson et al., 2015, p. 108).

Moreover, tattoos are often seen as a way of aligning oneself with a group of people or a movement (Kalanj-Mizzi et al., 2019), as was the case in the 1980s punk and homosexual communities (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). In the same vein, tattoos can be used as a both a "marker of individuality or a group identifier" (Kalanj-Mizzi et al., 2019, p. 198). Gang culture notoriously uses graffiti and tattoos to mark its territory and identify its members (Bazan et al., 2002; Piley, 2006). Due to the illegal nature of some marginalised groups and their prominent use of tattoos, tattoos have therefore been associated with this part of subculture (Armstrong et al., 2004).

There are several factors where gender actively influences a tattoo wearer. It has been suggested that men have tattoos as a symbol of group identity more often than women (Horne et al., 2007), whereas women tend to have tattoos for decorative reasons (Forbes, 2001). The location of the tattoo on the body also tends to be influenced by gender. Horne et al. found that women not only have fewer tattoos than men, but also choose parts of the body where the tattoos can be easily hidden (2007). This decision to hide tattoos could be because there is still an element of prejudice towards females with tattoos, which may stem from the sexist belief that tattooed females have violated traditional gender norms

[1] People born between 1965 and 1980 are deemed to be part of Generation X. Those born between 1981 and 1996 are considered to be Millennials, those born between 1997 and 2012 are categorised as being Generation Y (Dimock, 2019)

(Broussard & Harton, 2018; Hawkes et al., 2004). Another study suggested that women have the tendency to get tattoos on or near intimate parts of their body, for example on the lower back or hip, whereas men are more likely to choose *public skin*, such as their arms or legs (Manuel & Sheehan, 2007) this may suggest that women associate tattoos with sexual intimate relations more than men.

We consider that tattoos embody a form of visual language (Belkin et al., 2018) that expresses or provides clues about an individuals' identity (Dickson et al., 2015). We aim to confirm the theories established by our peers and also develop our own theory on language use in tattoos as an expression of linguistic identity. We will discuss how language use relates to identity in the next section.

2.4. Language and Identity

In a globalised world, language hybridity is becoming increasingly common as the boundaries of communities of practice are being broken down by the internet and globalisation (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2007). "Language is social" (Denissova et al., 2019, p. 23) and as a consequence, in a globalised world language also crosses borders in the same way that humans do.

The linguistic choices that people make can be seen as "acts of identity" (Jaworski, 2014, p. 138), which can be related to gender, social class, and ethnicity: otherwise known as intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality emerged in Northern America in two key works by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989; 1990). This particular concept tries to explain power and identity relationships between individuals, in regard to social class, gender, race, language (Block & Corona, 2016). It also acknowledges that when studying identity everything must be taken into consideration, that is to say, gender cannot be isolated and studied alone. Race, social class, education etc. must also be acknowledged as significant factors in defining a person's identity. According to Bucholtz and Hall, identity is produced by language and linguistic interaction, where identity is "the social positioning of self and other" (2005, p. 586). This could be explained in terms of individual awareness: to either distance oneself from others by demonstrating uniqueness or to develop social bonds and affiliations with groups as part of social identity (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017).

Other researchers, such as Johnstone, have found that identity, and with it a sense of self, is generally conveyed to the social world through a form of discourse (1996). Given that discourse is a form of language, and it has been argued that discourse is a series of acts of identity occurring through language (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), it can be reasoned that language is therefore an act of identity. However, the relationship between language and identity is not a causal relationship but rather a reciprocal one. Language is the medium for the transmission of both culture and values as well as influencing identity (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017). As a consequence, script tattoos, tattoos containing words or letters, are visual examples of discourse and ultimately acts of identity that also imply language choice.

2.4.1. Language Choice

When people learn or speak a second or third language they face a linguistic choice each time they wish to communicate. Language choice is generally determined by the target audience, but in the case of tattoos and other forms of artistic expression it is more closely linked to the individual and their language identity.

Language choice has been referred to as "secondary culture identity", and is described as the skills needed in order to communicate in a multi-cultural setting (Denissova et al., 2019, p. 22) where identity is influenced by language choice as well as language use (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017). Due to the intertwined nature of culture and language learning, it is impossible to learn one without the other, and knowledge of a new culture ultimately shapes and develops an individual's identity (Denissova et al., 2019). Besnier concludes that using English, as a second or other language, in discourse or written form, establishes the language user as cosmopolitan and modern (2003).

Language choice is personal and fundamental to that individual's identity. It is entwined with all other aspects of their identity and is proof of their position in the linguistic world. Script tattoos are, therefore, examples that highlight or reveal an individual's position in the linguistic world, their relationship to their identity by making precise language choices for their tattoos. We will now explore script tattoos in the next section.

2.4.2. Script Tattoos

The researchers have discovered that there is a gap in the literature and research surrounding tattoos in different languages. The researchers therefore view tattoos as examples of text art and as a literacy practice. Text can be defined either "spoken or written languages" (Fairclough 2013, p. 3). Texts are used to represent reality, facilitate social interactions and form new identities (Halliday, 1978). Text art is where the "language is the image, or a dominant element of the visual field." (Jaworski 2014, p. 140).

> Image-text relations – and their investigation within a broad range of disciplines from literature and philosophy to art history and geography – have a rich and varied tradition. (Gross 2010, p. 277)

Tattoos are one such example of pictures and letters being combined into text art, and therefore even script tattoos alone can be considered as art. Body art and tattoos are a means to express a person's identity and some scholars believe that even non-script tattoos also be considered "active expressions of linguistic command" (Mollegaard, 2016, p. 349). It has been stated that such hybrid formations of language and art are examples of "art infused with language," whereby the language is "both verbally intelligible and purely visible matter" (Oramas & Ferrari, 2009, p. 13). Magro and Martinez-Avila argue that not every language choice is necessarily an act of identity, however, when considering script tattoos language choice is always an act of identity due to the language being permanently marked on the bearer's skin (2018).

Kirkland argues that tattoos are an alternative literacy practice and that tattoos are literacy artifacts (2009). Pictorial or script tattoos tell the story of a

person's life. When the bearer decides to use a specific language for their tattoo, they are making a decision about their identity and how they wish to be perceived by others. The bearers choose a language in order to place themselves within a specific social landscape through their use of tattoos as a linguistic practice (Eckert, 2012).

Language choice when communicating is generally decided for the target audience, when it is for use in a tattoo it is chosen for the wearer. When a tattoo wearer makes a choice about their script tattoo, they make a choice about how they identify with language and languages themselves and so, they also choose, in a sense, how to display their linguistic identity (Denissova et al., 2019). We, furthermore, question if the gender parameter may have an influence on the language choices tattoo bearers make when deciding and designing script tattoos. We will now discuss how gender impacts discourse.

2.5. Gender and Discourse: The Impact of Gender on Discourse

The distinction between men's and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture, not the problem itself. It reflects the fact that men and women are expected to have different interests and different roles, to hold different types of conversations, and to react differently to other people (Tolmach-Lakoff, 2004 [1975], p. 62).

Since 1975, North American linguists Tolmach-Lakoff and later Tannen (1991) have questioned the weight, even the burden, of conversational styles of men and women. Are conversational styles real choices, or assigned ones? Social pressures compel individuals to abide by the rules of masculinity or femininity (Winter, 2010, Dolan, 2010, 2014). Gender shows up, speaks up, and plays up in both verbal communication, interaction, and gestures. The linguist and anthropologist Birdwhistell in 1970 and later Goffman (1974) and Tannen (1994) remind us of the notions of gender display and recognition and gender-identifying behaviour (Birdwhistell, 1970; Goffman, 1974, Tanenn, 1994). As a consequence, gendered conversational styles belong to social behaviour that performs and validates assigned gendered norms. Gender is therefore a regulative factor for social norms. In other words, men and women conform to appropriate styles in their interactions so as to guarantee their social value:

> There is an increasing body of evidence that (...) age, grade, status, courtship, territoriality, play, mood, states of health and of alarm or well-being are completely and intricately patterned and learned. To be viable members of their social groupings, fish, birds, mammals, and man must engage in significant symbolization – must learn to recognize, receive, and send ordered messages. In other words, the individual must learn to behave in appropriate ways which permit the other members of the group to recognize and anticipate his behavior. Society is that way in which behavior is calibrated so that existence is not a process of continuous and wasteful trial and error. (Birdwhistell 1970, p. 74)

In some institutions, a man or a woman who refuses to conform to gender and assigned norms runs the risk of facing social sanctions or even isolation. Being anti-conformist, through gestures, language, clothes, or aesthetics could result in mockery and/or even loathing from peers. Men and women are therefore faced with the existential challenges of being themselves or abiding by societies' rules

and norms. All these social constraints have been summed up by Tolmach-Lakoff in 1975 by the very famous quotation: "Damned if you do; damned if you don't'" (1975, p. 39)

The existence of constraints in language is not surprising since language is a *social fact,* par excellence (Saussure, 1999). Language is therefore part of located inscriptions, collective regulations of semiological and behavioural codes. In this vein, in 1994, the North American linguist Tannen produced theoretical work *Gender and Conversational Interaction* in which she claims:

> The "cultural" and "social" approach to gender and language usually refers to the proposal by Maltz and Borker that males and females can be thought of as belonging to two cultural groups since they tend to socialize in primarily sex-separate peer interaction during childhood. Another aspect of cultural patterning that bears on gender and language is the recognition that gender is only one of many cultural influences affecting linguistic and social behaviours (Tannen, 1994, p. 5)

Tannen's theoretical framework on the impact of gender discourse has been largely influenced by Tolmach-Lakoff (1975) and recently and accurately theorized by North American linguists such as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet. In *Language & Gender* (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2007), both argue that gender plays a structural role in verbal and non-verbal interaction. According to them, gender is in the background of our discourse. Gender is implied, implicit, and belongs to shared assumptions upon which every form of communication relies, including tattoos (Ibid, 2007). According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, many interactional practices exist (2007). As a result, "gender identity" construction is a dynamic process which draws itself in interaction on a daily basis" (Ibid, p. 59). Interestingly enough, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's perspective, enacting speech is only possible thanks to an individual (2007), who always has an objective in mind (*saying, convincing, sharing)*. Furthermore, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet conclude that "style or discourse is not a façade behind which the *real* self stands but the means by which we present ourselves or ourselves-in-making to the world" (2007, p.248). In other words, stylistic practice is at the crux of performativity. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet both consider that language, discourse and society are inseparable (2007). As a result, gender, discourse and interaction all belong to a pragmatic approach of language. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet claim that a "pragmatics approach sheds light on practice meaning, and usages" (2007, p. 43). For instance, Tolmach-Lakoff sees language and any form of discourse as meaning making:

> Making meaning is a defining activity of Homo Sapiens, and that it is more than just a cognitive exercise, since those who get to superimpose a meaning on events control the future of their society. And since so much of our cognitive capacity is achieved via language, control of language—the determination of what words mean, who can use what forms of language to what effects in which settings—is power. Hence the struggles I am discussing (...) are not tussles over "mere words," or "just semantics"—they are battles over the ability to define, and thus create, a large part of our reality (Tolmach-Lakoff, 2000, p. 42).

Gendered discursive practices are part of the *communities of practice* (Eckert, McConnell-Ginet, 2006 [2003]). The concept of Communities of Practice was,

introduced by Wenger and Lave in 1991. Communities of Practice initially referred to educational and professional contexts. Nevertheless, the concept was also extended to groups of people tied by their discursive performances of gender, for example

> The notion of community of practice takes us away from a community defined by a location or a population. It is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. [...] Gender is produced (and often reproduced) in differential memberships in communities of practices [...] The symbolic value of linguistic form is taken as given but [...] in actual practice, in social meaning, social identity, community memberships, forms of participation, the full range of community practices and the symbolic values of linguistic form are being constantly and mutually constructed. (Eckert, McConnell-Ginet, 2006 [2003], p.200-202)

The central themes that are at stake here are community and bounding (Tannen, 2001 [1991]). In other words, belonging to a community who are bound together because of common language practices. This idea is particularly accurate when referring to tattoos as a common (linguistic) practice. We consider, therefore, that tattoos are a linguistic and an expressive practice which focuses on the concepts of community and bounding (Ibid, 2001 [1991]) within a bounded community. Indeed, tattoos can be seen as symbolic expression shared by various individuals belonging to the same society or culture. Tattoos become therefore a linguistic, discursive, and expressive practice that gathers people around common aesthetic preferences and hence has the power to favour bounding, interaction and even become a marker that shapes identity within a community. The symbolic nature of tattoos also lends itself to tattoos being seen as identity markers, a common linguistic practice that allows the bearers to interact with others through their culturally established aesthetic preferences (Bell, 1999; Dickson et al., 2015). We will explore that particular point in the next section.

2.6. Tattoos as a Linguistic Practice

Tattoos are much more than just decorative art forms, they are also seen as a vehicle for expression (Velliquette et al., 1998). When people have a tattoo, it is because they have a message that they wish to convey permanently on their body using an image or language. Tattoos can be defined as visual language (Belkin & Sephtak, 2018), or visual discourse that tends to influence the indexation of identity in society. According to McDougall, "the function of a language is to convey the meaning; even more than that, it should convey the inner thoughts and feelings of the individual person" (2012, p. 328), consequently a script tattoo is the wish to permanently display an inner thought or feeling through language. These inner thoughts of feelings being a crucial part of an individual's identity.

Bearers choose tattoos which are symbols that are meaningful in their social and cultural worlds (Atkinson, 2003; Dickson et al., 2015). Tattoos fulfil both the basic role of body decoration: a "surface [...] filled with hieroglyphs telling one of the stories of corporeality in history" (Falk, 1995, p. 95) and also allow people who go through ineffable experiences to express themselves using the linguistic and practical tools available, in this case, tattoos (Armstrong et al., 2002; Greif et al., 1999; Sanna, 2016).

More recently people have been getting literary tattoos, also known as: "book tattoos", "bookish tattoos", "lit tat", or "lit ink" (Chassagnol, 2018). This type of tattoo can be part of script tattoos when it contains words or letters, or part of pictorial tattoos when it is just images. This trend has not gone unnoticed; in 2007, *Contrariwise: Literary Tattoos* became one of the first online blogs to observe this phenomenon by inviting photographic contributions from literary tattoo-bearers (Chassagnol, 2018). This was swiftly followed by the first anthology entitled "*The Word Made Flesh: Literary Tattoos from Bookworms Worldwide"* which brought together the inked and the writers, including the quotes and poems featured in tattoos (Chassagnol, 2018). This trend suggests that the interest in script tattoos is growing as an increasing number of people have a tattoo linked to literature, and also people's relationship with language and literature is evolving as people wish to ink themselves with their favourite poem or quote instead of just having the book on the shelf. As a result, we also notice that individual's tastes or emotions conveyed by tattoos, and the tattoos themselves, are part of an identification process and therefore part of the person's identity.

Besides the issue of tattoos as a linguistic practice and the individual's creative process, we wonder if tattoos cannot be also related to the notion of community of practice (Eckert, McConnel-Ginet, 2007). That is to say a common language, a common (linguistic) practice that enables individuals to identify with within a community, namely the community of tattoo bearers.

2.7. Communities of Practice

Human beings have the ability to communicate and interact with one another through signs, symbols, and language (Denissova et al., 2019). According to the Australian linguist and feminist Spender in *Man Made Language*, language is a not a simple code for of expression, Spender wrote: "One of the crucial factors in our construction of this reality is language. Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: our means of manipulating reality" (Spender, 1980: 2). Furthermore, language, is also, in syntactic, grammarian, verbal and interactional forms, a very powerful tool in representation, which Delbecque called in French "*un outil d'idéation*" *a creative thinking tool* (2002 p.1) that could shape and influence our thoughts and behaviour in a negative way regarding *sex* and *gender* (Sunderland, 2006).

After having introduced and discussed our theoretical framework, we will now introduce the methodology which led the empirical study, namely the research questions, the data collection, the results, and the general discussion.

3. Research Questions

After presenting the current literature, the paper now introduces the data collection and analysis. Whilst exploring the relationship between tattoos, gender, and identity several key questions arose:

i. In what ways are tattoos a matter of agency, identity, gender, personal expression of experiences, emotions, and or grief?
ii. Are tattoos a means of expression?

iii. How can tattoos be regarded as a linguistic practice?
iv. What can be inferred about the relationship between tattoos, gender, and identity?

4. Methodology

The present study is based on an anonymous questionnaire that was broadcast online, both in French and in English via social networks including *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. *Facebook* was particularly useful due to its groups and pages which connect users who are not friends but who share a common interest. The questionnaire can be found in the appendices.

The study aims to describe the link between gender and identity expressed through the visual form of communication embodied by tattoos. The survey had two main angles and purposes: what category of tattoo does the participant have (script or image), and how does the participant see themselves and their tattoo?

The data collected from participants were survey answers, including a precise description of their tattoo, the language used in the tattoo, the different meanings given by the participants for their choice of tattoo, and how the wearers saw their tattoos in relation to their identity. The 119 tattooed participants were a mixture of ages, genders, who spoke predominantly English or French as a first language.

The participants completed the survey and were asked if they would be available for an interview, those who were willing were invited to leave an email address. The researchers undertook semi-structured interviews with three participants. The researchers carried out the interviews either via telephone, video conferencing, or face-to-face. All of the participants mentioned have been assigned pseudonyms.

5. Results

Tattoos are a form of personal, permanent expression chosen, or designed, by the wearer. The following results refer to a survey of people with tattoos. The survey was published on various social media sites (*Facebook, Twitter, Instagram*) for two weeks. 135 participants responded to the survey in either French or English. 16 respondents did not have a tattoo and were not included in the study[1]. The gender distribution of respondents was as follows: 83 female participants, 33 male participants, 2 participants who identified with neither gender and 1 who identified with both genders. The respondents were between 20 and 60 years old. As shown in Figure 1 the modal age group was 26-30 years of age.

[1] These participants were asked if they had a tattoo, if they replied in the negative their questionnaire came to an end. Perceptions of other people's tattoos were not an aspect of this present study.

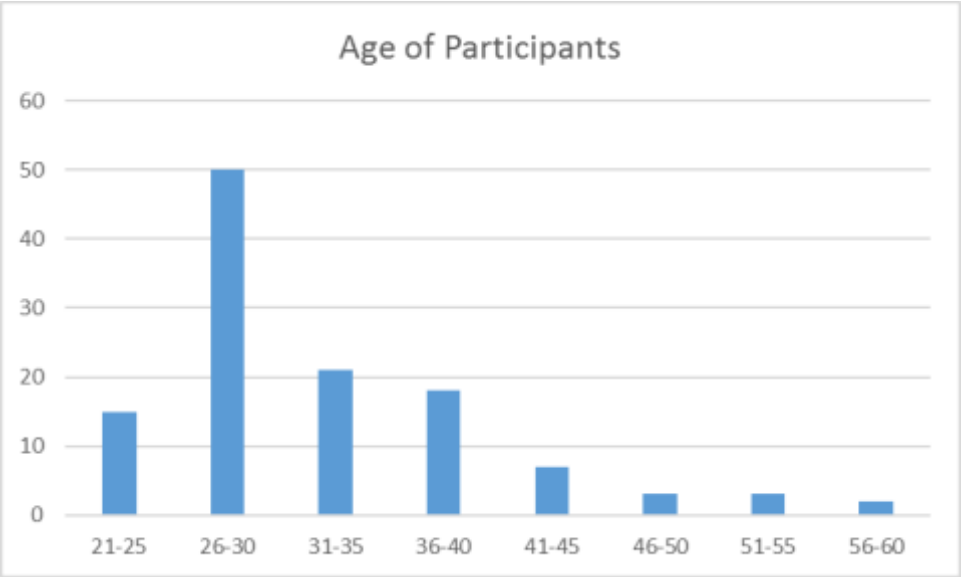

Figure 1 - Age of participants

The participants were also asked about the languages that they speak. Twenty-nine languages were cited. The most cited languages were: English (93 citations), French (41 citations), and Spanish (22 citations). The most common first language was also English (66 citations) followed by French (17 citations) and Spanish (4 citations).

Most of the participants (30%) had one tattoo. The 119 respondents with a tattoo were asked to describe their type of tattoos. Most of the respondents (72%) described (one of) their tattoo(s) as being only symbols, drawings or images, and 26% had a tattoo containing words or letters. Three people had tattoos that they categorised as "other". One person had been tattooed around their eyelids as a form of permanent make up (Female 51-55 years old), and another, a tattoo artist, described his tattoos as "abstraction" (Male participant 31-35 years old). The tattoo artist stated in the questionnaire that he is immersed in the world of tattoos and therefore the tattoos could have become abstracts parts of his identity.

5.1. Tattoos and Language Choice

Participants with a tattoo containing words or letters were asked what language their tattoo was in and why they had chosen that language. Thirty-four respondents said that they had one or more tattoos in the form of words or letters. The participants cited fifteen languages including English (21 citations), Chinese, (7 citations), Portuguese, Japanese, Latin and French (2 citations respectively) and music "the international language" (Female 26-30 years old). The reasons for choosing a specific language varied. Language choice was often linked to the person's experience (origins or travels[1]) or an aesthetic preference. On the other

[1] The earliest form of travel tattoo is the Pilgrimage tattoo. These tattoos commemorate having journeyed to a holy site. Christian pilgrim tattoos can be traced back to the 1500s (Sanna, 2016).

hand, one participant explained that their tattoo artist refused to write in French and therefore their tattoo was in Chinese:

> Chinois parce que mon tatouer ne voulait pas me l'écrire en français ! (Male 26-30 years old)
>
> Chinese because my tattoo artist didn't want to write in French![1]

They nevertheless agreed to have a tattoo in the language of their tattoo artist's choice, showing the importance and influence a tattoo artist may have over his/her tattooee.

Of the participants who had a language tattoo, seven explained that their tattoo was written in their L1 (first language), two said that their language tattoo referred to where they lived or had lived, and two participants said that it was because they were a language teacher. As described in the literature review, this result shows that language tattoos are strongly linked to personal identity. This could be relating to their childhood, their first language, a place they have lived or live, or a part of their career that they believe to be important enough to be permanently displayed on their skin.

Photograph 1 - Participant's name in Arabic (Male 30-35 years old)

The participant that bears that tattoo in photograph one wrote:

> "I am a language teacher although not of the ones mentioned. Languages represent certain aspects of myself. I love languages, always will! Awaiting one [tattoo] to be done in Latin". (Male 31-35 years old)

5.2. Tattoos and Identity

Steve, the tattoo artist we interviewed, gave the following reasons for people choosing to have a tattoo: "It's something that [is] such a personal reason and there's so many different ways to be tattooed." Steve explained that tattoos were often linked with the beginnings and endings of chapters in people's lives. Nevertheless, he gave two main reasons for people choosing to have a tattoo:

[1] Translation provided by the authors.

> A lot of people get tattooed for highly personal individual reasons or you can get a bro[brotherhood] tat1 or a gang tat [...] you'll see that a lot, that people will get that tattoo, like a certain tattoo with their friends [... and] more of my clients [for group tattoos] are women than men. (Steve, Tattoo Artist)

We have categorised these choices as being representative of both personal identity and group membership. The tattoo artist's testimony was supported by the following data we collected, that of the tattoo bearers.

In keeping with the diversity of tattoo themes collected by Csesznek and Stemate (2019), we found several themes related to the stories the participants gave for their choice of tattoo (see table 1 for a list of stories provided by the participants):

Story	**Citations**
Family	38
Loss of a loved one	19
Symbol or object that the participant loves	21
Design that the participant found aesthetically pleasing	14
Group or pair tattoo	12
Travel	12
Hardship or obstacles	11
Religion/ Spirituality	8
No Story	8

Table 1 - Story behind the tattoo

Our research confirmed four of the reasons for being tattooed cited by Csesznek and Stemate (2019) (beliefs, aesthetics, social ties, and loss of a loved one) yet, the data highlighted other previously unexplored themes including: a loved object or symbol, travel, and hardship. Csesznek and Stemate's results suggested that tributes to social models, curiosity, and emotional support all feature highly as reasons for having a tattoo (2019). However, our research suggested that social models are not a major feature of tattoos within our focus group and that few people decide to have a tattoo out of curiosity[2]. The research also suggested that the themes seen in tattoos can come in and out of fashion, religion and beliefs being the first reason in our study cited by Csesznek and Stemate (2019) whereas religion was the eighth most cited reason. These fluctuations represent the change of importance that people place on themes over time. Therefore, tattoos are a way of identifying contemporary social markers of identity. It must be noted that there were 38 separate (identity) stories cited for having a tattoo, which is testimony to the richness of stories behind the ink.

[1] Tat= abbreviation for tattoo
[2] 3 Male participants cited curiosity as the reason for their tattoo.

5.3. Tattoos and Sense of Membership

One form of group membership is family membership, and the most cited story for a tattoo was *family* (38 citations). Tattoos for family as a global category could be broken down into tattoos dedicated to parents, children, or siblings. The ways in which family was represented was individual to each tattoo bearer: for example, there were people who had the name of their child or their birthdate. Others had the initials of a family member, an object or animal to symbolise their family, or the family motto.

> Godmother and grandmother passed away so I have godmother's name and a quote for my grandmother. Stars representing my family and a quote to remind me that no one is perfect (Female 31-35)

One such participant had two tattoos on her legs to represent her parents through their jobs. She had a paintbrush tattoo for her father who is a painter and scissors for her mother who is a hairdresser. She also had the phrase "never forget your freedom" next to a swallow tattooed on her ribcage which is the advice her mother installed in her from a young age.

Photograph 2 - Paintbrush and scissors to represent the tattoo bearer's parents (Female 21-25 years old).

In another example featuring family ties, a male participant cited the variety of his tattoos, including personal interest and family. This shows that the bearers are not bound to one type of tattoo, they have a tattoo for each element of their identity and self that they wish to embody on their skin.

> I have a range of different tattoos. From my son's name to a portrait of Darth Vader. I have tattoos for my wife, son, grandparents, and parents. Others are quite meaningless. I have one that means never give up. (Male 26-30 years old)

One person explained that their tattoo was a heart on their palm, which geographically represented the place she spent her holidays growing up in

Michigan[1]. The participant explained that the message linked to this tattoo was "Home is where the heart is" (Female 21-25 years old).

Tattoos, as discussed in the literature review, are not only a way of showing uniqueness, but also a way of creating bonds with other people. Six of the respondents mentioned having an identical tattoo to someone else or to a group of people. The reason for collective tattoos is varied and could be for example, grief, a group holiday, or a wish to be a member of a community.

One participant explained that he and his cousin were curious to see what being tattooed felt like and decided to have vertical lines drawn on their shins at a party by a friend who was a tattoo artist. The cousins claimed that the vertical lines had no particular significance, apart from perhaps representing the fact that they shared them. Their female cousin has since decided to have the same tattoo to match them, emphasizing the motivation for strengthening a sense of family community through tattoo bearing.

Photograph 3 - The same tattoo shared by two cousins (Male 26-30 years old)

As in this example, most participants did not provide as specific reason for communal tattoos:

> [I have a] Lamborghini outline that 9-other people in my friendship group have (Male 31-35 years old)
>
> Le Batman est un tatouage commun avec mon frère (Female 31-35 years old)
>
> The Batman is a tattoo I have in common with my brother.

One participant explained that one of her tattoos was symbolic of her desire to belong and be included within the French community, see photograph 4. The tattoo in question was the French national flower: the iris. The tattoo represented both French culture and language. Her other tattoo was a sorority symbol, implying that the wearer belonged to an association or group that was represented

[1] Michigan is shaped like a glove and so the hand naturally reflects its shape.

by the tattoo, in this case, an anchor and therefore the association may be nautical.

Photograph 4 - Tattoo representing desire to belong and be a part of a group (Female 21-25 years old)

5.4. Tattoos and Grief

Twelve of the participants explained that they had tattoos because of a loved one that had passed away. The ways in which people documented their grief varied. This reflects the fact that grief is a very personal and individual emotion that everyone manages differently. Thus, any expression of this grief through a tattoo would be equally as personal. Grief is both an individual and often shared experience, for example, one tattoo bearer had the same tattoo as her brother to document the loss of their younger brother, see photograph 5. The act of sharing a tattoo brought the siblings closer together and allowed them to carry a physical reminder of their younger brother with them:

> "I never thought I would get a tattoo as I don't actually like them and I don't think they suit my personality and style. But I think my tattoo represents me and my new identity. I feel like it is a stamp of grief, a permanent symbol of the pain I will have to carry with me for the rest of my life..." (Female 36-40 years old)

Photograph 5 - Marking the grief of losing a brother (Female 36-40 years old)

Another participant explained that having a permanent tattoo was a way of symbolising a loved one's presence "[who] can't be removed from [the wearer] ever again" (Female 21-25 years old). Therefore, tattoos can not only be a link to other people who are grieving, but also a way of connecting the wearer to the person who has passed away.

Photograph 6 - Expressing the grief of losing a partner (Female 31-35 years old)

The tattoo in photograph 6 was designed by its wearer, Amy, after the sudden death of her partner. It represents her, her partner, and their pet. Amy explained that the process of being tattooed was similar to having a mid-life crisis and having a makeover, it was necessary for her personal grieving process:

> I lost my partner Alexander suddenly due to cancer and so I had a mini mid-life crisis, I dyed my hair and got tattoo of my cat. The bear is me, his pet name for me, then there's my cat, and the star is Alexander watching over us. (Amy, Female 31-35 years old)

5.5. Tattoos and Hardship

Six participants cited obstacles, hardships or challenges that they had faced as being the stories for their tattoos. One of the respondents with "Sink or Swim" inscribed on his arm was to remind him to "keep moving no matter how tough things get" (Male 26-30 years old). He was tattooed just before moving to a country he had never been to before and this was a challenge for him. He felt that the tattoo served as a reminder not to give up.

In addition, another respondent had a star to represent fishermen and "finding your way home" which she chose after going through a difficult time and so the tattoo symbolises her ability to cope. Another tattoo bearer also referenced the struggle against hardship as the reason for his "typical seaman's tattoo: Swedish flag, eagle, sinking ship and a rose". He also had a script tattoo which

read 'Last Port'" and the message of the tattoo was "to try until the bitter end" (Male 56-60 years old).

One female participant (26-30 years old) had multiple tattoos representing different areas of her life: her faith, experiences, and hardships. She had "warrior" tattooed on her side as a symbol of her strength and perseverance.

> [Tattoos] are representations of my faith and life experiences. They represent obstacles I've overcome as a way through my healing journey. Yes [they represent me] 100%. They have a message to me that I can do this ugly messy life and I'm strong and able. (Female 26-30 years old)

Photograph 7 - Tattoo representing personal strength (Female 26-30 years old)

5.6. Tattoos and Gender identity

Overall, the participants in our study did not explicitly say that their tattoos were linked to their gender, masculinity, femininity, or sexuality. When considering our results, we noticed that male tattoo bearers did not reference their masculinity or virility when replying to the survey explaining their tattoos. However, evidence of gender themes can be found in some of the tattoos and their stories. Four females, one male, and one non-binary tattoo bearer cited emotion, femininity, sexuality, or feminism as the story for their tattoo. When one of the participants was interviewed the researcher discovered that the hardships he had referenced in the survey referred to his sexuality and coming out.

One female participant (26-30 years old) had a feminist slogan on her wrist to mark the 100-year anniversary of women getting the vote. This historic landmark was particularly important for the participant as her great grandmother was a suffragette. Another female respondent (36-40 years old) had a feminist political quote "Nevertheless she persisted" tattooed on her neck and therefore it could be said that her gender identity was related to her political identity. One female participant (21-25 years old) had the phrase "cry baby" tattooed on her

thigh to represent her "sensitivity". Another, female participant (26-30 years old) had a moon tattoo which she said represented "femininity and emotions".

One participant's tattoo overtly represented their gender and identity. Nat (26-30 years old identifies with both genders) had a tattoo featuring the words "WAKE UP" tattooed on their thigh. This tattoo combines several of Nat's identities:

i. Wake up is used in the political sense to be "woke"[1]
ii. Each letter is a different colour of the rainbow as they are part of the LGTBQ+ community
iii. One of their passions is *wake*boarding
iv. Nat reported a life motivation to be uplifted as they described in French as "aller là haut" (to go/be *up* there)

Photograph 8 - Tattoo symbolising the bearer's multiple identities (Participant 26-30 years old).

During the interview, Nat said that they had been involved in different political movements during their youth, including the LGTBQ+ community. Nat reported having many passions and each of their many tattoos represented a different part of their identity. For example, they had a tooth because they were a dentist and a tattoo for each of the places they had lived. Nat's activism linked with their gender identity was one of the reasons why they, unlike others, had a tattoo openly linked to their gender.

One male respondent, Leo, explained that his tattoo represented the present breaking away from the past. The use of the deer was to symbolize both nature and being reborn. As Leo designed and drew his own tattoo, each element was linked to his personal struggle and growth. Leo explained that he had suffered from depression and anxiety in the past. He had had a hard time accepting his sexuality as he came from "a very strict homophobic Catholic family".

[1] "Woke" originates from African American Vernacular English. It refers to a person being socially aware. Its use has become increasinly popular since 2014 becoming entwined with the Black Lives Matter movement.

> "I kept asking myself if I was making a mistake, although I wasn't making anything, just being." (Male 26-30 years old)

His tattoo represented him moving on from his struggle to accept his sexuality and himself and learning to make something out of his past into something positive for his future.

Photograph 9 - Tattoo symbolising sexuality, hardship, and anxiety (Male 26-30 years old).

5.7. Tattoos and Aesthetics

Almost all of the tattoo bearers chose an object or symbol that they found aesthetically pleasing, but this was not often the only reason. Tattoos tend to be referred to as addictive (Murray & Tompkins, 2013), this *addiction* has turned into tattoo-mania (Sosin, 2014) and so finding an image that is pleasing to look at is sometimes reason enough because people who like to have tattoos often want more:

> Not all of them do have a story behind. Some of them are just beautiful to look at, others are symbolic for deaths and other moments I have a special relation to (Male 31-35 years old)

> Pas vraiment. Je ne pense qu'à moi lorsque je me fais tatouer. Il ne s'agit pas de chercher à revendiquer une appartenance à un groupe. Je trouve cela beau e quand j'y pense tout le temps, je le fais (Female 26- 30 years old)
> Translation: Not really. I only think about myself when I get tattooed. It's not about trying to claim membership of a group. I think it's beautiful and when I think about it all of the time, I do it.

Photograph 10 - female participant's first tattoo (scorpion in the hat) and a woman's face due to her love of the sailor jerry style (41-45 years old)

Another participant explained that he had always appreciated and liked tattoos. He saw them as aesthetically pleasing and a permanent reminder of his memories and life experiences:

> I've known I've wanted tattoos since I first saw one. The permanence of it is like a snapshot of your life from when you got it. Besides that, they can be beautiful and is a unique way of adorn your skin (Male 31-35)

6. Conclusion

The survey shows that tattoo bearers express themselves through script or pictorial tattoos. The participants explained their tattoos in relation to their identities. These identities could relate to life events, such as births, and deaths, or to relationships with others. Tattoos could also represent personal or community hardships such as the loss of a loved one, or social hardship.

The data of the survey revealed that no clear relationship between gender and choice of tattoo can be made. The stories behind the ink revealed stories about identity above all. Consequently, Tannen's hypothesis (1991, 1994) that communication and some language choice are gendered were not revealed in our study.

Our study tended to show that all the participants, however they identified, conveyed general personal emotions such as happiness, sadness, and grief through their tattoos. The expression of personal emotions through tattoo bearing was not shown to be linked to a matter of gender, or a question of masculinity or femininity, but rather a matter of humanity (Winter, 2010; Dolan, 2010, 2014). Tattoos are therefore a form of discourse through which people present their multiple identities rather than first and foremost their gender identity (McDougall, 2012). Particular meaning is not centred around only one or various gender identities but rather around the ideals, experiences and values claimed by an individual person.

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8. Appendices

8.2. Questionnaire

• Do you have a tattoo?
  ○ If yes how many?
• What tattoo content do you have?
  ○ Symbols
  ○ Language
  ▪ What languages do you know?
• Is there a story behind your tattoo? If so, what is it?
• Would you be available for an interview?
 	
• What age are you?
• What gender do you associate with?
• What languages do you speak in order of proficiency?
	• Avez-vous un tatouage ?
	  ○ Si oui, combien ?
	• Comment décririez-vous vos tatouages ?
	• Sont-ils écrits dans une langue précise ? Si oui, laquelle et pourquoi ?
	• Décrivez vos tatouages
	• Votre tatouage a-t-il une histoire particulière ? Si oui, laquelle ?
	• Est-ce que
	  ○ Vos tatouages représentent-ils des symboles?
	  ○ Sont-ils écrits dans une langue précise?
	  ▪ Si oui, laquelle ?
	• Votre tatouage a-t-il une histoire particulière?
	• Si oui, laquelle ?
	• Seriez-vous d'accord pour vous entretenir avec nous à ce propos ?
	
	• Quel âge avez-vous ?
	• Etes-vous un homme ou une femme ?
	• Quelle est votre langue maternelle ? Parlez-vous d'autres langues ?

8.2. Questionnaire Full Results

Feature	Frequency

Men	31
Women	83
Prefer not to say	15
Other	6
Number of tattoos	440
Tattoos with symbols	107
Languages	**Citations**
English	21
Chinese	7
French	2
Japanese	2
Portuguese	2
Swedish	1
Arab	1
Egypt	1
Greek	1
Korean	1
Mandarin	1
Spanish	1
Thai	1

Stories behind the Tattoos Citations			
Story	**Citations**		
	Male	Female	Other
Family	5	33	-
Grief	2	17	-
Something the bearer loves	7	14	-
Aesthetically pleasing	4	10	-
Travel	3	9	-
Group/ Pair tattoo	2	10	-
Hardship/ Challenges/ Obstacles	2	9	-
Religion/ Spirituality	4	4	-
No story	3	5	-
Job	4	2	-
Origins	3	3	-
Impulse	1	5	-
Memories	-	5	-
Life experiences	1	3	-
Gender	-	4	1
Gift	2	2	-
Love / Partner	1	3	-
Curiosity	3	-	-
Rebellion	-	3	-
Friend	-	3	-
End of relationship	-	3	1
Positivity	1	2	-
Linked to the self	1	2	-
Mistake	-	2	-
Astrology	1	1	-
Strength	-	2	-
Scar cover	-	2	-

Improper Ladies

Gender and language in Frances Burney's *The Witlings* (1779)[1]

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Abstract. This paper analyzes Frances Burney's representation of the relationship between language and gender in her play *The Witlings* (1779). Through an analysis of verbal exchange and the written word in *The Witlings,* I argue that in this work Burney revealed a good deal of her own approach to literature and her idea of woman at the end of the eighteenth century, and more specifically of the woman writer, as trapped in patriarchal culture and conditioned by her social image.

Keywords: Frances Burney-eighteenth-century British drama- gender studies-English literature.

1. Introduction

Frances Burney (1752-1840) was the eldest daughter of the acclaimed musicologist Dr. Charles Burney (1726-1814), who had entered the most distinguished eighteenth-century circles thanks to his friendship with the aristocrat Fulke Greville. Frances was also part of a family saga which included Captain James Burney (1750-1821), the painter Edward Francesco Burney (1760-1848), and the not less famous Sarah Harriet Burney (1772-1844), who was also a successful writer with an interesting life and work. Burney spent some time at Windsor Court as Second Keeper of Robes to Queen Charlotte and fell in love with the French General Alexandre D'Arblay, whom she married defying parental authority. Throughout her *oeuvre*, Burney was a sponsor of feminism; she was highly aware of the position of the novel and the power of women novelists at that time, when many women — like Susana Centlivre, Elizabeth Inchbald, Joanna Baillie, Frances Brooke or Hannah Cowley— wrote plays and novels opposing the prejudice of being called 'novelists' and at the same time they vindicated the verisimilitude of their fiction (Lorenzo 26). Both in the prefaces to *Evelina* (1778) and *The Wanderer* (1814), Burney expressed her commitment to writing and insisted that her characters came "from nature" (Burney *Evelina* 7). Her comparison of male critics with censors from Antiquity not only empowered female novelists but it was also a reminder: "you were all young writers once" (Burney *Evelina* 5). Burney's first literary achievement, *Evelina*, inaugurated the novel of manners that Jane Austen would elevate to perfection and placed Dr. Burney's daughter in a privileged position among British authors. Other feminocentric novels would follow (*Cecilia* [1782], *Camilla* [1786], and *The Wanderer*), as well as an essay (*Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy* [1793]), some comedies (*The Witlings* [1779], *Love and Fashion* [1798], *A*

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Busy Day [1800-2], and *The Woman Hater* [1802]), and tragedies (*Edwy and Elgiva* [1788-9], *Hubert de Vere, The Siege of Pevensey*, and *Elberta* [1789-91]).

Already a canonical author, Burney is the protagonist of a good deal of research by eighteenth-century scholars and those interested in gender studies. Regarding her dramas, we are particularly indebted to Joyce Hemlow and Peter Sabor for their editorial work, and to critics like Barbara Darby, who has focused on Burney's dramatic corpus. We owe to Hemlow the seminal work "Frances Burney: Playwright", where the scholar published the first research on Burney's dramatic texts until her contribution was retaken by Peter Sabor. Both the Burney's studies and eighteenth-century literature studies have to be grateful to Sabor for his admirable edition of Burney's plays based on the Berg Collection at the Public Library of New York. More recently, Darby has examined Burney's drama from the perspective of gender studies and has placed Burney in a broader context. Darby states that "late eighteenth-century women writers used the stage and its conventions to analyze the position of women in their society and their gender-specific experiences of such institutions as the family, government, and marriage", and she stresses their effort to depict "alternative modes of existence for women both on and off the stage" (3). Besides, The Burney Society promotes the study and appreciation of Burney's works and regularly meets at conferences in Europe and North America sponsoring *The Burney Letter* and *The Burney Journal*. Interest in Burney's drama has lately arisen in other parts of the world, and there is even a translation into Spanish of *The Witlings* and *A Busy Day* (Burney 2017).

In this paper I analyze *The Witlings*, a comedy by Burney that has never been the main focus of the Burney studies (for criticism on Burney's drama, see *El ridículo* 27-33). I argue that in *The Witlings* Burney tackles the troubling relationship between sex and language, and she explores how opinion constructs woman socially. Burney not only represents the power of the spoken word but also how the written word conditioned female reputation and her own reputation as a woman writer at the end of the eighteenth century. The connection between discourse and women in Burney's *oeuvre* has been stressed by feminist scholars (see McMaster and Bilger). Nevertheless, though it is an issue that permeates Burney's novels, it has never been examined in her work for the stage so far.

2. Comedy and women writers

Burney turned her eyes to the theatre at the early stages of her career, when few authors wrote purely classical dramas and many theatrical forms —including tragedies and sentimental comedies— satirized fashion and depicted domestic trials with romantic love scenes having in mind a middle-class audience. There was a tradition of female playwrights, like Frances Sheridan, Elizabeth Griffith, Elizabeth Inchbald, Hannah Cowley, Hanna More, Sophia Lee, or Joanna Baillie. As Felicity Nussbaum points out, female dramatists were attracted to the burgeoning business of writing for the newly feminized stage and women's indispensability to the commercial theatre was firmly established during the eighteenth century ("Actresses" 149). Most of these authors favoured variations of social comedy "to participate in topical debates without alienating those

audiences who would be resistant to the idea of an 'unfeminine' —that is, politically serious— woman writer" (Burroughs 4). The theatre was then appealing since it provided money and plays could be written more quickly than novels. It also offered the possibility to pose challenging questions about power in English society in different ways. Firstly, the fact of composing for the stage was not in accord with the image of the proper lady. Secondly, cultural prescriptions excluded women from professions regarded as male. Thirdly, the theatre was a place of public display and artifice which stood for everything a woman should not be and do. The perfect lady sketched in conduct literature and sermons was a mixture of modesty, devotion to her family, propriety and cleanliness (see Rogers and Poovey). Any attempt to rebel against patriarchy, to affirm oneself and to become independent, was severely criticized and condemned.

Both the social context and the status of the female writer have to be born in mind in the analysis of *The Witlings*, which was written just after the publication of *Evelina* and is easy to relate *The Witlings* to Molière's *Les femmes savantes* (1672) (Doody 80). In Peter Sabor's words, *The Witlings* would even have changed the history of the English theatre if it had been represented at the end of the eighteenth century (Clark 148). Critics support the argument that, despite the appreciation of the piece on the part of the playwrights Richard B. Sheridan and Arthur Murphy, *The Witlings* was rejected by the monitors of Burney's career, Charles Burney and Samuel Crisp, because the protagonist in *The Witlings,* Lady Smatter, could be too easily identified with two remarkable ladies (Darby 23-4; Doody 80-1). The first was the salonist and literary critic Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800), whose London home hosted large literary assemblies including Samuel Johnson, David Garrick or Edmund Burke. Lady Montagu had published *Essay on Shakespeare* (1769) and she patronized Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Hannah More, Sarah Fielding, or Burney herself, who had been encouraged to attack Montagu (Gallagher 229). Another possible source for Lady Smatter is Hester Thrale (1741-1821), a celebrated author and also Burney's good friend. Burney had entered society hosted by Thrale, who was jealous of Dr. Burney's control over his daughter. The young author became Thrale's companion and widened her contacts at the same time that Burney observed how the aristocracy both cherished and despised artists. The possibility of portraying the Streatham circle from a satiric point of view certainly came to Burney's mind, but the young author decided to sacrifice her career as a playwright: "[...] there are plays that are to be saved, and plays that are not to be saved! So good night. Mr. Dabbler! — good-night, Lady Smatter, — Mrs. Sapient, — Mrs. Voluble, — Mrs. Wheedle, — Censor, — Cecilia, — Beaufort, and you, you great oaf, Bobby! — good-night! good-night!" (Hemlow 138). Nevertheless, effacing the self and affirming it are typical features of Burney as a writer, so if *Evelina* was born out of the ashes of *The History of Caroline Evelyn* which Burney burnt on her fifteenth birthday, this time Burney capitalized on her failures again, and, as Darby observes, many characters in *The Witlings* migrated to *Cecilia* (25), a very perceptive insight into human follies and a study of the condition of woman at that time.

Burney always had a very intense relationship with writing and the physical printed text. She felt simultaneously proud and ashamed of her productions to the point of repeatedly editing her works (Fernández 67), where the role of

language is paramount. Thus, *Evelina* and *The Wanderer*, Burney's first and last novels, hinge on the protagonists' identities and names, and Cecilia's tragedy in Burney's homonymous novel is triggered by the obsession of the protagonist's uncle with preserving the surname Beverley. In *The Witlings* Burney also shows her awareness of the power of language in a very special way by liking it to female reputation. Not coincidentally, within Burney's corpus, no other piece contains so many characters bearing names allusive to their function in the play and the choice of the diminutive "witling" for the title simultaneously suggests the anxiety for fame, the importance of verbal intercourse and the lack of real talent when real genius is despised.

3. 'Fine ladies Seem to think their Words are made of Gold': flatterers in *The Witlings*

Under the guise of a new version of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Witlings* hinges on a rich heiress, Cecilia, desirous to marry Beaufort, the nephew of the literary patroness Lady Smatter who reigns over a group of pseudo intellectuals called the Spirit Party. This society has periodic meetings to study certain subjects, but its main goal is to flatter and entertain Lady Smatter, who likes manipulating sources and pretending to be a scholar. News arrives that Cecilia's money is lost since her banker, Stipend, is ruined. At that moment, not only does Cecilia's position in the world change but also the way she is regarded as a woman. Lady Smatter opposes the marriage between Cecilia and Beaufort and tries to send the former to the countryside. Though unwillingly, Cecilia accepts losing Beaufort, who also despairs. Meanwhile, Mrs. Wheele, the milliner who comes to be Cecilia's temporary landlady, gets a post for Cecilia as a companion of a lady who is about to travel abroad. Problems are solved when Censor, Beaufort's friend, blackmails Lady Smatter: if she does not consent to the union and thus change her regard for Cecilia, he will spread some satiric verses about her all around London which will destroy Lady Smatter's reputation.

Burney's comedy begins in a gendered space where appearances matter. The milliner's shop is a "Region/ of Foppery, Extravagance and Folly" (Burney *The Witlings* I. 129-30) and the first professional setting of the play. Sandra Sherman accurately maintains that *The Witlings* elaborates an encounter between emergent industrial discourse in which time, production and money are imbricated (the shop-people), and a leisured class which appropriates this discourse but produces nothing (the witlings) (401). Burney populates her work with characters who feed on pleasing others verbally and are duplicitous, hypocritical, disrespectful and even vulgar. Besides, they are polarized into those who idolize the written word and those who privilege opinion and gossip and insert the play in the comic tradition. Though they have a difficult relationship with each other, pseudo intellectuals and busybodies are closely related: Lady Smatter and Mrs. Sapient traffic with the written word by misusing it while Mrs. Voluble constructs and destroys reputations with her tongue. Therefore, Censor's negative description of Mrs. Voluble evokes disease:

> CENSOR. A Fool, a prating, intolerable Fool. Dabler lodges at her House, and whoever passes through her Hall to visit him, she claims for her acquaintance.

> She will consume more Words in an Hour than Ten Men will in a Year; she is infected with a rage for talking, yet has nothing to say, which is a Disease of all others the most pernicious to her fellow Creatures, since the method she takes for her own relief proves their bane. Her Tongue is as restless as Scandal, and, like that, feeds upon nothing, yet attacks and tortures every thing; and it vies, in rapidity of motion, with the circulation of the Blood in a Frog's Foot (Burney *The Witlings* I. 156-64)

As for Mrs. Sapient, Censor insists on her obsession to pass the words and quotes of famous authors as her own. In the course of the comedy it is shown that the written word is no better than opinion and discredits itself. Lady Smatter and Mrs. Sapient's symbiotic relationship is revealed in that Mrs. Sapient flatters people and Lady Smatter likes to be flattered:

> CENSOR. She [Mrs. Sapient] is more weak and superficial even than Lady Smatter, yet she has the same facility in giving herself credit for wisdom; and there is a degree of assurance in her conceit that is equally wonderful and disgusting, for as Lady Smatter, from the shallowness of her knowledge, upon all subjects forms a *wrong* Judgement, Mrs. Sapient, from extreme weakness of parts, is incapable of forming *any*; but, to compensate for that deficiency, she retails all the opinions she hears, and confidently utters them as her own. Yet, in the most notorious of her plagiarisms, she affects a scrupulous modesty, and apologizes for troubling the Company with her poor opinion! (Burney *The Witlings*, I. 215-23)

An incompetent authority rejected by everybody, Mrs. Sapient attends the unsanctioned reading of Dabler's poems and is later hidden in Mrs. Voluble's closet. Throughout the play, Mrs. Sapient pretends to have an opinion, but she cannot stop saying self-evident statements. Once discovered, she tastes her own medicine, according to Lady Smatter: "Those who conceal themselves to hear the/ Counsels of others, commonly have little reason to be satisfied with/ what they hear of themselves" (Burney *The Witlings* V. 937-9). Clearly, Burney's aim is not to present perfect female characters, but self-centered superficial women who rub shoulders with the quality.

In fact, class and sex also determine the role of words in *The Witlings*. Like in Lady Smatter's case, Mrs. Voluble's house is open to both sexes. A link between the upper and the lower classes, Mrs. Voluble feeds on news about people and is "hospitable if slovenly, kind in her own way to all saved her snubbed son and overworked maidservant" (Doody 83). Her ethics are exposed when she enters Dabbler's room to spy on his manuscripts and later she does not hesitate to allow her maid Miss Jenny and her son Bob contemplate the poet's writings. The written word which is patriarchally produced, the cherished basis of Dabler's profession which is kept hidden by the poet as something intimate, becomes the object of display and despise of a woman. The relationship between the sexes is inverted in *The Witlings*: the middle classes are no better than the well-off. Mrs. Voluble's curiosity is as offensive as Lady Smatter's arrogance. From that perspective, Burney points out the fact that social position can become more valuable than knowledge and being a man.

There are no exemplary women in *The Witlings* where Burney dismantles the idea of female solidarity and portraits aggressive and frustrated women, even

bullies, who lose power and their language at some point in the play. The women who have some degree of independence, like Lady Smatter, Mrs. Voluble or Cecilia herself, change their attitude as they face misery. Cecilia is the best example of this phenomenon. When Darby examines the first act of *The Witlings* in terms of the economic exchange between characters, she maintains that "[t]he strongest mark of distinction between Burney's figures lies in how they participate conversationally with others" (29) and points out Cecilia's verbal passivity: "the heroine's verbal and physical acts are ineffectual, dictated by others, or simply assumed" (32). I argue that Cecilia's poor ability to communicate echoes Burney's feelings as a creator. A puppet in Charles Burney's and Crisp's hands, Burney was aware of her frail and lonely status as a writer, and she foresaw the oblivion and despise she would face if she turned to the stage. Therefore, Lady Smatter's compliments at the beginning of act two and Cecilia's aura as an heiress disappear as soon as Lady Smatter opposes Beaufort's marriage to Cecilia because the latter is deprived of her fortune and a girl without a penny is no good match. Cecilia's reputation sinks and so does the opinion others have about her. From being a coveted single woman, she becomes an ordinary girl searching for a room and a job as a lady's companion. Even Mrs. Wheedle's nice words change at hearing the news that Cecilia is penniless now and the milliner quickly demands to be paid. Having nowhere to go, Cecilia is socially punished and faces social alienation and silence. At the textual level there is a quantitative difference between the speech flow of powerful women, who are free to speak to anybody and impose their opinion on sons and strangers, and those who are unable to express themselves, like speechless Cecilia when asked about her money, or when she desperately asks for "Pen and Ink" to write to Beaufort and communicate her affairs to him, which never happens. Darby calls Cecilia's speech locutionary since it does not achieve the second or third levels of a speech and the request or command she tries to make produces no response from the listeners (35). The play reveals that a woman without a voice has no place in the world and has to struggle hard to be respected.

4. 'Shall be recorded by the Muses': reputation and the written word

In her illuminating book about satire, *The Brink of All We Hate*, Felicity Nussbaum argues that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a long satirist tradition including poems and pamphlets in which the female scholar was depicted as a threat to the patriarchal order. One of the myths she comments on is the learned lady, which is parodied and identified in Burney's work with the Bluestocking Lady Smatter. Gary Kelly defines the Bluestocking circle as the mid-eighteenth-century group of men and women around Elizabeth Montagu and her close friends, who were important because they enabled increasing numbers of women to escape 'confinement' in the domestic sphere and to pursue work and knowledge within a wider and supposedly superior sphere of intellectual work and sociability (175-6; see also Rogers 32-6). Other authors like Emily Boscawen, Hester Chapone and Hannah More also published for profit and public esteem and preserved their unimpeachable reputations. In her play, Burney is interested in the relationship between language and the representation of the literary lady in the world. The latter solely depends on social discourse to

appear in the world and be respected by others, and she keeps her status as long as her reputation is unstained. Any attempt to surpass the limits of womanhood and compete with men destroys the literary lady.

The play does not only revolve around the young lovers Cecilia and Beaufort, but also around Lady Smatter who fetishizes the written word in a special way and departs from the image of the domestic lady in many aspects. Firstly, she has turned the private sphere of her home into a cultural space open to the Spirit Party where men can enter. Secondly, Burney creates a character who wants to compete with men publicly, which no conventional women would aim to do. Thirdly, finding satisfaction in being praised for her achievements, Lady Smatter does not really care about real knowledge, but public opinion, and she just wants to keep her social image as a stronghold.

Lady Smatter's main goal is to pass for a scholar, which makes her feel socially realized. The fatigue of reading does not overcome her desire to exhibit her achievements, and that is why she has organized her Spirit Party, where authors bring new works and critics comment on old compositions with two premises: the pursuit of sincerity and the avoidance of flattery. However, in the course of the comedy, the written word connected with patriarchy is totally manipulated and never taken seriously because neither attribution nor literary intentionality is respected. Lady Smatter finds mistakes in Shakespeare and Pope (Burney *The Witlings* II. 45-6) —even though she has not read half their works—, and she also mistakes Swift for Pope (Burney *The Witlings* III. 79-82, III. 133-4). In *The Witlings* the impossibility to achieve real knowledge does not matter. Lady Smatter just wants the world to believe she is a scholar and she also reveals the limits of her scope: "For where can be the pleasure of reading Books, and studying authors, if/ one is not to have the credit of talking of them? (Burney *The Witlings* II.i. 25-6). If read literally, Burney's satire implies that the female writer deserves no praise and has no merit. A woman who is associated with the production of discourse and culture is just a liar because not only does she enjoy trafficking with speech but she is also a Nobody entering the realm of men and pursuing undeserved admiration.

There is another trait in Lady Smatter's personality that makes her despicable to the audience and she exhibits with pleasure. She lives in a world of her own, unable to realize the feelings of others and insensible to the news arriving from Yorkshire. First, she tells Codger that she would not let Beaufort marry a poor woman (Burney *The Witlings* II. 501-2); then she declares her pity for Cecilia (Burney *The Witlings* II. 534); and finally she downgrades the young lady to the most insipid thing: "if she [Cecilia] can make a/ Cap, 'tis as much as she can do, — and, in such a case, when a Girl is/ reduced to a Penny, what is to be done?" (Burney *The Witlings* II. 556-8). In fact, Beaufort's anger at Cecilia's departure seems downright blasphemy to Lady Smatter because, according to Beaufort, it is not the time to read books and this feature is stylistically marked in the Spanish translation (*El ridículo* 91-2). Feeling totally detached from the world around, Beaufort's proud aunt threatens with disinheriting him precipitating the climax of the comedy.

5. 'Self-dependence is the first of Earthly Blessings'

The Witlings is not a tear-jerking eighteenth-century comedy. It deals with serious matters, like property and propriety, and with female victims of patriarchy, like Cecilia. Economic dependence is more important than the fact of being a man or a woman, but there is something else. For Darby, this play depicts the triumph of censorship and subjugation over independence, and it is women who are publicly censored or confined financially, physically, and intellectually (22). There is even a biographical component in its two major female characters: "*The Witlings* externalizes and focuses Burney's internal war between the modest, private woman who seeks only domestic security and the intellectual woman who desires public recognition" (Thompson 17). As Peggy Thompson explains, in *The Witlings* there are many dependencies at various levels: Bob Voluble, like Burney, suffers a parent who keeps her offspring silent and wretchedly submissive; Dabbler strives to maintain his privacy while he writes; and Burney also represents herself in Beaufort —who is dependent from Lady Smatter (21-2). At this point in her career, Burney realizes she is in Charles Burney's hands while striving to be independent as a woman writer. Under this light, *The Witlings* would have become Burney's most open feminist manifesto, but Burney was also aware of the dangers of voicing the truth on stage. Surprisingly, in *The Witlings* dependence makes possible the happy ending and language plays a paramount role here.

The fact that neither Voluble nor Lady Smatter can understand men's language reveals Burney's awareness of women's lack of formal knowledge, but also the absence of real communication since people do not listen to each other. While Doody considers that both Lady Smatter and Mrs. Voluble are important in their own circles and that they desire to control and to gossip (83), that is, to create false linguistic expectations, there are many differences between them. Mrs. Voluble is Dabbler's landlady and she gives shelter to Cecilia temporarily too. This is the only example of female solidarity in the whole play. Mrs. Voluble feels compassion for Cecilia in act five and her invitation to partake in her meal represents an invitation to enjoy life while Lady Smatter has a dark side she uses to intimidate and impose herself on others.

In *The Witlings* the originally patriarchal written word becomes feminine, so neither women nor the written word is respected. Female plagiarism is attacked while men are free to proceed as they please with an exception. Like in *Evelina* with MacCartney, Burney introduces the figure of the ill-treated poet Dabler, who, unlike Lady Smatter, struggles to make a name for himself through his effort. His social position is uncertain since he depends on his patron, Lady Smatter, as much as Beaufort depends on his aunt. If he feels frustrated, it is because he is not allowed to be free and creative. Far from being supervised or guided, Dabler manipulates discourse in order to earn his living: he lives on a woman and he trades with words like the milliners trying to satisfy the upper-class ladies' whims and depending on them. Plagiarism and his bad use of the written word are conditioned by necessity.

The Witlings is a very pessimistic play about independence and it shows that self-realization does not exist for any sex. For Doody, Burney shows her skepticism about the power of literature to soften customs and instruct the heart

(82). My argument is that Burney was deeply aware of the power of literature indeed and vindicated the value of the written word through satire. Burney always revered knowledge and equated the respect for the written word with the respect for woman, so Dabler voices one of the most revealing messages of the piece: "we men do not suffer in the World by/ Lampoons as the poor Ladies do; — they, indeed, may be quite/— quite ruined by them" (Burney *The Witlings* V. 741-2). A comedy was the best means to show that the real poet has no place in *The Witlings* and feels as exploited and abused as Burney felt as a woman writer and as Dabler in *The Witlings*.

In the play the learned lady lives in false world of *dilettanti* and ultimately deceives herself. Lady Smatter simultaneously loves words and is afraid of them because she knows their potential when applied to women, whose social status changes depending on how language is applied to them, which never happens to men. Instead of a creator, Lady Smatter is a usurper who distorts the father's word and lacks a language of her own. Like the Bluestockings and Burney herself, she wants to enter a masculine realm when women did not have access to scholarly culture. Lady Smatter defies patriarchy because she feigns to have knowledge and Burney herself vindicated the voice of the female writer and considered herself a Sister of the Order, a woman writer entering the male realm. Nonetheless, *The Witlings* is a comedy and Lady Smatter's final punishment is not connected with her boldness, but with her ethics as an improper lady.

Lady Smatter's patriarchal punisher comes to be eccentric Censor, who suggests Dabler composing some extempore verses on slander. The poet initially objects to the proposal since it is a most illiberal subject, but later he accepts to obey. If the lines are carefully put together, Dabler's supposed piece is introduced as a lampoon against Lady Smatter's fame and it runs as follows:

> Yes, Smatter is the Muse's Friend,
> She knows to censure or commend;
> And has of Faith and Truth such store
> She'll ne'er desert you—till you're poor.
> Were madness stinted to Moorfields
> The world elsewhere would be much thinner;
> To time now Smatter's Beauty yields —
> She fain in Wit would be a Winner.
> At Thirty she began to read,—
> At Forty, it is said, could spell,—
> At Fifty, 'twas by all agreed
> A common School Girl she'd excel.
> Such wonders did the World presage
> From Blossoms which such Fruit invited, —
> When Avarice,—the vice of Age,—
> Stept in,—and all expectance blighted (Burney *The Witlings* V. 661-5, 694-6, 698-700, 705-6, 708, 711-4)

Shortly afterwards Jack arrives singing a new ballad against Lady Smatter which is ready to be printed. The piece reminds Augustan satirical poetry and unveils what Lady Smatter's dreads more, her lack of deep knowledge and the sycophant world she inhabits:

I call not to Swains to attend to my Song;
Nor call I to Damsels, so tender and young;
To Critics, and Pedants, and Doctors I clatter,
For who else will heed what becomes of poor Smatter.
With a down, down, derry down.
This lady with Study has muddled her head;
Sans meaning she talk'd, and Sans knowledge she read,
And gulp'd such a Dose of incongruous matter
That Bedlam must soon hold the Carcase of Smatter.
With a down, down, derry down.
She thought Wealth esteem'd by the foolish alone,
So, shunning offence, never offer'd her own;
And when her Young Friend dire misfortune did batter,
Too wise to relieve her was kind Lady Smatter.
With a down, down, derry down.
Her Nephew she never corrupted with pelf,
Holding Starving a Virtue — for all but herself
Of Gold was her Goblet, of Silver, her Platter,
To show how such ore was degraded by Smatter.
With a down, down, derry down.
A Club she supported of Witlings and Fools,
Who, but for her dinners, had scoff'd at her rules;
The reason, if any she had, these did shatter
Of poor empty-Headed, and little-Soul'd Smatter.
With a down, down, derry down (Burney *The Witlings* V. 772-6, 778-82, 787-91, 794-803)

Both pieces attack Lady Smatter's literary anxiety but also her ruthlessness. Obviously, Censor is responsible for both pieces since he took advantage of the poet's neglect and inadvertently picked up Dabler's verses, his words, from the floor. That moment represents Censor having both Lady Smatter's and Dabler's reputation in his hands, just as Mrs. Voluble usually spies on and touches Dabler's manuscripts. Ironically, Dabler's extempore piece against Lady Smatter and Jack's ballad are eventually turned into panegyrics through Censor's blackmail as Lady Smatter is incapable to hide the truth. She unwillingly yields to the evidence and accepts restoring Beaufort to his position in exchange of becoming "another Sacharissa, a Second Sapho — a tenth muse" (Burney *The Witlings* V. 863). This unsatisfactory ending makes sense when we turn our attention in another direction.

In *The Witlings* the literary matron Lady Smatter is a punisher who will be punished. Lady Smatter faces Cecilia and Beaufort joining together and despairs at their alliance against her authority. Her only consolation is that Beaufort depends on her and has no profession: "[...] young men, you know, are mighty apt to be rash; but/ when they have no independence, and are of no profession, they should/ be very cautious how they disoblige their Friends" (Burney *The Witlings* II. 633-5). On another occasion she hypocritically tells Censor that Cecilia has left mysteriously when Lady Smatter has really expelled her and Beaufort exposes Lady Smatter's double dealing by pointing to the obsession with reputation of this "hard-hearted, vain, ostentatious woman" (Burney *The Witlings* IV. 633).

The Witlings is based on *Romeo and Juliet*, where Friar Lawrence helps the lovers to achieve happiness. In Burney's play this role is performed by Censor, an intriguing satirist, who has two conversations with the protagonists expressing his willingness to help them and his aim to punish Lady Smatter for having intruded the male temple of knowledge. The old bachelor defines himself before Cecilia as "a fellow who can wish you well without/ loving you, and, without any sinister view, be active in your Service; a/ fellow, in short, unmoved by beauty, yet susceptible of pity, — invulner-/ able to love, yet zealous in the cause of distress" (Burney *The Witlings* III. 640-3). It is tempting to consider that Censor understands the lovers' difficulties and that Beaufort's happiness directly depends on Lady Smatter. However, Censor's motivation is not fair. He even deprecates proudly against women's participation in culture:

> CENSOR. Heavens, that a Woman whose utmost natural capacity will hardly enable her to understand the History of Tom Thumb, and whose comprehensive faculties would be absolutely baffled by the Lives of the Seven Champions of Christendom, should dare blaspheme the names of our noblest Poets with Words that convey no ideas, and Sentences of which the Sound listens in vain for the Sense! — O, she is insufferable! (Burney *The Witlings* III. 176-81)

Censor gives Lady Smatter a taste of her own medicine and blackmails Lady Smatter for Beaufort and Cecilia's benefit. He enjoys humiliating Lady Smatter and encourages Beaufort to rebel against her by instilling into him the idea that otherwise he will depend on her forever and will never be happy. Thus, the play turns into a vindication of freedom as the only way to affirm oneself and in Burney's case this constitutes her awakening as a woman writer. Revealingly, Burney is not ruthless to Lady Smatter in that Censor never forces Lady Smatter to dissolve the Party Spirit. That is just his final thought and something he hopes will happen at the end. In spite of everything, it seems that the female genius has the right to exist.

6. Conclusion

Though undemocratic and a misogynist, Censor looks like a restoring force to facilitate the *denouement* of the play under the pretence of presenting himself as a free man, not a poet that depends on everybody else: "and therefore [I] may be allowed to have an opinion of my own, to act/ with consistency, and to be guided by the light of Reason; you, for/ which I most heartily pity you, are a Lover, and, consequently, can/ have no pretensions to similar privileges" (Burney *The Witlings* I. 123-6). He despises female realms, the milliners and literary ladies. Curiously, he is not punished at the end, but rewarded. Should he represent Burney's daddies, Censor shows that Burney was not able to detach herself from patriarchy yet and that *The Wanderer* was still to be written. As a matter of fact, Cecilia's success depends on sticking to rules and the end of the play confirms Burney's moderate politics since Beaufort and Cecilia get married thanks to Lady Smatter's consent and Censor's letter containing five thousand pounds. Still, Burney deals with very uncomfortable truths in her satire though apparently she endorses a conservative view.

The Witlings is about the power of language in modern society. When Lady Smatter's reputation is about to be the object of slander in pamphlets and songs, Burney envisions how words lead to the erosion of female reputation and they guarantee the existence of patriarchy. Like *Cecilia*, *The Witlings* was to be Burney's second vindication as a writer after *Evelina*, but, realizing her position, Burney already decided to suppress *The Witlings* and the preface to *Cecilia* in which she dealt with Genius's retreat from society. Burney's split self felt simultaneously guilty and satisfied with *The Witlings*. Up to a point, she identified herself with Lady Smatter. However, privately Burney felt that writing was a sacred activity that was being denied to her because her daddies could not stand young female scribblers and Genius could not be female. In *The Witlings* Burney identifies herself with Cecilia, dispossessed of her riches and trapped by her daddies' decisions, but also with Lady Smatter, an alien in patriarchal culture. Burney faced her desire for literary fame and saw the dangers of public exhibition. All her frustration and fear are recorded in *The Witlings* where gender and language are closely related as I have tried to argue. The total lack of respect for the written word parallels the role of women at that time and the frustration of the woman writer haunts the whole work. Behind Lady Smatter's façade, Burney depicts the aspiration of so many women who wanted to conciliate the desire of being praised with entering men's realm and saw themselves frustrated.

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Giving A(nother) Murdered Woman a Voice

Lars Gustafsson's *The American Girl's Sundays*

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Abstract. Lars Gustafsson's *The American Girl's Sundays* (2006) is a welcome change to tales based in true crime, which often focus on the predominantly male murderer or serial killer instead of on the predominantly female victim. The verse novel is also part of a larger countertrend resisting the hype accompanying killers, meanwhile paying little to no attention to the victim and what her life was and could have been. Gustafsson's narrative, inspired by the murder of Colleen Reed in 1999, is narrated by the fictionalised victim herself. This article explores how the interweaving of Gustafssonian elements affects the narrative voice.

Keywords: Narrative voice, authenticity, Colleen Reed, Lars Gustafsson, female representations, true crime

Lars Gustafsson, novelist, poet, and scholar lived and worked in Austin, Texas for about 20 years before returning to his native Sweden in 2006, which is also the year that *The American Girl's Sundays* was published in Swedish as *Den amerikanska flickans söndagar*. The book regrettably remains untranslated into English. Gustafsson has written numerous novels and collections of poetry and worked as a Professor of Philosophy and as a teacher of Creative Writing at The University of Austin. During this expatriate period, he began writing *The American Girl's Sundays*, a prose poem largely inspired by a true crime: the abduction, violation, and murder of Colleen Reed, on December 29, 1991. Colleen was a certified public accountant. She was not yet 30 years old.

This article focuses on two aspects of the narrative: its formation of the voice of Colleen and how the inclusion of Gustafssonian elements affects that voice, and how *The American Girl's Sundays* forms part of an important countertrend in writing about true crime by focusing on the victim rather than the murderer. In the postscript to *The American Girl's Sundays,* Gustafsson writes:

> *The American Girl's Sundays* was commenced in Austin, Texas, during the winter of 1999, and long remained a brief fragment.
>
> Its basis is a real criminal event—a young girl, living alone, who whilst washing her car on a Sunday morning, was abducted, raped, and murdered by two men. One of the murderers was found a few years later and executed in accordance with the law, but to little comfort. So brutally and so without resonance did this girl disappear from the world that I, the very day that I read about her in the paper, felt that I in some way had to give her a voice. This voice is, as everything else in my story, free verse. (p. 55)

The postscript posits two important aspects: that Gustafsson's narrative was largely motivated by the conviction that Colleen deserves a voice, and secondly,

that he is aware that he is constructing it, and the voice she is given is in itself a fiction in the form of free verse.

Not once in *The American Girl's Sundays* does Gustafsson name the killers, though they are known and convicted. This is, of course, part of his larger testament to Colleen Reed. But the book does not bear her name. Arguably, because Colleen comes to symbolise so many dead women without a voice, and perhaps also, as Gustafsson states, because it is about a fictionalised Colleen. It does not claim to be a biography, and largely, the life it could have described was cut too short for the genre, nor does it claim to be a non-fictional account.

Gustafsson's text fits many genres: prose poetry, elegy, true crime, creative non-fiction, and makes a highly relevant contribution to the countertrend. In stark contrast to a book about the murderer of Collen Reed, *The Bad Boy from Rosebud* written by Gary Lavergne and published in 1999, Gustafsson focuses on the victim and the victim alone. Lavergne stated in an interview that "I did feel a responsibility as an author to bring this story to the public, to alert people to the reality that these guys exist;" (Stockwell 2016) Gustafsson does the opposite: "I [...] had to give *her* a voice" (2006, p. 55, my emphasis). In *The American Girl's Sundays*, the purpose is to alert the world that Colleen Reed existed. In the same way that the victim is often the catalyst for the narrative about the murderer, in Gustafsson's text, the murderer is the parenthesis: the story is about Colleen.

Gustafsson's is a welcome change to narratives about crime, be they based on true events or not, which often focus on the killer, his motives, the gruesome details, his capture or non-capture, his sentencing or lack thereof, or his remorse or lack thereof. Before discussing the specifics of *The American Girl's Sundays*, it is relevant first to discuss the countertrend to which the verse novel contributes and how it goes against the norm.

The standard pattern for TV-series, true- or fictional crime novels, documentaries, interviews drawing confessions out of murderers or perpetrators of other violent crime, is to focus on the murderer. These narratives are plentiful, and readily available to viewers or readers through a range of media. In our voyeuristic urge to try to understand that which cannot be understood: the workings of an evil mind, the victim is soon forgotten. The victim becomes merely the catalyst for the *real* story: that of the hunt, capture, and punishment of the killer, that of his motive, and if there is none other than evil, the attempts to make sense of the senseless. Through this, the victim's role is often reduced to that of a catalyst for narrative action: a bare necessity, a narrative tool. In filmatisations, in the true-crime genre, and in documentaries, the focus often lies on the (serial) killer. The more gruesome his crimes—the more focus on his deeds. For example, an option for a search for "serial killer" on Wikipedia—one of the two men involved in the murder of Colleen Reed was a serial killer—is to list serial killers by "numbers of victims" (Wikipedia), further reducing the victim to a number among numbers, at the same time adding to the infamy of murderers with large victim counts. There was, for example, the American 15- and 18-year-old boys who collected knives and bought guns with the sole purpose of "want[ing] to kill so many people that they would become more famous than the Columbine High School shooters" (Wagner 2015). As a necessity, they had to kill their family first, and were caught after that: their aim to set a record and achieving infamy a failure. The fame and notoriety awarded serial killers can thus become another

driver for these (by and large) male perpetrators. Likewise, the surge in documentaries like *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* (2019a) (a docuseries based on interviews with Bundy) and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* (2019b) (a fictionalised account in which Bundy is played by Zac Efron) attempt to get to the core of the serial murder psyche. All the while, viewers can participate scot-free in the voyeuristic gaze, under the pretense of wanting to understand, rather as participants in a society-wide obsession with evil, and part of creating a cult around killers that become household names. There is a plethora of cheap dramatisations and a large range of other, often American, series on YouTube and on other online viewing platforms. The victims are generally women, their murderers generally men.

There exist, across artforms and media platforms, interesting and significant countertrends to the obsession with the murderers and the details of their violence in the form of a resistance to the hype around the killer and a focus instead on the life lost. On Twitter, Billy Jensen posted a feed when *The Bundy Tapes* was just released. Jensen's first tweet showed a collage of the faces of the murdered women, with a reminder not to let the victims be forgotten in the frenzy of engaging in true crime stories like the Bundy one. "These women all had hopes and dreams," Jensen reminds us, "they should all have movies made about them."

(@Billyjensen 2019a)

Jensen subsequently posted the photographs from the collage of each of the victims, with some biographical information about her life. This is a

contemporary example of how social media may contribute not just to the hype, but to the immortalisation of the victim.

(@Billyjensen 2019b)

The biographies of these women varied in length and mentioned more or less personal information. Of some women, so little was known that Jensen requested information from his Twitter followers, should someone have further knowledge about her short life. The act of attempting to memorialise women about whom very little is known carries further sadness: to the public, they will remain a story told only by the fact that their lives were taken. They will be another photo, another name, of a victim amongst victims, soon forgotten.

Jensen's act is a poignant reminder that no matter how much narratives about murders and serial killers are fictionalised, the victims are not just characters in a story, but real women with real lives, hopes, and dreams, all having been violently stolen from them. What Jensen does here is manifold: he gives these women a face, a name, and shows the gap they left in the world; yet, he acknowledges that we are all, himself included, participants in the voyeurism and thus co-creators of the hype.

In other media, too, there has been a conscious drive not to give the perpetrator attention, actively to take away the focus from the "hall of infamy" that the two American school boys, and many other evildoers, strived for. For example, in the feature "Holiday to Hell: Survivors of the Nice attack reveal their terrifying experience," (2016) a young Australian woman, Adelaide Stratton, who was seriously injured when the truck plowed into the masses celebrating Bastille Day in 2016 tells her story. Adelaide was found by a French man, Patrick, who never left her side. The two developed a deep friendship and he visited her regularly in hospital, and then later, visited Adelaide and her family together with his fiancée. When interviewed about the terrorist driver, Adelaide denies the power of the attacker, and reclaims the story:

> *Interviewer*: What do you think of the man in the truck?
> *Adelaide Stratton*: I'm gonna be honest with you: I don't really think of him. I've got too much to deal with. Too much to think about. Too many more important things to think about than… I couldn't even tell you his name. And my story isn't about him. My story isn't about what he did. My story is about Patrick and how people helped me.
> *Interviewer*: So your story is about love?
> *Adelaide Stratton*: Yeah. My story is about love. My story is about helping others. My story is about the beautiful things that can come from the terrible, you know. My story isn't about him. Not at all. (min. 25:53–26:36)

Adelaide is a survivor with a voice, and she is using it to its full capacity. She refuses to let the terrorist into the limelight by declaring that the story does not belong to him. An interesting aspect here is that the interviewer does not name him. He is "the man in the truck" a someone given a general description, which strips him of some of the association of his atrocious act. He is thus less likely to gain a cult following.

Similarly, when the Christchurch mosque shootings took place on March 19, 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made a speech that was shared worldwide. Ardern stated that she would never speak his name and would not contribute to the notoriety the killer sought, and she encouraged the world to follow her example:

> There is one person at the centre of this terror attack against our Muslim community in New Zealand. A 28-year-old man, an Australian citizen, has been charged with one count of murder; other charges will follow. He will face the full force of the law in New Zealand. The families of the fallen will have justice. He sought many things from his act of terror, but one was notoriety, and that is why you will never hear me mention his name. He is a terrorist, he is a criminal, he is an extremist, but he will, when I speak, be nameless, and to others I implore you: speak the names of those who were lost rather than the name of the man who took them. He may have sought notoriety but we in New Zealand will give him nothing—not even his name. (Ardern, New Zealand Parliament, *Pāremata Aotearoa 2019*).

Speaking the names of the victims, foregoing, forgetting the names of the evildoers is, as shown, a larger trend. Gustafsson's verse novel precedes the public forms of denial discussed above, and his book has received much less consideration. *The American Girl's Sundays* predates the era of rapid sharing made possible by social media, and the book not yet having been translated into English adds to its lack of attention. Yet, it taps into this stream of resistance, of telling the story of the human life lost, and not rewarding the killers by giving them the fame, or the infamy, they are after—by not even giving them their names.

Though one of Gustafsson's aims with *The American Girls Sundays* is to give Colleen a voice, and to memorialise her, the book does more than that. It co-mingles Gustafsson's childhood images with Colleen's memories, blurring the line between author and subject. Instead of adopting the voyeuristic gaze, Gustafsson turns inwards, into the thoughts and memories of a fictionalised Colleen, and into himself.

It is not the first time that Gustafsson takes on the voice of others. His collection *Four Poets*, first published in 1998, is an "experiment in dividing the

own voice in four different Swedish writer profiles from different periods" (Gustafsson 1994a, p. 7). The four poets are all fictive and their voices invented. They are all Gustafsson, yet not. Each fictive poet—Gustaf Adolf Fredenlund, Bernard Foy, Ehrmine Wikström, and Jan Bohman—is also given a brief fictive biography (some with fictive references), which further creates a sense of realism. Gustafsson, in his discussion of "fictive poetry," (p. 7) leaves it up to "ontologically interested students of philosophy to try to sort out how an only imagined (but written) poem relates to a normal poem" (p. 8). This article is perhaps such an attempt. The story of Colleen, though she was a real person, must be fictionalised, as must her voice.

Since the shift in Gustafsson's book is from offender to victim, it is not strange that the narrative about her murder is almost entirely missing from Gustafsson's text. Instead, we get to follow the (imagined) life and thoughts of Colleen, who, in the book, works in a library, in a wing filled with books in languages she does not speak:

> The Japanese, Koreans, and Hindus
> populate the Large Asian Catalogue
> and diligently fill the files with signs.
> It is their place. In the world.
> In the pauses, it can get a bit lonely.
> Those who speak to each other
> do so in a language I do not understand.
> They could of course talk to me
> in my own, but they do not.
> It was really that way my whole life.
> And it does not bother me.
> (In reality, I am never lonely.)
> Hundreds of thousands of books
> and up until this summer
> not one of them in a comprehensible alphabet. (2006, pp. 11-12)

This sort of internal monologue, references to Colleen's childhood, descriptions of her working life, and her inner life, constitute most of the narrative. The extract above bears clear traits of Gustafssson's voice: the incomprehensible alphabet echoes Gustafsson's poem "Where the Alphabet has Two-hundred Letters" in which he likens American freight trains to "large philosophical systems, wander[ing] / through a continent that is itself a poem / where the alphabet has two hundred letters" (1994b, p. 27). Gustafsson returns to signs, alphabets, languages and their incomprehensibility, and it is no coincidence that Colleen also wanders in an incomprehensible world and that she likes it there. Largely, the narrative is composed by these sorts of internal monologues, descriptions of Colleen's day-to-day life, the boredom of mundanity and its beauty, and her dreams and thoughts.

There is one important exception. The below description of her abduction and murder is the place in which her dark fate is first evoked. It occurs about two thirds into the book:

> Just next to here is a car wash
> where on a Sunday in the middle of the nineties

> a girl who was giving her car its Sunday wash
> was abducted by two men and later
> was found violated and dead in a ditch
> far out southwest. On her body
> were burn marks; glowing cigarettes
> had been put out on her breasts.
> The murderers made a mistake:
> they drove a whole long suburban street
> against the direction of traffic and were seen.
> They were captured in another state
> and brought here to die. The jury needed
> twenty minutes to reach the verdict.
> Oh, these shallow, uninteresting punishments!
> Soon, the dead will forget
> that they ever existed! The saint,
> if it exists, and the demon
> share the same fate. (p. 33-34)

Notably, the text still does not acknowledge that the narrator is the victim in question. The subject is merely "a girl" and "the murderers" just that. Some descriptions are also fictionalised. Collen Reed's body was not found and identified until seven years after her death—in Gustafsson's poem only described as "later"—which further makes it unlikely that there would be any evidence of burn marks from cigarettes on her remains; this information must come from research made by Gustafsson, for example from news reports. Whether he ever read *The Bad Boy from Rosebud*, in which this information is contained, is unknown. There are several other disturbing and highly visual descriptions of the torture to which Colleen was subjected, which Gustafsson has decided to leave out. Colleen's body was not found, as Gustrafsson describes, in "a ditch," but in a poorly dug grave, which was the murderer's modus operandi, close to a river, according to Lavergne (1999; see also UPI Archives 1998), whose book about the murderer is based on numerous court records, interviews with family members, police, and CIs. Gustafsson's fictionalisation of Colleen's death is in line with the fictionalisation of the narrative of her life, which has never been about telling the "true" story of Colleen. Lavergne's book, though primarily interested in the murderers and the investigation to find them guilty, gives a surprisingly thorough description of Colleen and her life, if largely objective and sometimes detached. Instead, Gustafsson gives us slivers of Colleen's (and his own) childhood, of its emotions and thoughts. The verse novel is structured over ten Sundays. The first nine are numbered, and the tenth is simply titled "The Last Sunday". An early example in the narrative is this:

> From light to light. And they weaken
> and shift more and more to green,
> a soft, but lively green. Which was
> a childhood colour. (p. 4)

This excerpt brings the importance of the colour green as intimately connected to childhood, and connects to images of spring, to youth, and, importantly, to images recurrent in Gustafsson's own work. This second quote highlights that connection further:

> All these hidden things, forgotten objects
> that remember where they are but that do not
> want to tell me, that keep it secret
> maybe because they do not want to be found by me
> as were they scared of something that could happen
> were I there together with them, and hesitate,
> hidden to me, green bottle glass dug from earth.
> But I remember them, each and every one of those
> rocks and pearls of glass and the strings
> I carefully hid, each and every one
> in its place. To be found, one day. (pp. 7-8)

This extract, also from "The first Sunday," demands the investigation of voice and how Colleen's and Lars' voices intermingle: these lines echo the first stanza of Gustafsson's poem "Seven Very Small Events," published in 2000, interestingly in a collection called *Elegies and Other Poems*:

> Early memories, fume from childhood,
> green bits of bottleglass
> dug from earth. (Lines 1-3, p. 38-39)

Here, Gustafsson explores the metaphorical excavation of the mind, and it is one of the occasions on which his and Colleen's voices become one and the same. The voice here is distinctly Gustafssonian but is given to Colleen. These personal, *Heimlich*, and clearly, to Gustafsson, highly important images, add a layer of authenticity: the specificity of the images give specificity to Colleen's inner life, of which little information can be found. The introduction of images that have appeared in other of Gustafsson's works add to the veracity of the voice in the sense that they may be regarded as diminishing the distance between the Self and the Other—between the author and the subject narrator. It is worth noting here that the book in its entirety is not an exercise in Gustafssonian imagery, but the occasions on which the blending of voices occur are poignant. Giving Colleen of his own voice, well-intentioned thought it may be, is problematic. It is a contradictory balancing act, and a risk-taking on Gustafsson's behalf. Gustafsson already has a voice, owns his imagery, and though he shares it with Colleen, there is a risk that his memories overtake her fictional ones—that he, in a sense, hijacks the voice of the weaker participant. Whether the poem becomes Lars Gustafsson's rather than Collen Reed's is difficult to answer, though, again, Gustafsson's intentions are sincere: he is answering his call to tell the admittedly fictionalised story of Colleen, and perhaps the ends must necessarily justify the means. Though the project is not without its flaws, on neither a philosophical nor a narratological level, Gustafsson's choice to attempt to give a voice to a woman deprived of hers is a worthy cause, and its execution, not without its challenges, is in many ways a beautiful testament to the inner worlds lost when a human life is taken.

Gustafsson thus, as noted, not without complication, attempts to know the Other through the Self, to know Colleen through Lars, her voice through his. This creates an intimacy, a relationship, also between the narrator and the reader. Gustafsson fictionalises within a non-fiction framework, and he is honest about that in the postscript. He further makes a comment on the obsession with narratives, his and ours. Instead of Colleen becoming just another female body,

and as a corpse, literally only a female body, she is, through this narrative, promoted from object to subject – an "I", fictionalised though this "I" may be. As the book is a speculation in terms of giving Colleeen a voice, as Gustafsson had no personal knowledge of her or about her life, let alone her inner thoughts and dreams, arguably, giving Colleen some of his own childhood memories and ways of seeing the world could be regarded as a sort of bridge-building or as a sharing. The introduction of his own imagery and giving it to her can be regarded as a gift—when giving her a voice, which was Gustafsson's explicit aim—it makes sense also to give her some of his own. In blurring the line between Lars' and Colleen's memories as characters, there is also a blending of their voices. This adds a layer of complexity in how to dissect the co-mingling of these voices when Colleen does not technically have one. To argue that her voice automatically becomes Gustafsson's is ineffective; surely, few would argue that an author's and his protagonist's voices are (necessarily) one and the same. Colleen is a fiction—what could have been learned about her can no longer be learned, and she could thus, arguably, be seen as any other fictional character. The difference is that she is not, nor does Gustafsson treat her as such. Colleen was a real person, and Gustafsson speaks explicitly of giving her the voice of which she was robbed so violently.

Gustafsson has seldom written female characters, which adds another level to the question of authenticity to Colleen's voice. Clearly, intention matters here—to give a voice to a voiceless victim, otherwise easily forgotten among the thousands of other voiceless victims, matters, and the introduction of Gustafssonian elements adds to the authenticity through the bridging of the gap, the narrowing of the distance between author and subject. Though those familiar with Gustafsson's poetry will identify recognisable images from an established male author, it is not necessarily the case that these images make for a skewed or predominately male voice for a female character. Rather, the sharing of images with a subject whose own images are gone, could be consider a sacrifice: a surrendering of the Self for the Other. It further tells us that we are not so different—our childhoods carry hidden treasures like the pieces of glass and the rocks in the excerpt above, but also the wounds refusing to heal, as in this example:

> And what to do with the memories
> these wounds that never heal? (p. 7)

An author's only responsibility may be to tell a good story, but in the land of non-fiction, there are other moral aspects to consider. A certain loyalty not to take lightly. Adjusting the genre to creative non-fiction does not necessarily mitigate this moral duty. It seems, though, that Gustafsson is well aware of this responsibility and does aim truly to do Colleen and her voice justice. Arguably, thus, the Gustafssonian elements function as a means to get closer to Colleen and to offer genuine memories through this prose poem. Gustafsson has thus by giving of himself given to Colleen a history, memories, and potential futures. Colleen's narrative is written from the first-person point of view, giving her a certain ownership rather than her (fictional) life story simply being in the hands of an external author.

What further establishes the voice as gendered female is the distinct lack of a male gaze, such as Gustafsson's leaving out of the sexual violence, the descriptions

of torture, and the viewing of Colleen as a body. In contrast to TV-series etc., there is very little reveling in the crime itself, but it is worth revisiting a few lines from the longer passage quoted above:

> a girl who was going to wash her car one Sunday
> was abducted by two men and later
> was found violated and dead in a ditch
> far out southwest. On her body
> was burn marks, glowing cigarettes
> had been put out on her breasts. (p. 33)

Gustafsson does not dwell upon the crime, nor the murderers, nor their names, despite the relative infamy of one of them. This, too, is a statement and a strong rejection of a worn narrative, of the male perspective and its voyeuristic tendencies of seeing the woman as a body, and, once deceased, as literally a body to be viewed, poked, and probed, to be sensationalised, objectified, and, should the murder have sexual undertones, for this sexualisation to be brought to the surface, as if the female body has been stripped of all right to privacy. Gustafsson uses the word "violated" rather than "raped" and does not go into detail of what this violation consisted of. The burn marks, one of the few details included, can be seen as an attack on her femininity, and also hints at the torture she was subjected to without making further comment on it. Her being thrown into a (fictional) ditch, is another comment on her being disposed of like were she nothing, as were she garbage. Gustafsson subtly makes these comments but does not dwell upon any of these aspects—he is concerned with this young woman's soul, her life and story as it could have been, had her narrative not been cut short. An approach like Gustafsson's immortalises the 'American Girl' through the narrative choices made—a shift in focus from a woman's death to a focus on her life de-objectifies, de-fetishises, and de-mythologises her; shifting the gaze by de-objectifying the female victim, so often a seen merely as a body in life as in death, literally and literarily promotes her from object to subject.

Such a lack of concern with the corporeal lends itself to a voice gendered in alignment with its subject—Colleen—promoting her thus from object to subject, and not merely the subject of the book, but its true protagonist.

Like Adelaide Stratton refusing to make the story that of her attackers, like Prime Minister Ardern, Gustafsson refuses to let the evildoers own the narrative of the victim and promotes Colleen from object to subject.

Like Colleen works in a library surrounded by stories that are incomprehensible, her story is incomprehensible. The violence, her death, her being erased – it is all incomprehensible. This book is testament to the incomprehensible, and testament to Colleen and to her life: her death is a parenthesis. Not until the very last lines is the murder revisited:

> One day would start like all the others
> with the health-tea and the radio on the shelf
> and end in a great confusion.
> I was that girl who was taken
> from that place and who was killed
> when I wanted to wash the car on a Sunday.
> And of that, I have no more to say. (p. 52)

There is nothing more to say. This is the end of Collen's narrative, the end of the line. Her voice, as it were, now has to be constructed as it is not hers anymore.

Who can speak for the dead? Who can know their dreams and wants and wishes, their weaknesses, their faults, their fears? We can only know the Other through the Self, by daring to bridge the gap between us.

In Gustafsson's "Ten Elegies," the last lines of the first elegy "In the Surface," read:

> To go into the only hesitantly welcoming shadow,
> to in the shadow of a forest go to the others,
> those already invisible; you, others, who live also
> other lives and other years, tell me,
> who merely live only one, if you wanted the same!
> In this night, no stars can be seen.
> The stars have no names
> We gave them of our own (1994c, lines 40-47, pp. 235)

In this vein, Gustafsson expresses how the unfathomable requires our intimate connection, through naming, through bridging, to bringing it into our own consciousness and life to enable some sort of sense-making. The final lines may as well read:

> (The) Colleen(s) have no voice
> We give them of our own.

Colleen Reed 1962–1991 (Stockwell 2016)

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The Sound of Silence

The Construction of Gender Through the Unsaid and the Use of Language in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor Of Casterbridge.*

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Abstract. This paper analyses how the language of the main characters from Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* mirrors (and occasionally defies) Victorian gender roles. We will see how the masculine characters in this novel tend to use a more aggressive language which features imperative forms, commands and future tenses in order to impose their point of view and reinforce their dominance, while the feminine characters are more likely to use polite requests, courtesy words and modal verbs to convey the same meaning. We will also discuss whether the female characters' silence might be considered a mechanism to subvert male dominance.

Keywords: Language, gender roles, silence, Victorian era

1. Introduction. Notions of femininity and masculinity in *The Mayor of Casterbridge.*

In order to analyse how the characters' language reflects gender roles and gender inequality in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, we should first establish the context in which the novel was written and published and also the time in which the novel is set.

The novel was first published in 1886, serialized in *Graphic* [1] and *Harper's Weekly* [2] from January to May; that is to say, it was printed in what is known as the late Victorian period, which goes roughly from 1850 to 1901. At that time, women's and men's roles were still sharply defined, and Victorian rigid moral code was still at play, as it was the culture of separated spheres, which established that public spaces were for men and private and domestic for women. Janet Wolff highlights that this separation between the public world of work and politics and the private world of the home is a consequence of "the cult of domesticity" which emphasizes "the sanctity and purity of family life, and the moral task of women as mothers and wives" (Wolff 14).

This gender-based segregation also affected cultural and leisure activities. On the one hand, women were supposed to enjoy activities like "reading, playing music or gardening" (Cunningham 159-60), which could be easily done at home and in complete solitude (and consequently in silence). On the other hand, "Those entertainments or cultural activities which did take place in the more public arena, like sports, were almost exclusively male" (Wolff 22). What is more, Cunningham claims that "the general rule was that any woman in a public place of leisure, and unaccompanied by husband or other suitable male, was a prostitute" (130). Women, then, were more likely to be isolated inside their own houses, and as a consequence their voices were silenced and only to be heard at

home. On the contrary, men could easily be heard and seen, and as social beings it was desirable for them to be eloquent.

We should also bear in mind that during the Regency and the Victorian period, women, and especially middle and upper-class women, were not allowed to express themselves or to talk about certain matters, such as adultery, suicide or prostitution. As Mª Teresa González Mínguez claims in "Jane Austen y la exclusión de la voz femenina en el periodo de la Regencia," we can see how female characters in Jane Austen's works are usually silenced. As an example, she quotes *Persuasion*'s Anne Elliot, who explains how women "lived at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us" (2010, 517). Women writers suffered this exclusion from the public spheres too, which affected their production. According to Ellen Moers, they were "barred from the universities, isolated in their own homes, chaperoned in travel, painfully restricted in friendship. The personal give-and-take of the literary life was closed to them" (64).

This theory of the separated spheres shaped relationships between both sexes throughout the whole Victorian period. Many women were confined at home, as the house was widely considered genuinely "a woman's place." The Ruskinian ideal of the natures and duties of men and women, precisely described in his book *Sesame and Lilies,* which was published in 1865, was still very popular in the 1880s. In "Of Queen's Gardens", the section of the book that is mainly dedicated to women's values, Ruskin claims that men's and women's characters are "separate." Man's power is

> Active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever was it just, wherever conquest necessary. (51)

On the contrary, he states about women that "Her great function is Praise" (51). He adds that a woman's place is

> By her office, and place . . . within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offense. This is the true nature of home — it is the place of Peace; the shelter ... a vestal temple (51)

Alfred Lord Tennyson described the traditional distinction between men's and women's characters in his poem *The Princess (NAEL* 8.2.1225*)*, following Ruskin's ideas:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
> For the sword, and for the needle she;
> Man with the head, and women with the heart;
> Man to command, and woman to obey;
> All else is confusion. (v. 437-41)

Hardy's contemporary readers were likely to be familiar with these ideas. However, by the time *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was published, things were beginning to change in a male-dominated England. Women started bringing light about gender inequalities and began challenging Victorian restrictive gender roles. Florence Nightingale had already published her *Cassandra* (1854), which attacked the Victorian family, essentially patriarchal, and the passive role and lack

of opportunities of Victorian women. George Eliot condemned domestic ideology and educational and professional barriers to women (Poplawski 481). As Poplawski claims, there were many other women who wrote about "The Woman Question" and were trying to force a "reform of the educational, political, legal and economic institutions or practices in the period" (375).

Fin-de-siècle literature showed how things were changing for women in the late nineteenth-century and displayed a whole range of female characters that embodied this new kind of women, who were educated, independent and who were not interested in marriage or motherhood. The rise of this new found freedom affected women's language: many women writers found their own voice and dare to explore new literary and linguistic possibilities, beyond those traditionally associated to women. However, women had to be very careful with how they expressed themselves. In 19th century England, those women whose behaviour was not feminine enough, according to Victorian gender roles, were labelled as "hysterical", "maniac" or "madwoman." This included those who didn't have maternal instinct, those who refused to submit to their husbands or fathers, were opinionated, spoke their minds, wanted to work, or decided to get a divorce, which was possible at that time thanks to the Divorce Act of 1857. As Showalter points out, "Moral insanity redefined madness not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behaviour" (*The Female Malady* 29). When it comes to language, a woman who raised her voice, talked too much, swore or was too bossy could be labelled as insane. In fact, many women were confined in asylums by their husbands if they talked about their infidelities or other issues that could ruin the man's reputation. This was the case, among many others, of Louisa Lowe, who was locked up in a psychiatric hospital because she had accused her husband of being unfaithful and had decided to abandon him. She requested an interview with the Commissioners in Lunacy in order to be discharged, but the commissioners (all male doctors) considered that she had to be confined to prevent her from "further tarnishing the reputation of her husband" (Nicholson 141). Those women were always advised to "keep quiet" so as to not make things worse. Silence, then, might be considered a way of protection for women, while a woman's voice was potentially dangerous for men's reputation.

Hardy includes in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* a female character (Lucetta) who embodies those women whose behaviour challenged the status quo and who were potentially dangerous, since they refused to be silenced or dominated. Nevertheless, the novel shows how women like Susan or Elizabeth-Jane (or even the aforementioned Lucetta) are forced to use silence for their own benefit, be humble and keep secrets in order to succeed, as we will see later. The novel's female characters are encouraged to gain independence and defy the theory of the separation of spheres, but paradoxically those characters who dare to push the boundaries even further, like Lucetta, are exposed, mocked and punished.

Thomas Hardy, then, shows in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* the complexity of the late Victorian era, a period in which the old values were gradually being replaced by new ones. Hardy sets the novel in the mid-1880s, while the wife-selling event takes place eighteen years before. In that 18-year lapse, society had evolved quickly and greatly, especially in urban areas, while the rural world, as it usually happens, remained more conservative in matters of gender. Casterbridge is described as an "old-fashioned place" by Elizabeth-Jane; a point of view that

many contemporary readers might have shared. The narrator insists on that idea, and describes the town as an "antiquated borough" which is "untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism" (*Casterbridge* 27), thus condemning, as we will see later, Casterbridgeans' reactionary ideas regarding gender stereotypes.

The main female characters seem to represent a wide range of attitudes towards gender stereotypes and language: on the one hand, we have Susan, who uses silence to defy gender roles and to subvert male dominance. On the other hand, Lucetta refuses to be silenced and uses language to empower herself, thus subverting gender roles, and as a consequence she is eventually punished and transformed into a madwoman. Finally, Elizabeth-Jane, who manages to be conservative but progressive at the same time.

2. Feminine and Masculine Language in *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*

The Mayor of Casterbridge shows how language perpetuates and reflects, but also defies, traditional gender roles. It is interesting to see how the novel highlights, on the one hand, how language and silence exposes power imbalance between men and women, and on the other hand how words (and the absence of words) are a powerful weapon for women to subvert male dominance, as we will see later. Language, then, has the ability of reinforcing gender roles and perpetuating gender inequality, but it can also empower women. It is important to point out that while the characters' behaviour sometimes defies Victorian gender roles, their language is somehow more conservative in terms of gender construction. Margaret R. Higonnet argues that in Hardy's novels "resistance to the social code of gender is undermined by the reinscription of a gendered linguistic code." (Higonnet 28)

The novel's masculine characters, and especially Henchard, have a tendency to dominance, which is expressed through their language. For example, Henchard is prone to use imperative forms, such as these words to Farfrae: "You shall do no more to-night", "Now you shall!" (*Casterbridge* 72). When he talks to Susan or Elizabeth-Jane he uses future tenses to impose himself: "You'll take my surname now-hey?" (qtd. in Gamarra Aragonés 50). He also employs the pronoun "you" to emphasize his control over the rest of the characters, especially over Susan: "No, no, Susan, you are not to go [...]" (*Casterbridge* 70), "That I meet you, court you, and marry you" (*Casterbridge* 55).

It has been argued by critics such as Christopher Lane that Henchard, who is the embodiment of old-fashioned, aggressive masculinity, understands personal relationships and love in terms of domination. Robert Langbaum, for example, states that in Henchard "the desire for power replaces sexuality; he seeks to possess completely the people he loves or is unable to distinguish the pleasure of love from the pleasure of proprietorship" (130). Elaine Showalter claims too that "the nature of intensity of Henchard's need is not sexual. . . What he needs is a 'greedy exclusiveness,' a title; and this feeling is stimulated by male competition" ("The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge" 106). According to Robert Langbaum, Hardy suggests a homo-erotic element in Henchard and Farfrae's male bonding: "Henchard's sudden passion for Farfrae, which is striking after his coolness towards women, suggests homosexuality on his side" (129). His efforts

to control Farfrae might be a symptom of his feelings towards him. His aggressive character might have to do with these repressed emotions and desires. We read how Henchard prolonged "holding the young man's hand" when he tries to convince him not to go to America (*Casterbridge* 130) and when we watch the two friends through the eyes of Elizabeth-Jane, we realise she is somehow jealous of such a "Friendship between men and men; what a rugged strength there was in it, as evinced by these two" (*Casterbridge* 74). For Langbaum, this is the example "which best points towards homo-eroticism . . . Elizabeth-Jane keeps her eye on Farfrae as though she were competing with Henchard for his affection" (130).

However, Henchard is aware of what is expected of him as a man. Speaking openly about feelings is not a suitable or manly behaviour. This is why he thinks it is weird to talk about his personal life with Farfrae: "It is odd" said Henchard, "that two men should meet as er have done on a purely business ground, and that at the end of the first day I should wish to speak to 'ee on a family matter ..." (*Casterbridge* 73). Nevertheless, later on, during the wrestling match, Henchard confesses to Farfrae that "God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time. . ." (254) and then he declares that "I am a wretched man, but my heart is true to you still" (*Casterbridge* 266).

Regarding Henchard-Farfrae relationship, we may highlight that homosocial and/or homoerotic relationships in the Victorian era were not as rare as we might think. John Beynon claims that, in fact, "The [British] Empire was the site of 'masculinist imaginings' in which men could enjoy homosocial comradeship in physically challenging, arduous circumstances far from what they perceived to be the damaging influences of *the feminine*" (38).

Henchard undergoes a process of feminization, or "unmanning" according to Showalter, since when he acknowledges his feelings towards Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane, and performs an act of selfless love, he embraces his feminine side ("The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge" 101). We should take into account that virtues such as devotion, sacrifice and selfless love are traditionally womanly values and as such they have to be expressed in a more feminine language. Images that show this loss of virility are found many times in the novel. As Robert Langbaum points out: "Henchard's change after his self-defeat in the wrestling match is strikingly pictorialized" (132). We can also read that Henchard remained "in a crouching attitude, unusual for a man, and for such a man. Its womanliness sat tragically on the figure of such stern piece of virility". The narrator also states that he resembled a "fangless lion" (*Casterbridge* 254-5).

As a consequence, his language changes during the process. This feminization process becomes more intense as we approach the end of the novel. We can see how Henchard even recognizes he is no longer entitled to give orders to his stepdaughter. It is also interesting how at this point he uses a term of endearment (usually associated to feminine language, since it implies intimacy) instead of Elizabeth-Jane's name, showing this way his love for her: "I approve of anything you desire to do, Izzy" said Henchard. "If I did not approve, it would be no matter! I wish to go away. My presence might make things awkward in the future; and, in short, it is best that I go" (*Casterbridge* 289). Henchard's transformation is complete, since he is now prone to showing his feelings and speaking about them: "But he was no longer the man to stand these reverses unmoved" (*Casterbridge*

302). In the end, he sacrifices his well-being for his stepdaughter's sake: "Don't ye distress yourself on my account" (*Casterbridge* 303).

Regarding the main female characters portrayed in Hardy's novel (that is, Susan, Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane), they are quite different from each other and as a consequence they use a language of their own, to the point that language and the way they express themselves is usually key to understand the character's personality and motivations. However, the language employed by all the female characters has some things in common. For example, they usually tend to use a less aggressive language than men when asking for something. Instead of using imperative sentences or commands, which are ubiquitous in Henchard's speech, the women in this novel prefer to ask politely and use courtesy words, among other linguistic features. We can see, for instance, how Lucetta tries to make Henchard change his mind about marrying her. Instead of commanding him to do so, she employs a more "feminine" language and begs: "[...] please, don't argue it any more" (89). When Henchard discovers that she has married Farfrae, Lucetta asks for his forgiveness. Again, she is not using an imperative, but instead she asks for mercy: "Michael – pity me, and be generous!" (*Casterbridge* 284).

Another characteristic feature of the language of female characters in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is the use of intensifiers, which shows that women are more prone to show their feelings in a more emphatic way: "It is so plain to me now, father, it is [...] He [...] whom my poor mother married by such a strange mistake [...] was very kind-O so kind!" (*Casterbridge* 198-99). As we can see, the language employed by female characters in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reflects their passiveness and the superiority of their male counterparts. We can also see in the use of silence a good metaphor of how Victorian women were voiceless in many situations. For instance, in a conversation that takes place between Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane, the narrator tells us that she "did not utter any objection", that she "breathed a sigh" and also "remained incompetently silent" (180-181). Elizabeth-Jane, then, is not capable of expressing herself through language.

The language of the novel's characters mirrors power imbalance between men and women, since the discourse of the male characters overpowers feminine discourse and as a result it is easier for them to impose their point of view. However, female characters in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* manage to use language and silence to their own benefit and to defy male dominance. In fact, even a minor female character like the furmity woman is capable of destroying or saving a man's reputation with the power of her words - or with her silence. The furmity woman is a central character in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and certainly a curious one. Although she is a secondary character that appears only a few times throughout the novel, her words have the power of changing the main characters' fate, especially Henchard's. We could argue that her words are the catalyst for both of Henchard's downfalls.

2.1. Susan Henchard / Newson: the subversive power of silence.

Susan Henchard/Newson might be considered a good example of the traditional, submissive Victorian women, whose role was mainly to stay at home and look after their husband and children. She would also embody the Victorian myth of "the angel of the house". Even Newson, her "buyer", describes her as a "warm-

hearted, home-spun woman." (*Casterbridge* 271) As such, she is associated to silence throughout the novel, to the point that her quietness is her most distinctive feature. From the beginning of the story she is considered a victim and is portrayed as a very quiet, almost voiceless woman: the wife-selling event that opens the novel makes us think of her as so. However, we can argue that Susan deliberately uses silence as a mechanism to diminish male dominance. When we first meet her, Susan is following her husband silently and passively: "What was really peculiar, however, in this couple's progress, and would have attracted the attention of any casual observer otherwise disposed to overlook them, was the perfect silence they preserved." (*Casterbridge*, 5)

Susan's silence is not a sign of submission, but her way of granting herself some space. According to Priyanka Singh: "In the company of indifferent man by her side, it is silence that promises Susan a space to breathe. It is freedom for her that liberates her from constant reaction to what is said and done." (71) Silence can be also seen as a protection for women, as we stated before.

As Henchard gets drunk because of the rum provided by the furmity woman, she remains silent, and takes care of her little daughter. Even when Henchard sells her in his improvised auction, she goes with Newson (the man who pays five guineas for her) without protesting or questioning the legality of the transaction. When Henchard gets drunk and then sells her, she does not yell at him or makes a scene. She simply agrees and leaves her bad-tempered husband for a kinder one. By doing so, she is attacking one of the most sacred institutions for Victorians – marriage. In Susan's behaviour we could glimpse some kind of defiance and self-esteem, although we might also consider that she is merely being submissive. However, we may argue that she is courageous enough to change words for actions. We should not forget that, while the auction is going on, she overtly defies her husband in front of everyone and answers back very ironically:

> "Will anybody buy her?" said the man.
> "I wish somebody would," said she firmly. "Her present owner is not at all to her liking!" (*Casterbridge* 11)

Although Susan remains silent for most of the auction, it might not be indicative of fear or submission: Susan is seriously considering what would be better for her and her daughter. She is silently making a decision, and in the end, she breaks her silence to make clear that she is willingly going with Newson: "Mike." She said, "I've lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to 'ee; I'll try my luck elsewhere. 'Twill ne better forme and Elizabeth-Jane, both. So good-bye!" (*Casterbridge* 12). According to Singh, "It would be interesting to comprehend silence as a medium to reject male hegemony, privilege and dominance." (68)

This mutism and alleged innocence are also a characteristic that describes Susan and that was quite common and desirable in Victorian women. In Charles Petrie's words, "The stamp of masculine approval was placed upon ignorance of the world, meekness, lack of opinions, general helplessness and weakness; in short, recognition of female inferiority to the male" (184). Newson's final words

about Susan emphasize this idea of her as an ignorant, uneducated woman: "She was not what they call shrewd or sharp at all" (*Casterbridge* 271).

Henchard's answer to these words shows that he shares Newson's point of view: "She was not." He even blames her for leaving him after the auction, because he considers her "simple-minded enough to think that the sale was in a way binding" (*Casterbridge* 271). As we can see, Susan is not described by her words, but by what other people say about her. However, although she is labelled many times as "dumb", it is quite possible that she was merely playing the part and pretending to be simpler than she actually was, in order to make her life easier. She simply acted as it was expected of her. The fact that she remained silent about the real identity of her daughter proves that she is not as simple-minded as people thought. What is more: it is very possible that she knew perfectly well that the auction was not binding, but that she chose to go with Newson because she knew it would be better for her and her daughter.

After eighteen years, when Susan returns to Casterbridge looking for Henchard, she is not trying to get revenge. She doesn't even ask her husband for an explanation. Surprisingly, she is quite ashamed of meeting Henchard because she has found out that he is an important, wealthy person and she is not. Again, she strikes us as a submissive woman, whose role is not to lead, but to follow men's instructions, and her language seems to support this idea. For instance, when Henchard agrees to take care of her and Elizabeth-Jane and decides to remarry her, she utters "I am quite in your hands, Michael" *(Casterbridge* 70). She uses a submissive language which reinforces male superiority in order to make Henchard take pity on her.

In order to understand Susan's language and behaviour, we should take into consideration that in the late Victorian period women could hardly be financially independent. Susan is a widow now (or at least she thinks she is), so she is forced to find someone who provides for her and her daughter. So, perhaps, she is not being submissive: maybe she is just choosing the right words in order to persuade Henchard to take care of them and to make sure Elizabeth-Jane has an opportunity in life. The narrator explains clearly why she accepted to re-marry Henchard: "... she did not enjoy pleasantries on a situation into which she had entered solely for the sake of her girl's reputation" (*Casterbridge* 77).

Susan is sacrificing herself for his daughter's sake, showing a behaviour that is typically associated with women and mothers in the Victorian age. The narrator tells us about Susan's reaction to Henchard's marriage proposal: "The poor woman smiled faintly" (*Casterbridge* 77). Again, words are not necessary here: Susan is using her silence to subtly express disagreement. Her silence allows her to accept without giving her consent verbally, and since Henchard interprets her smile as an affirmative answer, she doesn't need to humiliate herself and verbally accept to marry the man who sold her 18 years ago.

We can argue, then, that Susan uses silence as a way of achieving her goals. We can see, for example, how she remains silent about Elizabeth-Jane's paternity, so that Henchard takes her in. It is only when she's about to die that she writes a letter that clarifies the identity of the girl's father.

2.2. Lucetta Templeman: the myth of the "fallen woman"

The character of Lucetta might be considered the embodiment of the Victorian myth of the "fallen woman." Even though she tries to overcome her past and at first shows no signs of repentance, this changes when she falls in love with Farfrae and marries him. Lucetta is not really ashamed of her previous romantic relationship with Henchard, which is a modern and unconventional standpoint in a society in which women had to remain chaste until their wedding day. She is determined to forget about her past and is willing to start a new life with her new love, Donald Farfrae. Lucetta considers that women are sometimes blamed and stigmatized for things that are not their fault, which is a very revolutionary statement. In the next excerpts, Lucetta calls into question the double standard that judges women more harshly than men. It is interesting how she uses the personal pronoun "I" to highlight her point of view:

> "I was thinking of- what happened sometimes when women get themselves in strange positions in the eyes of the world from no fault of their own." (*Casterbridge* 159)

> "...my only crime was the indulging in a foolish girl's passion for you with too little regards for correctness, and that I was what *I* call innocent all the time they called me guilty ..." (*Casterbridge* 165).

It is clear, then, that Lucetta does not agree with the restrictive Victorian moral code. She defies Victorian rigid moral code regarding romantic relationships and courtship ritual. Regarding language, she is not afraid of speaking her mind and leading the way in a conversation, even with men, which wasn't very ladylike in Victorian society. It is quite significant that she employs a language that mirrors her determination. We can see in the next excerpt how she uses again the personal pronoun "I" and the affirmative and negative form of the Simple Future tense to indicate that she is talking about a decision, a fact, and not a possibility. She wants to make clear that she is determined to live the life the way she chooses and with whomever she wants: "I won't be a slave to the past- I'll love where I choose" (*Casterbridge* 166)

She is also incredibly open about her past, which is quite ironic if we take into account that it is a secret about her past that ruins her life and drives her mad. Lucetta is the antithesis of Susan when it comes to language: while Susan uses silence as a shield, Lucetta talks too much, according to Victorian standards, and as a result she is destroyed by her own secrets. We could argue that Hardy is punishing Lucetta for trying to subvert gender roles and for using language in a way that was not desirable or suitable for women. The author is telling Victorian readers that not being discreet might have terrible consequences for women.

Lucetta defies the rigid Victorian etiquette and manners of addressing, which were especially restrictive regarding men-women interactions, which were regulated to the slightest detail. In his article "Etiquette for Ladies and Girls", Ardern Holt establishes how men and women should interact:

> A true lady should, more than all other things, take the greatest care not to wound the feelings of anybody... If a young lady walking with her father or brother meet a gentleman known to them whom they recognise, in returning their salutation

> he would raise his hat to her without knowing her, which she would acknowledge by the slightest possible motion of the head, but this would not constitute an acquaintance. Supposing she bowed to a gentleman of her acquaintance who was accompanied by a friend, he would raise his hat as well as her acquaintance… According to the strict etiquette a married lady or the one of the higher rank bows first. (qtd. in Poplawski 482)

In her first encounter with Farfrae, Lucetta does not conform to those strict rules. She acts as a straightforward woman who even makes Farfrae blush. Lucetta bluntly confesses to Farfrae that she likes him: "Quite otherwise- you are most interesting!" (*Casterbridge* 149). The narrator describes Farfrae's reaction with those words: "It was now Farfrae who showed the modest pink" (*Casterbridge* 149). Victorian readers would not empathize with a woman who defies etiquette and gender roles so overtly. Vanity was not a desirable attribute for women. Too much attention to physical appearance was also regarded as a type of mental illness in Victorian times, called "Intense Vanity" (*The Female Malady* 86).

The hypothesis of Lucetta as an example of the classic Victorian madwoman, a stereotypical female character in Victorian literature, might be confirmed at the end of the novel. Lucetta's nervous breakdown caused by the "skimmity ride" might indicate she is psychologically unstable. However, we should take into account that independent women like Lucetta, who refused to be submissive were usually labelled as mad, as we discussed in the introduction.

Although Lucetta embodies a new type of woman, who openly defies gender roles, including those which have to do with language, she employs a more "feminine" language when she wants to change Henchard's mind. We can see an example of pity as a way of subverting Henchard's dominance when Lucetta tells him to give her love letters back and asks for mercy: "Oh, Michael, don't wreck me like this." When hearing these words, Henchard "was disarmed" (*Casterbridge* 232) and agrees to return the letters in order to help her. He even asks her: "Well, what do you want me to do?" (*Casterbridge* 232), giving her the power of commanding him.

Henchard was deceived by Lucetta, who speaks in a more ladylike and submissive way just to trick him and make him return her letters out of pity for her. The narrator makes clear that Lucetta had selected "her poorest, plainest, and longest discarded attire" (*Casterbridge* 231) in order to make Henchard change his mind about the love letters she once wrote to him. Again, the narrator is showing us that is better for women to play the victim and use a submissive, pitiful language instead of being aggressive or belligerent, even if they are entitled to be so. This kind of language would work for men, who have to be dominant in order to be heard and respected, but according to Hardy this doesn't apply to women, since they have to at least appear to be weak so as to get men to do what they want. She was rewarded for being humble, as women were supposed to be, and eventually punished for not being so in the past.

However, despite being portrayed as a modern, independent woman, Lucetta sometimes shows a traditional sense of morality, even though she is aware that she has done nothing wrong. She is mainly concerned with keeping appearances and with his husband finding out about her pre-marital relationship with Henchard, as she supposes that he would react badly. She has discovered the power of silence and how dangerous words can be. Moreover, she thinks the news

of her love affair with Henchard would affect Farfrae's status and respectability as new mayor of Casterbridge. As wives were considered a property, what they did affected the reputation of the husband and consequently the family and the household. We should mention at this point P.A. Buckner's words on this matter:

> The married couple became one entity represented by the husband, placing him in control of all property, earnings and money. In addition to losing money and material goods to their husbands, Victorian wives became property to their husbands, giving them rights to what their bodies produced: children, sex and domestic labor. (137)

2.3. Elizabeth-Jane: the best of both worlds

Elizabeth-Jane is the only character that manages to integrate the public and the domestic, challenging the "separation of spheres" that, as mentioned in the introduction, was widespread in the late Victorian era. She finds it very important to be independent and to find a job that enables her to make a living out of it. She is not afraid of leaving the security of Henchard's house or working at the Three Mariners in order to pay for her and her mothers' lodging and later she works for Lucetta as a companion and housekeeper. After Henchard's bankruptcy, she works with him in Farfrae's yard. This kind of work was not considered one of the traditional "women's trades" that were mainly related to "teaching, dress-making and retail" (Wolff 14). However, she also embodies Victorian ladylike values, such as quietness, taste, service, piety and gratitude. This character manages to be modest and humble, and hardly ever expresses her deepest feelings. She, as her mother Susan, remains silent in many situations and is aware of what words (and secrets) might do to a girls' reputation. Nevertheless, she also uses a more "masculine" language, which reflects this double personality of hers (since she accesses both the private and the public spheres, that is, she can be feminine and masculine at the same time).

It is worth mentioning that the Elizabeth –Jane of the original serialization of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, published in *Graphic*, was somehow bolder and her behaviour was more "manly", according to traditional gender roles. In order to make Elizabeth-Jane more attractive to Victorian readers, Hardy changed some excerpts of the novel and transformed this character into a "womanlier" one, according to Victorian traditional values. In the first version of the novel, it is Elizabeth-Jane, and not Henchard, the one who stops and tames the bull and rescues Lucetta. When it comes to decorum, a value that is essentially feminine for Victorians, we witness how in the serialized version Elizabeth-Jane allows Farfrae to kiss her in public (which was certainly an inappropriate behaviour for a young lady). Those two scenes are substantially changed, or even discarded, in the ultimate version of the novel. We might guess that Hardy wanted to make Elizabeth-Jane a more likeable character for conservative audience, in order to successfully make her the spokesperson for his ideas. Pamela Dalziel argues that this revision of Elizabeth-Jane's characters was motivated by the illustrations drawn by Robert Barnes, who "attempted to win readerly sympathy for Elizabeth-Jane … by representing her in terms of conventional notions of Victorian womanliness" (80).

According to Dalziel, Barne's drawings for Graphic persuaded Hardy to "moderate his initial Graphic portrayal of Elizabeth-Jane as a distinctly unconventional figure combining traditional 'feminine' virtues (patience, selflessness, fidelity, and so forth) with such 'masculine' traits as courage and assertiveness" (*Casterbridge* xxx). Hardy replaced a proto-feminist heroine, who defied stereotypical gender roles with a "more conventionally womanly character who might recommend herself to a conservative readership and serve a more acceptable spokesperson for his philosophical views" (*Casterbridge* xxx).

It should not be a surprise to the reader that Elizabeth-Jane's behaviour (as it happened with Susan) is prudish and chaste, although we know she falls in love with Farfrae and has feelings for him nearly throughout the entire novel. Elizabeth-Jane is aware of what society expected of her as a woman, so she knows it is not appropriate to openly show her feelings if she wants to be respectable. We should bear in mind how Ruskin praises "The perfect loveliness of a woman's Countenance" (53). We have an example of repressed feelings when Susan tricks both Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane and they find themselves alone in the granary. We know they both have feelings for each other, but neither of them is willing to express them. Farfrae doesn't even dare to touch her in order to clean her, since she was covered in "husks and dust" (*Casterbridge* 89). Even though they avoid physical contact, sexual tension is evident in this excerpt: "Donald Farfrae began blowing her back hair, and her side hair, and her neck, and the crown of her bonnet, and the fur of her victorine, Elizabeth saying 'Oh thank you' at every puff" (*Casterbridge* 89).

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Elizabeth-Jane dances with Farfrae. Even though she is having a good time, she doesn't want to be carried away by her passion, so she speaks this way to herself: "No, no. Elizabeth-Jane - such dreams are not for you!" (*Casterbridge* 104-5).

This is an example of how for Victorian women expressing their feelings was even more difficult than for their male peers. Bertrand Russell stated that: "In women who have been conventionally educated there is often a certain pride in coldness, there is great physical reserve, and an unwillingness to allow physical intimacy" (101). Paradoxically, a young girl was not expected to focus too obviously on finding a husband, although for most Victorian women it was a life's goal. Women were assumed to desire marriage because it allowed them to become mothers rather than to pursue sexual or emotional satisfaction. William Acton, a famous British doctor who studied sexuality during the Victorian era, wrote that "The majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind" (235). According to this idea, Susan is represented as a sexless character, and she accepts to remarry Henchard just for her daughter's sake, but it is made clear that there was no "amatory fire" between them (*Casterbridge* 78). The narrator also describes Susan as a character so pale and thin that the boys called her "The Ghost" (*Casterbridge* 78).

As much as Elizabeth-Jane has some "manly" manners, she, as every female character in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, uses silence, if not for her benefit, for Lucetta's. Since she works for her, she witnesses the love triangle between Henchard, Lucetta and Farfrae, but she remains silent, even though she has feelings for Farfrae. However, although she manages to find out that Lucetta was romantically involved with her stepfather, she says nothing, thus avoiding a direct

confrontation between Lucetta's admirers. Elizabeth-Jane's failure to inform both Farfrae and Henchard might be considered a form of subversion. Since they lack some important information, they cannot be in control of the situation: Lucetta is, at least for a while. Elizabeth-Jane's faithfulness towards her employer might be even considered an example of sorority.

Elizabeth-Jane, who at first avoided judgement on Lucetta's past and seemed to understand her situation, condemns her behaviour later on, as she is contravening Victorian moral code. When she discovers that Lucetta's former lover is Henchard, she states: "And I say it is him (Henchard) or nobody for you" (*Casterbridge* 199). It is interesting to highlight how Elizabeth-Jane adopts a more masculine language, which reminds us of Henchard's abuse of imperative and exhortative sentences. Since she is adopting a masculine role (giving orders to a woman), her language suddenly turns more aggressive.

Her attitude and language are somewhere in between Susan's passiveness and Lucetta's boldness, and she can both use silence as a way of subverting male dominance (like Susan) and a masculine language to impose her point of view (like Henchard) and empower herself. Thomas Hardy is showing us his own prototype of a "new woman", who according to him should defy gender roles but only to certain extent.

Is Elizabeth-Jane echoing Hardy's point of view concerning the new woman's language, which reflects a change in women's behaviour? It could be so, if we take into account that Lucetta is punished at the end of the novel for speaking openly about her past and for overtly trying to subvert the Victorian moral code and gender roles, while Elizabeth-Jane, who in the end respects the Victorian gender-biased moral code, and knows when to be silent and discreet, is rewarded. Her patience, virtue and decorum (quintessential female qualities) enable her to be the great winner of the novel. Virtue, for Thomas Hardy, seems to lie in the middle.

Notes

[1] *The Graphic* was a British weekly illustrated newspaper, first published in 1869.

[2] *Harper's Weekly, A Journal of Civilization* (1857-1916) was an American political magazine based in New York City.

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The Nonunitary Identities of Japanese Women

The Conceptualization of Selves Through Implications of 'Investment' in English Language Learning

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Abstract. This paper discusses the development of Japanese women's identities in the context of the accomplishment of agency in the field of foreign language study. In order to situate the identity within the feminist poststructuralist theory and SLA (second language learning) practice, the paper addresses Chris Weedon's and Bonny Norton's reconceptualizations of subjectivity as nonunitary. By doing so, the subjectivity is further analyzed in relation to the learners' 'investment' in learning a foreign language, to explain the very process of subject formation. Through the analysis of the interviews with young and financially accomplished Japanese women, it can be understood that their subjectivities appear to be regulated by their commitment and desire for the English language and not solely Occidentalist longings. Therefore, this paper tries to pinpoint the trajectory of transnational Japanese women's identity development and answer the question of what SLA situations and implications cause their identities to be interpreted in the context of struggle, or contestation.

Keywords: Identity, subjectivity, subject in process, SLA, Japanese women, Kristeva, and Foucault.

Introduction

Drawing on Bonny Norton's problematization of identity vis-à-vis SLA (second language learning) context, this paper will discuss the formative characteristics of identity in the context of Japanese women's accomplishment of subjectivity in the field of foreign language study. To be more specific, the question of identity in fluctuation is intriguing concerning Japanese women's identity development within the ideological discourse of internationalization (policies that presuppose "that English is the remedy for all international and global matters" (Nonaka, 2018, pp. Kindle Locations 211-212)) and their eventual subjectification to desire to learn a foreign language, i.e., the desire for internationalization. Based on the logic of identity as already socio-historically embedded in the discourse, we can problematize the desire in the same manner. Therefore, to understand Japanese women's desire to learn English, this paper will reflect on the poststructuralist theories of identity posited by Bonny Norton and Chris Weedon, to rethink the conceptualizations of subject and subjectivity in the discourse of SLA practice. These theories will be further applied to the data obtained through the interviews conducted with Japanese women and will be addressed from three different perspectives (in agreement with Norton) to, potentially, trace the identity change and development through these women's lived experiences.

The existing research on SLA and Language and Desire positioned Japanese women in, somewhat, unfavorable discoursive position of erotically inspired Occidentalists who perceive the West, and all it entails, as an idealistic geo-social

space that promises a better life than the one in Japan (Kelsky, 2001; Piller & Takahashi, 2006). Hence, to pinpoint a change in the discourse of Occidentalism and address the new perception of Japanese women's subjectivity as 'in process,' to use Kristevan concept (1984), the reconsideration of the existing research is required. That means it is essential to understand subjectivity[1] as a heterogeneous entity, or a site of struggle, that emerges in the diversity of social sites regulated by the power relations in "which the person takes up different subject positions" (Norton, 2013, p. 164).

Therefore, Norton's concept of investment, which encompasses the complexity of the relationship between learner's identity and her/his commitment to learning a language (2013, p. 3), applies to the dualistic relationship between Japanese women's subjectivities in process and the desire to learn a foreign language, English in this case. Thus, through the analysis of Japanese women's investment in the SLA practices, this paper tries to pinpoint the trajectory of transnational Japanese women's identity development and answer the question of what SLA situations and implications cause their identities to be interpreted in the context of struggle, or contestation.

The research data for this paper were collected in the period between November 2018 and January 2020. I generated the data from the semi-structured, both Skype and in-person interviews, conducted with young and financially accomplished Japanese women. For this paper, the interviews with five of them, Aya (27), Hazuki (27), Tomi (37), Michina (36), and Saki (32), will be analyzed. The interviews with these five participants are chosen for two reasons. If we reflect on the construct of investment as relevant in the establishment of the trajectory of the paper argumentation, these women can be considered representative examples because they either committed a significant amount of time to English language study (outside Japan) or are currently residing abroad and working on the fulfillment of their internationalist goals. Based on the data analyzed, my epistemological position is that Japanese women's identities can be interpreted as unfixed or in process. These fluctuating identities can be indicative of the potential sites of contradiction and duality on the liminal space of the transnational route between Japan, the USA, and Canada.

This paper is organized as follows: the next section discusses the theoretical framework of the study of identity and subjectivity by bringing up the theories posited by Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva. Then, in agreement with Norton's three definitions of subjectivity, the following section discusses the feminist poststructuralist reading of subjectivity as fluid and bound with language. Ultimately, the analysis of the three definitions (aspects) is applied to the empirical data from the interviews conducted, to reaffirm the relevance of language in the practice of subjectivity emergence and reconfiguration.

[1] It should be pointed out that, referring to Michel Foucault and Bonny Norton, the terms of 'identity' and 'subjectivity' are used interchangeably; however, the nuanced differences between the concepts are emphasized, particularly in the context of disciplinary gaze and subjection vis-à-vis the understanding of subjectivity.

Theoretical Framework

Tackling the subject position in discourse, in his lecture on the relationship among the text, reader, and the author, Michel Foucault asks a set of thought-provoking questions regarding the subject's appearance, position, and functions within the discourse. He contends that "the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse" (1977, p. 138). In that regard, it can be assumed that the position of the subject is more complex, and should be assessed from multiple points of view. Furthermore, Foucault explains that a person becomes the subject in two ways, by being subjected to some governing mode of power or through the subjection of one's own identity to the disciplining power of self-knowledge (1982; 1988). In other words, asides from the broader scope of the governance of subjects within the specific relations of power and knowledge, we see subjects as also structured through deliberate practice of internalization of a disciplinary gaze, through the practice of self-care, and enunciation of desires. Therefore, if we take the self-regulatory practice of governance as a representative factor of elicitation and promotion of subjectivities through self-reflection, the study of identity can be acknowledged as being always in process or in-the-making.

Having noted the relevance of Foucault's premise on subject construction, the poststructuralist perception of the subject constitution in and through language should be addressed. To grasp the relationship between an individual and the social, Foucault constructs the concept of a (bipolar) discursive field, a site of constant discord between the ways of meaning-making and organizing of the social institutions and practices (1977). These moments of 'institutional' competitiveness can be explained through the existence of dominant and marginal discursive fields. For instance, in the prevailing discourses of power, such as family, church, or education, we cannot account for all of them equally. Some discourses will disseminate unified or transcendent subject values that reaffirm the status quo (Weedon, 1987), while the hegemonic system of meanings will cast away the others that try and challenge it (Ibid., p. 35). If this logic is applied to the Japanese system of English language education, it can be seen that the constitution of desirable subjectivities within the context of internationalization policies is funded and promulgated by the government. Interestingly, within the very discourse of internationalization, there is little evidence of the personal, lived, narratives of the participants in the programs (Nonaka, 2018). Thus, the experiences of Japanese people, women to be more precise, should be understood as the founding block of Japanese discourse of internationalization, especially concerning the desirable subjectivity formation and its potential to diverge with the collectivizing power arrangements that attempt to construct normative versions of subjectivity per se.

The problematization of desire by Bronwyn Davies (1990) might encapsulate the notions of competitiveness mentioned above, to rearticulate the desire in the feminist poststructuralist context, and attest to its subversive interpretation. Davies reflects on various humanist perceptions of desire as transcendental and indicative of the human essence. However, relying on the feminist poststructuralist theory, she detects "different lived patterns of desire" (Ibid., p. 501). These patterns do not categorize people according to the binding logic of

binary oppositions into prescriptive categories of femininity and masculinity, on the contrary, they extend the poststructuralist perception of the fluid (multiple) identities to the understanding of desire as "a movement amongst a multiplicity ways of being" (p. 501). Furthermore, she argues, desire is "spoken into existence" (1990, p. 500); it is articulated through Kristeva's concepts of symbolic and semiotic via the discursive and interactive processes. The symbolic and semiotic stand for two modalities of the same signifying process that are to be perceived as interlocking and in an incessant dialectical relationship that constitutes the type of discourse (Kristeva, 1984, p. 24). With that in mind, the enunciative capacity of desire, it is essential to look into the processes behind the construction of both desires and desired subjectivities in and through language.

Chris Weedon (1987) states that the capacity of poststructuralist theoretical assessment of the general social milieu, encompassing organizations, power, and individual inclinations, resides in language. According to Weedon, language must be seen as a site of generation and contestation of some aspects of social organization and their political consequences. Moreover, she continues, language is always to be referred to as already socio-historically determined by a multiplicity of discourses, through the acknowledgment of which it is possible to pertain it to the relevant site of political struggle (pp. 21-24). In that sense, the position of the subject of enunciation is indispensable for language, its structure, and conscious subjectivity itself. Subjectivity is then expressed through the individual's conscious and unconscious, and her perception and relation to the world (Weedon, p. 32).

Bonny Norton picks up on the Foucauldian approach to discourse and claims that the subjectivity in poststructuralist theory is discursively articulated and "always socially and historically embedded" (2013, p. 4). This aspect opens up the space for feminist poststructuralist theory to articulate it as ever-fluctuating, i.e., as prone to changes caused by a multiplicity of discursive fields that construe it (Weedon, p. 33). She asserts that the feminist poststructuralist construction of subjectivity has tremendous explanatory potential because it centralizes women's experience and methods that connect the women's lived experience with the social power in the context of identity studies. Norton argues that subjectivity is comprised of three defining characteristics. These are the nonunitary or multiple nature of the subject, subjectivity as a site of struggle, and the temporal quality of subjectivity as ever-changing in time (p. 161).

The Non-Unitary Subject

Speaking of the aforementioned perception, of subjectivity defining one's both conscious and unconscious thoughts, Weedon (1987) discusses the psychoanalytic developments to explain the precariousness of the conscious subjectivity, or the symbolic order, that is continuously challenged by the unconscious one. In other words, to understand the unitary potency of psychoanalytic subjectivity, Weedon hypothesizes about the nonunitary subjectivity by reflecting on the work of Julia Kristeva, particularly her conceptualization of the subject in process, where she challenges the humanist

perception of the discoursively rational and symbolically enunciative unitary subject.

Through her work on the theory of language, Kristeva (1984) addresses non-poststructuralist theories of language that envisage language as a finite object or a dead matter that is without any prior regard for the speaking subject. More specifically, her view of the theories of the philosophers of language is rather critical because they tend to categorize and catalog the language per se. However, through her conceptualization of the modalities of semiotic and symbolic, it can be inferred that the signifying practice that is both produced and intelligible through language overcomes the capitalist methods of language stratification and "attests to a "crisis" of social structures and their ideological, coercive, and necrophilic manifestations" (p. 15). Therefore, language is not to be studied apart from the subject of enunciation, which not only incorporates both semantic and logical fields but reflects on their intersection and "*intersubjective-relations*," omnipresent both intra and trans-linguistically (p. 23, emphasis in the original text).

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Kristeva speaks about the language as a signifying process depicted through the interconnectedness of the two inseparable modalities, semiotic and symbolic. The signifying process operates in two ways, she argues. The symbolic modality reflects in the manifestation of the clear or 'real' meaning, always conveyed by the spoken word. The modality of semiotic refers to the interplay of rhythmical processes of the drives and feelings residing in the unconscious, that are 'waiting' to be released into the symbolic. The semiotic is, hence, understood to be continuously 'discharged' into the symbolic, where it threatens to disrupt the 'normal' symbolic order. Therefore, Weedon concludes that conscious subjectivity is "inherently unstable" (p. 87) and always in the making.

Furthermore, by bringing up the Kristevan concept of *negativity*, Weedon posits that these discourses demonstrate the fragility of unitary subjectivity and open up the space for "the articulation of the subject in process" (p. 89). In other words, to describe the not inherently negative 'nature' of semiotic drives, Kristeva brings up the concept of *Semiotic Chora* to define a space in the unconscious, that simultaneously generates and negates the subject, by implicating the very fragility of the unified subject that is continuously challenged by the processes that produce her/him. She names this process 'negativity' and posits that it is manifested in the discourses of the non-symbolic that incessantly challenge the unified or transcendent nature of the subject (Ibid.). That said, meaningful language cannot function without this interplay of the semiotic and symbolic. Despite the emergence of subjectivity upon the entrance into the modality of the symbolic, the semiotic is not to be left behind; it is to remain in a constant connection with the symbolic and constitute meaningful language along the way. Thus, the dialectical relationship, as such, can be considered representative of the non-transcendent depiction of subjectivity.

The non-transcendent subjectivity must be addressed with a specific dose of caution since it reminds of how precarious a self is, and implies that the self should always proactively work on understanding and acting upon the surrounding world while emphasizing the relevance of lived experience (Bloom & Munro, 1995). Bloom and Munro's position regarding the beneficial role of the

discussion on subjectivity within the field of empirical research accentuates the transformative power of the nonunitary approach. According to them, the assessment of subjectivity as 'inprocess' brings about the transformative layer to the discussion of the unequal gender relations. Moreover, by applying the concept of nonunitary identity to her empirical data, Norton (2013) emphasizes the value of the approach for the assessment of the women's lived experiences, particularly in the context of second language learning. Also, she interprets her empirical data as subversive, where the pluralistic understanding of identity resurfaces through the process of negotiation of selves among the immigrant women who participated in her study.

That said, to illustrate this point, the articulation of identity as nonunitary will be applied to the data obtained through the interviews conducted with two Japanese women. I will analyze the narratives provided by Hazuki (27) and Aya (27), two girls from Tokyo whom both had the experience of being involved in the process of internationalization at some points in their lives. Hazuki studied at a university in the United States, while Aya first went to Australia to study English and afterward attended Business School in Milan. Currently, Aya lives and works in the USA, while Hazuki still resides in Japan. Since the interviews with the girls were conducted before Aya's departure to the USA, the paper will discuss her internationalist experience as relevant for understanding the concept of nonunitary identity.

Aya

Aya is a girl who has been interested in English ever since she was an undergraduate student. She even wrote her B.A. thesis on the topic of English as a lingua franca, a research that led her to expand her social network of foreign contacts and to her eventual decision to enroll in a master's program abroad. During the interview, Aya profoundly criticized Japanese society and its isolationist and homogeneous inclinations. She points out that people in Japan do not feel like going abroad; there is no need for such an enterprise whatsoever. In order to explain the reasons behind her initial departure and the desire for the world outside Japan, she says: "If you are not happy you always want something, you know. If people are satisfied, they do not need to look the other way" (Aya, 2018). Therefore, understanding identity as nonunitary applies to Aya's attitude towards the English language and the homogenizing tendency of Japan. Reflecting on the emotive aspect of her identity, the equalization of happiness with the learning of new things, Aya positions herself as a subject already in process. The action indicates that the process of her subjectivity development is still ongoing since she succeeded in departing from Japan and stationing herself in the USA.

Also, according to Aya, her identity change converges with her position within the Japanese business institutions, which she sees invaluable for her future professional progress. As she states, knowing the ropes about the business style can be very useful later in life, particularly regarding the experience of the "unique approach in Japanese business style." While speaking assertively about her professionally-oriented goals, another aspect of her nonunitary identity can be detected. By assuming the position of agency and transgressing the masculinist

discourse of Japan, I interpret her professional goals in agreement with Bloom and Munro, who posit that:

> subjectivity evolves in women's struggle to be "competent" as professionals while not "disappearing." Central to this struggle and the evolution of subjectivity is the redefinition of authority and power to resonate more with female selfhood. Interpreting these contested sites of female selfhood and professional authority provides not only a clearer understanding of nonunitary subjectivity but also suggests alternative understandings of power and authority (1995, pp. 104-105).

Therefore, her desire to learn English can be understood as a corollary to her identity development, which encompasses her professional goals, transnational desires, and criticism of the collectivizing tendency of Japanese culture. Thus, analyzing the developmental aspects of her nonunitary identity enables me to establish a tentative trajectory of her identification by bringing forward all of the different aspects of her identity in the context of the social relations of power. In that sense, Aya's position within the discourses of SLA and internationalization can be rephrased in Foucauldian terminology to indicate the potency of a subject to emerge as autonomous upon her utter subjectification to the internalizing disciplinary relations of power imposed by the discourse of foreign language learning.

Hazuki

Hazuki is a woman who is working in a successful advertising company in Japan whom I had a chance of meeting personally as well, asides from the Skype interview. She considers her work schedule slightly busy and limiting; however, she sees the opportunities to use English at the workplace beneficial given her previous educational background in the United States. Back in Japan, she is reacquainting with the Japanese lifestyle and struggling with some core elements of the Japanese etiquette. She asserts that upon her return home, certain "anomalies" (Bird, 2018) in her, at the time 'usual,' Americanized, self occurred. Agreeing with Aya's criticism of the homogenous culture of Japan, Hazuki criticizes the gendered aspect of the Japanese patriarchal lifestyle, which drives many women to pursue foreign interests. She declares that ever since she was a young girl, she thought:

> it was interesting to communicate with people from other countries. Also, when it comes to the future, you know, like in senior high school, people always think about the future of going to university, going to work, or going to any of the special schools, or something like that. I was like, oh, maybe I want to study, maybe I want to communicate with other people not only with Japanese people, so I just decided to study abroad in the States (Hazuki, 2018).

By driving her to do away with the totalizing self of being Japanese, through the negotiation with and the emergence of a different identification, that moment can be seen as formative of her identity. While summarizing her narrative with a potential plan of leaving Japan, Hazuki sees Japanese culture as smothering and retaking her in its grasp, which she points out with an exclamation of "Oh my Gosh, I am getting Japanese!" In this statement, it is clear what Foucault says about the becoming of the subject; it is either through the submission to a type of

governing power or one's disciplinary gaze of self-knowledge. Therefore, Hazuki's automatic response can be interpreted as the negation of the re-subjectification to the homogenous discourse of Japanese society and the prescriptive norms of the internationalization practices. Also, regarding Kristeva's take on the subject in process, Hazuki stands as a representative example of how subjectivity emerges and reemerges through the interplay of the conscious and unconscious desires (symbolic and semiotic), to reinstate the ever-fragile perception of the subjectivity per se. In sum, subjectivity is not supposed to be understood as unitary and centered, on the contrary, Kristeva, Foucault, and Norton contend that it is to be understood as multiple and decentred, which builds up a space for the analysis of the second characteristic that defines subjectivity as contradictory or a site of struggle (2013).

Subjectivity as a Site of Struggle

Drawing on Foucault's theory of the discursive fields, one can see that a person's access to specific modes of subjectivity and identity is "structured through power relations of inclusion and exclusion" which foreground their argumentation on the assertion of the visual differences, particularly noticeable in the discourses of racism, patriarchy, and homophobia (Weedon, 2004, p. 13). Weedon posits that the essence of the discursive fields in question is comprised of multiple diverging discourses that differently fashion subjects and subjectivities. Hence, understanding the language as constitutive of the subject and identity acknowledges the subjection of the identities to processes of cultural struggle (Ibid., 2004). In that sense, to refer to identity as a site of struggle corresponds with the poststructuralist perception of identity as nonunitary. Alternatively, as Norton puts it, "if identity were unitary, fixed and immutable, it could not be subject to change over time and space, nor subject to contestation" (2013, p. 164).

In the context of SLA, to better explain the relationship between the desired target language and learner's desire to practice the language, Norton (2013) develops the concept of 'investment.' According to her, the learners' investment in studying a foreign language presupposes their desire for acquisition of any symbolic resources (*Bourdieuan* capitals), which will result in their better social positioning and the better 'ranking' on the scale of hegemonic power relations. In that sense, she sees the investment as indispensable to the identity, and within the concept, she converges "a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language, and their complex and changing identity" (2013, p. 6).

That said, if I maintain the dualistic framework set by Norton, regarding the perception of identity as contested and linguistically bound with the learners' investment in studying a foreign language, I will try to problematize Japanese women's access and appropriation of subjectivities tailored according to the inequitable power relations' policies of collectivization and exclusion. To reflect on these relations of power vis-à-vis their positioning of Japanese women, the interviews with three more research participants, Saki (32), Michina (36), and Tomi (37), will be analyzed.

Saki

Saki currently resides in Washington, D.C., for a research fellowship. She sees her one-year opportunity to work on the conservation of oil paintings in America significant for her career since it gives her a chance to access different artwork to the one in Japan. Having been acquainted with the 'strict' Japanese etiquette, she feels quite liberated in the USA, which she particularly assigns to her relationship with the people around her, the university staff, and foreign friends. Regarding her desire to learn English, she admits that she was not interested in learning English at first, because of her overwhelming school schedule; however, realizing that, among the siblings, she was the only one who could not speak English inspired a change in her disposition towards the language. Gradually, her view started changing, and with it, her identity. Having invested a vast amount of time and effort in her English acquisition, she decided to boost her language learning through the various acts of socialization and language exchange, such as participation in the global homestay service of CouchSurfing.

Talking about the experience as a host in the program, she reflects on the not so pleasant situation she faced with concerning an American man, whom she corresponded by messenger app. She says:

> I met an American man in person, after texting for a while and wanted to show him around Tokyo. I don't know why, but he knew much more about Tokyo than me. He took me to a skyscraper so we could see the beautiful night view and he proposed to me. [...] I thought he tried to find a woman to marry him, and, of course, I rejected him. [...] As I talked with him, I realized that he wanted a *typical* Japanese woman (Saki, 2019).

The "typical Japanese woman" seems to be an archetypal description of the group of Japanese women infatuated with the West. Through the studies conducted by Karen Kelsky and Ingrid Piller and Kimie Takahashi, we are familiarized with the construction of a particular Occidentalist identity among these women, whose desire for the West regulates their very subjectivities (2001; 2006). The excerpt from the interview with Saki can be interpreted as her assertion of the subjectivity against, presumably, collectivizing attitude of a Western man towards Japanese women. Saki manages to overcome the stereotypical labeling of her own self and emerge as an agent of her own choices. Therefore, through the act of refusal of the marriage proposal, Saki creates the opportunity for the reconceptualization of her identity as a nontypical Japanese woman who is not afraid to say 'no' to an 'idealized' Western self. Moreover, she manages to do aways with the internalized and fetishizing Orientalist gaze, which positioned Japanese women as ever-inferior to both Western and Japanese men (Kelsky, 2001). Through the enunciation of her subjectivity, Saki overcomes the construct of the conventionally 'submissive' and 'typical' Japanese woman and reinstates herself as a signifier of her own subjectivity in the subversive discourse of female empowerment.

Michina

The interview with Michina, a woman who currently lives in the U.S. with her Australian fiancé, was quite informative, it provided me with a more profound

understanding of how some Japanese women participating in the SLA scene perceive themselves in relation to the other Japanese and the people in the West. Throughout the interview, Michina reflected on her vast experience in the foreign language acquisition process and made an emphasis on the significance of the financial burden it posed to her budget. At the age of 24, she went to Hawaii to study English; however, the experience did not turn out to be satisfactory, and she resorted to more arduous methods of learning English. After the series of purchased C.D.s proved to be both expensive and ineffective, she decided to change her approach to language learning and challenge "typically Japanese way of thinking." Diverting her attention towards English and Irish bars, she says that "meeting a foreigner in a bar equals a free lesson" (Michina, 2019).

Asides from the benefits of learning English in these bars, Michina felt these places were more fun and liberating than the "Japanese bars." To say it differently, her identity as a Japanese woman got conflicted with her accustomation to the "casual" atmosphere of these bars. Not only are these bars mostly visited by foreigners, but they offer a plethora of engaging programs where one can easily interact and meet the others. Throughout these events, Michina managed to meet a lot of foreign people, men to be more specific, and started rethinking her subjectivity. In the same way, as Saki previously mentioned, Michina defines Japanese etiquette as notoriously strict, which makes her feel frustrated every time she returns to Japan. By expressing a specific dose of confusion with and not-belonging to either of the two countries, her identity feels like being conflicted between Japanese and the (newly acquired) American one. As a Japanese who is dating a Western man, she is ostracized and judged by the Japanese community, "treated like garbage," as she puts it, while, in America, she feels othered on the racial basis because of her non-Western looks. This aspect of her narrative, allows me to interpret her subjectivity as being in a constant contestation, or split, because to potentially 'fit' either of the places, she is to regulate her own self according to the rules applied. As Kristeva would argue, the language is to be seen as inseparable from the undulating signifying process, that can be transposed to the very process of formation of one's subjectivity (1984). Therefore, Michina's detachment from both socio-cultural surroundings (Japan and the U.S.) implicates the potency of her investment to learn English as a subversive marker of the changing nature of the subjectivity through the linguistic prowess and diligence. She confidently states that she feels like expressing herself in English is the right path for her, and she does not plan to return to Japan any time soon. Therefore, it can be said that even though her subjectivity succumbed to an overpowering (two-fold) social influence, a self emerges upon the enunciative power of subjectivity; she asserts her identity through her desire to speak English and acknowledges it is an action that is to be understood as ongoing.

Tomi

After the Skype interview, I had the pleasure of meeting Tomi personally during my field trip research in Japan in November 2019. She currently resides in Toronto, Canada, where, in order to prolong her visa, she enrolled in a Canadian college in the spring of 2018, and now studies Business Administration. Reflecting

on the SLA field, Tomi says that, when she was younger, she believed that learning English from the native English speakers was the best option for her; however, she eventually changed her mind and opted for the bilingual teachers of English. One of the significant things I noticed while interviewing her was that she considers English as a crucial factor for feeling positive about herself, which is the opposite of how the Japanese language makes her feel. Moreover, Tomi expresses dissatisfaction with Japanese culture in general, which she even calls the "group culture," an equivalent to the concept of homogenization Aya and Hazuki previously mentioned. Interestingly, she defines the Japanese culture by comparing it to the Canadian (Western) culture, where she positions her identity as a potentially Western one. She elaborates her answer by saying that:

> I have been thinking about Japanese culture; it's like a *group culture*, where all you want to do is to follow each other and do whatever the other people are doing. However, in North America or Canada, it is quite the opposite. Everyone wants to have individuality, individualistic versus group mentality, so that is why I wanted to come here, to get away with that culture. I still like Japanese culture, but I needed a different experience (Tomi, 2018-2019, emphasis added).

Identical to Saki and Michina, Tomi explains how she wanted to do away with Japanese culture, and how following all the rules imposed on the people in Japan felt suffocating, leading to her eventual refusal to keep any of the Japanese cultural practices. She considers a good thing to get used to the Canadian way of life and, in a way, 'forget' to be Japanese. Assuming a critical attitude towards one's native culture unravels the machinations behind the constitution of a subject in process. Therefore, Tomi's critical assessment of the Japanese culture and her self-marginalization from the normative tendencies of Japanese society are indicative of the split nature of the subject, whose dialectical relation between the semiotic and symbolic is in perpetual flux in order to synthesize the further development of some new subjectivity. In sum, Tomi does not give up on her internationalist plans; she sees herself as an accomplished 'individual' who succeeded in overcoming the collectivizing Japanese self by challenging her own subjectivity and positioning herself in the "different way of life." In that regard, the situations these three women find themselves enmeshed in signal the divisive power behind the structuring potential of the assertion of one's identity and serve as a fruitful ground for the further discussion of identity as affective across the temporal dimensions of discourse.

Identity as Changeable Over Time

In the third characteristic of subjectivity formation, Norton (2013) explains that the quality of identity to change over time is an extension of the perception of the identity as nonunitary, contradictory, and a site of struggle. As mentioned earlier, we can understand subjectivity as always socially and historically positioned, and, in that regard, adding a temporal dimension to its conceptualization would be self-explanatory. Speaking in the context of the SLA practice, we can think of the formative stages of language acquisition as presupposing the constitution of one's subjectivity. Weedon (1987) sees the process of growing up as relevant in detecting potential sites of resistance, or counter-discourses a subject is to be

identified by. For instance, in the homogenizing culture of Japan, as observed through the interviews, finding an alternative discourse of belonging poses a significant challenge for the identities of my participants. Their recognition of the existence of contradictory identities can be interpreted as the reconfiguration of the personal experiences in the homogenizing discourse of internationalization and Occidentalism.

To illustrate the temporal dimension of identity construction, I will combine the data from all five interviews, since the aspect of temporality contributes to a better understanding of a 'general' background of both nonunitary and conflicting identity. If Saki's and Hazuki's narratives are addressed from the temporal perspective, it can be seen that both of them proclaim how their identities have changed over time, and how their subjectivities can still be addressed as in process, or ongoing. Hence, through the context of the technologies od power and the self that objectify or inspire the self-transformation of an individual (Foucault, 1988), the educational institutions Saki and Hazuki mention can be discerned as influential in the ideological knowledge production. Also, since the second parties inspired both Saki's and Hazuki's English learning, it can be inferred that the practice of identity formation is closely connected with the competitiveness of the speaking subject, who overcomes the conflicting drive of the split subjectivity through the enunciative practice of language learning and transgresses with governing power imposed through conventional knowledge production.

Observing Tomi's, Aya's, and Michina's experiences within the framework of subjectivity as temporally affected appears to be interesting because it allows us to critically address the nonunitary subjectivities that are dialectically torn across binaries. It can be seen that time plays a significant role in the construction of their subjectivities that emerge and remerge via the praxis of negativity of a self within the signifying processes of identity formation and accomplishment of the agency. Through their narratives, the learners' investment can be pinpointed as a crucial drive in the reconceptualization of their selves, since, solely through the mastering of the desired language do they see their goals achieved.

Conclusion

As the paper argued, feminist poststructuralist theory articulates the identity as fluctuating, or in process. The heterogeneous nature of the subject is discussed from both macro and microdynamics' take on the subject formation, where theories posited by Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva serve as the guideline for the establishment of further feminist and linguistic assertions regarding the problematics of subjectivity on trial. Foucault and Kristeva conceptualized the subject as conflicted internally. In other words, their subject in discourse appears to be dialectically constituted via the perpetuation of the processes of emergence (generation) and negativity of the very subject that unravel the undulation of the signifying processes subject finds herself enmeshed in. Moreover, extending the Foucauldian and Kristevan theories to the scopes of SLA and feminist poststructuralist theory postulated by Norton and Weedon, the approach to subjectivity gets extended to its multiple definitions and contextualization within the praxis of foreign language learning. The subjectivity is articulated from three

different angles, as the nonunitary, site of struggle, and temporally affected. Therefore, taking the three aspects of subjectivity as the subversive of the humanist concept of subjectivity as transcendent and unitary, reaffirms the feminist implication of subversion, particularly in the context of the undoing of the conventional (prescriptive) governing power of institutional knowledge production.

The theories of identity mentioned above were applied to the narratives of Japanese women collected through empirical research and interviews. The data collected were analyzed accordingly with Norton's suggestion of the triple definition of subjectivity and addressed the transnational experience of Japanese women as formative of the development of one's subjectivity in general. Therefore, it can be concluded, that SLA circumstances Japanese women get involved in influence the constitution of one's identity. These narratives reaffirm the interpretation of Japanese women's identity as nonunitary. Also, through the formative role of the English language, they manage to signify novel (transnational) subjectivities that can be traced dialectically. In that sense, the trajectory of the subjectivity in fluctuation must be followed across transnational, socio-cultural, linguistic, and temporal dimensions, because, as we have seen, the subject emerges at the intersection of these discourses, and to pinpoint its development more accurately, more detailed investigation of each would be necessary.

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Feminist Linguistic Theories and "Political Correctness"

Modifying the Discourse on Women?

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Abstract. This article proposes a historical perspective looking at the beginnings of feminist linguistics during the liberation movements and its link with the "politically correct" movement. Initially a mostly ironical left-wing expression, it was used by the right notably to denounce the attempt by this movement to reform the language used to describe racial, ethnic and sexual minorities. This attempt at linguistic reform rested on a theoretical approach to language use, with borrowings from feminist linguistic theories. This led to an association being made between feminist linguistic reforms and "political correctness", thereby impacting the changes brought to the discourse about women.

Keywords: feminist linguistic theories, political correctness, language, discourse, sexism

Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a debate over what came to be known as the "politically correct" movement [1] erupted in the United States first and then in Britain. It focused notably on the linguistic reforms associated with this movement. These reforms aimed at eradicating all forms of discrimination in language use in particular through the adoption of speech codes and anti-harassment guidelines, so as to modify the discourse about racial and ethnic minorities but also women, and thereby bring about social change by transforming social attitudes. However, these attempts at a linguistic reform were viewed as a threat to freedom of speech by its detractors who used the phrase "political correctness" to denounce the imposition of a form of "linguistic correctness". Conversely, their use of the phrase "political correctness" was widely viewed as an attack on the progress made by minorities as a result of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It was notably considered as a backlash against feminism and the anti-sexist linguistic reforms which were adopted as a result of feminists' activism.

In this article, we will thus first retrace the origins and development of feminist linguistic theories and of "political correctness" respectively, so as to then analyze the link between them and finally the impact "political correctness" has had on these theories. In other words, by going through what three feminist linguists, Deborah Cameron and Sara Mills in Britain and Robin Talmach Lakoff in the United States, have written in connection with this issue, we will question whether "political correctness" has benefited feminist linguistic theories or, on the contrary, backfired on them and on any progress made by feminists on the linguistic front.

Genealogy of feminist linguistic theories and of "political correctness"

Feminist linguistic theories were developed in the subfield of language and gender studies [2] created in the mid-1970s stemming from the feminist movements launched in the United States and Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a consequence, this subfield in linguistics was political in essence, in that it aimed, just like the wider movements, at changing the relations between men and women. It endeavored to do so notably by analyzing how and why these relations were constructed according to a framework of difference which systematically asserted women's inferiority to men, this analysis and the linguistic reform that it called for having, in British feminist linguist Deborah Cameron's words, "[the] political utility for raising consciousness, denouncing sexism and empowering women" (1992: 125).

Feminists became interested in language, and in particular in the issue of sexist language, as a result of a preoccupation with the way women were represented notably in the media and in advertising. Language being a medium of representation, feminists started doing research on it and developing a theoretical framework (Cameron 1992). It is the American feminist linguist Robin Tolmach Lakoff who gave the initial impulse to the development of the feminist study of language and gender in her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) [3]. Indeed, she posited the existence of a "women's language" whose effect is to submerge

> a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object — sexual or otherwise — but never a serious person with individual views. (Lakoff 2004: 42)

According to her, the outcome was the exclusion of women from positions of power based notably on what was perceived to be the inadequacy of their linguistic behavior (Lakoff 2004).

While acknowledging the founding nature of Lakoff's book, feminist linguists have since criticized its approach, associating it with what has been called "a deficit model", because it highlighted the way in which women's use of language demonstrated their powerlessness and weakness, thus implying a deficiency in their way of speaking in comparison to men.

Another groundbreaking work published in 1980 in Britain, *Man Made Language* by Australian feminist critic and literary theorist Dale Spender, analyzed the way men as the dominant group had influenced discourse. Using the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis [4] on the link between language and reality, it asserted that as a consequence men had had the power to shape reality from their perspective. The dominance of men thus explained why sexism pervaded the English language. This inaugurated the "dominance model" approach in language and gender studies, which Deborah Cameron defines as suggesting "that women's ways of speaking are less the result of their gender *per se* than of their subordinate position relative to men: the key variable is power" (2005: 14).

A final approach which developed in language and gender studies is the "difference model", which has notably been associated with the American

feminist linguist Deborah Tannen and which "suggests that women's ways of speaking reflect the social and linguistic norms of the specifically female subcultures in which most [women] spend [their] formative years" (Cameron 2005: 15). Hence, there also existed a male subculture.

Both the dominance and difference approaches were at the core of a debate within feminist circles in the 1980s: some criticized the former for its deterministic view of the relationship between language and reality and for its essentialism, i.e. its tendency to view women's oppression by men as being similar, thus making generalizations (Mills 2008); others reproached the latter for "failing to acknowledge the extent to which power relations are *constitutive* of gender differentiation as we know it" (Cameron 2006: 76).

In the 1990s, many feminist linguistic researchers started moving away from the "dominance-difference" dichotomy and towards an analysis of diversity among women and of how gender is something which is fluid rather than static [5], that is, in Cameron's words, "the idea of gender as something people 'do' or 'perform' as opposed to something they 'have'" (2005: 17).

This shift in focus coincided with the eruption of a debate over what came to be known as the "politically correct" movement, first in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s and then in Britain. Before being associated with a movement, "political correctness" was an expression whose origins are rather obscure. If most would agree that it was originally a left-wing expression which was used by different movements based on Marxist ideas, in particular in the ranks of the Communist Party, people disagree on the period when it was first employed. According to some, it was at the beginning of the 20th century, while others argue that it was in the 1930s under the Stalinian regime or in the 1940s, and finally for others still it was at the beginning of the 1960s through Mao Tse Tung's *Little Red Book* which had much success among members of the New Left and of the Black Power movement [6]. In fact, the movement which emerged on elite American campuses in the mid-1980s and was given this name, is a direct outcome and a continuation of the social movements which shook the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, former members of the New Left having made their way into different positions in American universities (as professors, deans, administrators or presidents).

Initially used by the left in a straightforward way, that is to qualify the right or correct ideological stance, in the early 1970s the phrase "political correctness" started to be used in an ironic way to denounce a strict adherence to the Communist Party line. The expression seems to have then lost its currency in written form at least, as it was next apparently used in connection with the women's liberation movement and was employed by feminists during a conference entitled "The Scholar and the Feminist IX: Towards a Politics of Sexuality" which was organized at Barnard College on April 24th 1982. One of the goals of this conference was to debate whether there was a "politically correct" sexual practice (Perry). Having entered the academic world as a subject of study, it was used to signify the opinions that left-wing professors and students had not only about feminism but also about minority rights and a multicultural education [7]. These opinions were going to be at the core of a movement on American elite campuses which aimed at ending the exclusion of racial, ethnic and sexual minorities (women and gays) [8] from university curricula, the student and

teaching bodies or their marginalization therein. This movement was given the label of "political correctness" by conservatives, who thus denounced the intolerance they associated with it [9]. It is one particular aspect, namely the attempt at reforming the language used to refer to minorities to rid it of racist, sexist or homophobic connotations, which was notably the target of conservatives' criticism, and the debate continued from the late 1980s till the mid-1990s in the United States.

A theoretical interconnection

It is through this attempt at a linguistic reform that a link between "political correctness" and feminist linguistic theories was established. Feminists were the first to develop a thorough analysis of how language discriminated against women, first by rendering them invisible with the use of generic terms associated with the masculine sex, then by depreciating the value of everything associated with the feminine sex. Modifying the discourse [10] which downgraded women and thus perpetuated their unequal status in society became "a key concern for feminist theorists and activists, trying to change the way that women were represented in advertisements, newspapers and magazines, and also the way that they were named and addressed in texts and in interaction" (Mills 2008: 1). In their attempt to eradicate sexist language, feminists first focused their attention on mainstream dictionaries, criticizing them for failing to identify as offensive the sexist words they contained, devised dictionaries of sexist language and gave advice on words which were to be avoided, calling for the adoption of non-sexist language guidelines (Mills 2008).

Those associated with "political correctness" used the theoretical framework behind these demands for linguistic reforms to elaborate part of their theoretical approach to language use. The link established between language, reality and power [11] within the feminist analysis of language and the sexism it embodies has been particularly important. Thus, in her book *Man Made Language* (1980), Dale Spender argues that

> Given that language is such an influential force in shaping our world, it is obvious that those who have the power to make the symbols and their meanings are in a privileged and highly advantageous position. They have, at least, the potential to order the world to suit their own ends, the potential to construct a language, a reality, a body of knowledge in which they are the central figures, the potential to legitimate their own primacy, and to create a system of beliefs which is beyond challenge (so that their superiority is "natural" and "objectively" tested) The group which has the power to ordain the structure of language, thought, and reality has the potential to create a world in which they are the central figures, while those who are not of their group are peripheral and therefore may be exploited. In the patriarchal order this potential has been realized. Males, as the dominant group, have produced language, thought, and reality. Historically it has been the structures, the categories, and the meanings which have been invented by males — though not of course by *all* males — and they have been validated by reference to other males. In this process women have played little or no part. (97)

Dale Spender's argument that language is the medium through which reality is constructed and as manmade, it is one of the means that men have used to

maintain their hegemony, has found its way into the "politically correct" ideology. More precisely the latter has been inspired by the issue of naming [12] that has been tackled notably by feminist linguists. Indeed, feminist linguists have theorized that those who have the power to name things or people are in a position to influence reality. As a result of women having no power, specifically feminine experiences have no name (Spender). This idea has been formalized through the use of the term "phallogocentrism" [13] which

> describe[s] how patriarchal assumptions are so deeply embedded in existing languages that women (those denied access to the symbolic and real power of the phallus) have no independent existence that can be expressed in language. Phallogocentric language excludes women from the category of the universal, so that "man" is synonymous with "human". (Childers and Hentzi: 225)

This exclusion or invisibility led feminists to create a vocabulary which took their experience into account and endeavored to eradicate all forms of sexist usage. This was done first by closely examining dictionaries [14] and what they authorize so as to demonstrate how the latter, "functioning as linguistic legislators, perpetuate the stereotypes and prejudices of their editors, who traditionally have been men" (Frank and Treichler: 5), and thus contribute to shaping the discourse about women (Treichler). This then led to the creation of alternative dictionaries such as *A Feminist Dictionary* (1985) [15] edited by Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, and the drafting of guidelines for nonsexist usage which were adopted notably by professional associations [16], scholarly journals, and publishers. These guidelines focused in particular on the exclusion or invisibility of women through the use of male-specific words as generics (i.e. the pronoun *he* and the noun *man*), as well as through gender-marked compounds (i.e. *chairman*), and offered alternatives (i.e. the use of *he or she,* or *she or he*) as well as coined new terms (i.e. *chairperson*). Some of the words associated with "political correctness" have actually been borrowed from the new vocabulary created by feminists (i.e. *herstory*, *womyn* or *wimmin*) [17]. The creation of such words, some of which have found their way into dictionaries such as the *Cambridge English Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was part of "a more general feminist linguistic strategy designed to raise consciousness about the ubiquitousness of the male presence in language [...] [by] replacing occurrences of obviously male-gendered terms such as *man* and *he* with their feminine or generic counterparts" (Treichler and Frank: 199).

However, those associated with "political correctness" have not limited themselves to borrowing feminist coinages or to creating specifically "politically correct" terms embodying a respectful stance towards not only women but minorities in general. They have also called for a monitoring of what can or cannot be said about sexual, racial and ethnic minorities through the adoption of speech codes [18] on university campuses where members of these minorities had been the target of discriminatory comments or of hate speech [19] from the 1980s onward. The idea behind these codes was that by eradicating all the discursive practices which could create a hostile environment [20] for these groups, it would be possible to ensure a true equality on campuses, and this would later have an impact on the wider society as well.

It is this attempt at a prescriptive linguistic reform, notably through the implementation of speech codes, which was at the core of the debate over the "politically correct" movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the United States. A debate over "political correctness" also took place in Britain in the early 1990s, but as pointed out by Geoffrey Hughes in his book *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (2010), it was less intense, "less of an exclusively academic affair" and "much of the initial commentary was ironic, focusing on the curious verbal innovations, rather than the ideologies behind them" (69).

Impact of the debate over "political correctness" on feminist linguistic reforms

Just as there is a theoretical link between feminism and "political correctness", the two are connected in this debate. Indeed, Deborah Cameron, for instance, views this debate as a backlash against feminism, and more particularly against the feminist linguistic reforms concerning sexist language which met with opposition early on (2006). She draws a parallel between feminists trying to free the English language from sexist connotations in the 1970s and the "traditionalists who claimed to be liberating language use from the authoritarianism of feminists and other radicals" (2006: 4) in the 1990s. Thus the terms of the debate have been reversed: if feminists could be said to have held the high ground with some of their proposals to make language gender neutral or gender inclusive with arguments stressing civility, accuracy and fairness (Cameron 2012), such is not the case with those associated with "political correctness".

The confusion that surrounds "political correctness", its origins and its meaning is symptomatic. From the beginning, the terms of the debate have been framed from the point of view of those who denounce "political correctness", people associated with the right appropriating the term "political correctness" and turning it against those who support linguistic reforms and multicultural education, as the Republican President George H. W. Bush did in a speech he delivered during the University of Michigan Commencement Ceremony on May 4 1991:

> Ironically, on the 200th anniversary of our Bill of Rights, we find free speech under assault throughout the United States, including on some college campuses. The notion of political correctness has ignited controversy across the land. And although the movement arises from the laudable desire to sweep away the debris of racism and sexism and hatred, it replaces old prejudice with new ones. It declares certain topics off-limits, certain expression off-limits, even certain gestures off-limits. What began as a crusade for civility has soured into a cause of conflict and even censorship. (Excerpts: 32)

By doing so, he contributed not only to giving "political correctness" a national dimension, as his speech was commented upon in the media [21], but also to confirming the threat to free speech that it was seen as representing. Thus by associating, in his turn, the reforms demanded by racial, ethnic and sexual minorities, notably those related to the language used to refer to them, with

"political correctness", a phrase with a negative connotation as it led to "censorship", he downplayed the good intentions behind these reforms. Indeed, for President Bush, they were doing something similar to what they were trying to eradicate, and paradoxically, they were "crushing diversity in the name of diversity" (32).

As " 'PC' now has such negative connotations for so many people", Deborah Cameron thus points out "that the mere invocation of the phrase can move those so labeled to elaborate disclaimers, or reduce them to silence" (2012: 123). Some even go as far as denying that such a movement exists [22]. However, she along with Robin Lakoff acknowledges that the term originated on the left, while Sara Mills argues that the term "political correctness" was coined by the media to "refer to campaigns by feminists, ethnic minority activists and disability rights activists" (Mills and Mullany: 159). However, in *Language and Sexism* (2008), she seems to acknowledge that the term was used, but with a different meaning, by feminists, although she adds in a footnote that whether feminists had developed the term "political correctness" is questionable.

Robin Lakoff's argumentation similarly stresses the irony of the terms of the debate: the right has defined every aspect of the discourse on "political correctness", presenting "political correctness" as a "totalitarian threat to language and mind" (2000: 92) and therefore putting those associated with it in a defensive position, either denying the claims or remaining silent. Thus, for her, the silencing or the intimidation is done by people on the right and not by those who have been associated with "political correctness".

According to Lakoff (2000), it is also paradoxical that the right describes "political correctness" as a threat to the nation, while at the same time making it look ridiculous by resorting to jokes. However, by making the renaming associated with "political correctness" ridiculous, the aim of the right is "to maintain control of language at all costs" (100), and as "language is [...] the means by which we construct and analyze reality" (20), the right can also maintain control over how reality is represented.

In addition, "political correctness" being negatively connoted, "political incorrectness" has accrued a positive connotation in certain contexts [23]. Indeed, as pointed out by Sara Mills, "if 'political correctness' is viewed as an over-zealous concern with the rights of political minorities, then 'political incorrectness' can be seen as a positive mocking or undermining of such concerns, with stress on the fun which 'PC' is trying to eliminate. (2008: 109)

Further, Sara Mills sees accusations of "political correctness" as being "an effective political intervention" from right-wingers, since these have "the effect of wrong-footing political activists" (2008: 102). She argues that "the term PC [is] being used to criticize anti-racist and anti-discrimination activists and to brand their activities as excessive. However, whilst it is politically inexpedient to criticize anti-racism, it is seen to be relatively acceptable to criticize PC" (2008: 103). She thus implies that criticizing "political correctness" is an indirect way of calling into question the linguistic reforms implemented by anti-racist and anti-discrimination activists so as to maintain the hegemony of the dominant group (white males) over racial, ethnic and sexual minorities, and as a consequence perpetuate the exclusion or marginalization of these minorities.

According to Mills, the debate over "political correctness"—notably the way it has been framed—has therefore had a negative impact on feminist linguistic reforms. First, it has led many people to associate anti-sexist campaigns with "political correctness", and thus not only with the parody that has been made of the related linguistic issues, but also with the threat they are said to represent for freedom of expression [24]. Therefore, in the public mind, it has contributed to downplaying the issues of equal opportunity and discrimination against women. It has "made the process of linguistic reform advocated by many feminists much more complicated and problematic" (Mills 2008: 108). Moreover, because the work of feminists has been characterized as being "politically correct", it has made it more difficult for feminists to explain what their work consists in and what measures against anti-sexism function because of the ideological presuppositions associated with "political correctness". "Political correctness" has also had more pragmatic consequences according to her: she thus claims that many anti-sexist language policies adopted in the 1980s have stopped being implemented notably for fear that they might be viewed as an attempt to adhere to the "politically correct" line, and thus as being concerned with superficial linguistic changes rather than with a more profound social transformation. However, since she views "political correctness" as a reaction against feminist reforms, she also argues that paradoxically the more the phrase "political correctness" is used, the more it demonstrates the impact which feminist campaigns have had (2008).

A more positive assessment of the debate over "political correctness" is made by Deborah Cameron: as she points out in *On Language and Sexual Politics* (2006), "if 'political correctness' means paying attention to the implications of all the words you use in an effort to avoid recycling disrespectful and oppressive propositions, I would say that non-sexist language guidelines need more of it rather than less" (23). The debate has thus managed to make it plain that linguistic choices are not neutral and are therefore not trivial (Cameron 2012). Indeed, those associated with "political correctness" have succeeded in politicizing all the terms by creating alternatives to traditional usage. The existence of a "politically correct" alternative has meant that language users have to make a choice from which political neutrality has been removed, as with this choice "reformers have in effect forced everyone who uses English to declare a position in respect of gender, race or whatever" (Cameron 2012: 119). There has also been a heightened interest in identity politics within the feminist critique of language (Cameron 1998). Indeed, the movement associated with "political correctness" has included the experiences of women, alongside those of racial and ethnic minorities, in discursive practices. Even though this was not a new trend in feminist linguistic theories, it has contributed to bringing a new perspective in the analysis of diversity by stressing the importance of respecting all types of differences.

Conclusion

"Political correctness" and the debate about it that started in the late 1980s have contributed to raising people's awareness about words or expressions which can be considered as offensive to women, thereby modifying somewhat the discourse

about women. This is also valid for the other non-dominant groups which have also denounced the use of terms that fail to take into account their experience or that they deem to be demeaning or discriminatory. However, this modification in the discourse about women has only been partial as illustrated by the way conservatives have redefined the term "political correctness". First, they have given it a negative connotation by associating it with a threat to freedom of speech and thought. By using it to refer to the reforms demanded by members of non-dominant groups in order for their particular experiences to be represented as well as respected, they have succeeded in controlling the meaning of these reforms by associating them not with respect but with intolerance. In doing so, they have elaborated a discourse which has framed these reforms as being dangerous rather than necessary. Secondly, even though the feminist campaigns regarding language use and sexism have led to the adoption of nonsexist and inclusive words by institutions, conservatives have proceeded to ridicule these linguistic reforms, reinforcing their unnecessary nature and thus demeaning them in the public mind. Moreover, as pointed out by Sara Mills, rather than being overt, sexism has become indirect, that is a "sexism which manifests itself at the level of presupposition, and also through innuendo, irony and humor" (2003: 90). Consequently, the association which has been made between feminist linguistic reforms, their theoretical base and "political correctness" has made it more difficult to modify the discourse about women, as sexism has become more subtle.

Notes

[1] Throughout this paper, we will be using the term "political correctness" with quotation marks as its use is contested. Indeed, many of those who have been associated with this movement have argued that this was a right-wing invention.

[2] If as pointed out by Sara Mills and Louise Mullany (2011), women's language had been studied by scholars like Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1922) or American sociolinguist William Labov (1966) prior to the development of gender and language studies per se, in this new subfield the articulation between language and gender was studied from a feminist perspective as well as in a more systematic way.

[3] It was first published in a shorter version in *Language in Society* in 1973.

[4] Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf were two American linguists who, through their study of Amerindian languages, came to the conclusion that linguistic differences explained the different ways in which various cultures viewed the world (Cameron 1998). Their argumentation was taken up by feminists in the 1970s to suggest that languages in which gender was grammatically marked and the masculine considered as unmarked led those who used them to view the world in "gender polarized and androcentric ways" (Cameron 1998: 150), since these languages had been developed from a male perspective.

[5] Cameron calls this analysis the "performance" approach (2005).

[6] For more detail on that, see notably Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* (1992); Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux's *Education Still Under Siege* (1993); George Bornstein's article "Can Literary Study Be Politically Correct?", and Herbert Kohl's article "The Politically Correct Bypass: Multiculturalism and the Public Schools."

[7] They used the term in a non-pejorative way, and to highlight the marginal status of those who held left-wing ideas at a time when conservatism reigned in American society.

[8] Despite representing more than 50% of the American population, women can still be considered as a minority insofar as they continue to have a subordinate status in society.

[9] For instance, in his article "We Conservatives Wage a Phony War on Political Correctness," published in The Wall Street Journal in December 1991, Robert K. Kelner acknowledges that he with other young conservatives used the term "politically correct" against liberals when he was a student at Princeton: "I first heard the term 'PC,' or 'politically correct,' when I arrived as a freshman at Princeton in the fall of 1985. Back then it was a bit of college slang bandied about by young conservatives. We thought ourselves insurgents, bringing the Reagan Revolution to academe, that last bastion of the new left. By dismissing our enemies as 'PC', we made fun of the fact that the open-minded liberals were actually the most closed-minded people on campus" (7).

[10] The term "Discourse" is used in the sense given to it by poststructuralist Michel Foucault in his Archeology of Knowledge, that is to say, "a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (qtd. in Mills 2004: 6).

[11] In that analysis, feminist linguistic theorists have been influenced by Michel Foucault's theorization of power, which has also had a big impact on the development of the ideology of the "politically correct" movement. See Michel Foucault's *L'Ordre du discours* (1971).

[12] Naming is defined by Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler as a "fundamental process for identifying, defining, and conceptualizing experience" (qtd. in Treichler and Wattman Frank: 219).

[13] It is a portemanteau word initially created by French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida through the association of the words "phallocentrism" and "logocentrism".

[14] Feminists have also focused their attention on the textbooks schools use, criticizing them "for their stereotyped representation of the sexes and for their use of language that tended to make women invisible except in roles like mother, daughter, homemaker, and perhaps teacher and nurse." (Frank: 119)

[15] This was not the first feminist dictionary to be created and published, but contrary to previous ones which criticized "the negative view of women embodied in traditional dictionaries, *A Feminist Dictionary* tends to emphasize women's definitions of themselves." (Treichler: 63)

[16] The Modern Language Association (MLA) was among the first professional associations to adopt such guidelines.

[17] The term herstory is not simply a feminine alternative word for history, as it refers to a narrative told from the perspective of women and stressing their experiences and activities. (Treichler and Frank, 1989)

[18] According to the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, more than 350 universities adopted speech codes in the 1980s and 1990s (Steinstra). However, several of them were challenged in state courts and federal district courts for violating the First Amendment. Some of these challenges were upheld, as was the case for the speech code adopted by the University of Michigan which was deemed to be too vague and too broad by a federal district court of the State of Michigan in 1989. See Doe v. University of Michigan.

[19] As Samuel Walker, a professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska, explains in *Hate Speech* the term is usually used to refer to "any form of expression deemed offensive to any racial, religious, ethnic, or national group. In the 1980s some

campus speech codes broadened it to include gender, age, sexual preference, marital status, physical capacity, and other categories." (8)

[20] A hostile environment is created "when unwelcome verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior of a prohibited nature is severe and pervasive enough to unreasonably interfere with an employee's work or a student's learning, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment to a 'reasonable person'." (The Law Firm of David A. Young, LCC)

[21] For examples of the media coverage of George H. W. Bush's speech, see for instance Christopher Myers's article "Many Praise Bush for Lashing Out at 'Political Correctness' concept, but Others See Misrepresentation" and Maureen Dowd's article "Bush Sees Threat to Flow of Ideas on US Campuses."

[22] Even if the "politically correct" movement does not compare to movements like the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, it has many of the characteristics that sociologists use to define movements, i.e. grievances, the belief in the possibility of changing society, the existence of a precipitating event and of a network. See Rodney Stark, *Sociology*. Wadsworth, 1994, p. 622. See also Christèle Le Bihan, *La polémique autour du mouvement politiquement correct sur les campus américains*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, 1998, pp. 36-58.

[23] In her book *Language and Sexism*, Mills identifies four groups of meanings associated with the use of the terms "politically incorrect" and "political incorrectness": "The first group of meanings (A) can be characterized as broadly positively evaluated: a positive association with risky humor and fun, as a term of praise for those who are doing something daring, and as an accurate, if unpalatable to some, assessment of affairs. The second group of meanings (B) can be characterized as when the phrase 'politically incorrect' is used to refer to a set of opinions which are considered trivial or concerned with the banning of offence. The third group of meanings (C) is when 'political incorrectness' is portrayed as ridiculous. Finally, there is a fourth group of meanings (D) where 'political incorrectness' is used as a synonym for sexism or racism" (108). So the terms "politically incorrect" and "political incorrectness" can have both positive and negative connotations, but it is their positive connotation which has tended to be stressed in the media with, for example, American comedian Bill Maher's talk show "Politically Incorrect" which was aired on Comedy Central from 1993 to 1996 and then on ABC until 2002.

[24] This was done notably through the association being made by journalists, but also some academics, between these linguistic reforms and a thought police trying to impose a linguistic conformism. Some articles also referred to a new McCarthyism. For an example of this, see historian Stephan Thernstrom's article "McCarthyism Then and Now". See also Jerry Adler's article "Taking Offense: Is This the New Enlightenment on Campus or the New McCarthyism?" published in the issue of December 24 1990 of *Newsweek* whose cover title was "Watch What You Say. THOUGHT POLICE. There's a 'Politically Correct' Way to Talk about Race, Sex and Ideas".

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[En] gendering the 'I'

The First-Person Pronoun, Gender, and Context

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Abstract. The first-person pronoun *I* appears neuter in the English language but it generates certain semiotic and linguistic problems. One of them is its dual system of reference. In a conversation, the pronoun *I* stands for both the speaker or referee and a referent or the grammatical unit. In a wider context of Linguistics, Gender-studies, Literary criticism, Discourse analysis, and Conversation analysis the paper investigates the relation between the referent *I* and the referee *I* and argues that the gender of the speaker or referee *I* endows the referent *I* with a gendered signification.

Keywords: gender, language, pronoun, context

Introduction

John says, "I am a man". In the speech of John, *I* stands for two discourses: one for John and another for a set of characteristics that John claims to possess. This set of characteristics informs an essence, both biological and cultural, of gender. In the pronouncement of *I*, John represents (him) self linguistically. But this representation is not a simple semiotic message because in the instance of utterance John is doubly signified: first as a person, who is unique among other Johns, and second, as a gender, the masculine. The claim of John for his masculine gender also connects him further to a larger conversational setting or context in which John's claim is both expected and justified. The paper aims to attract scholarly attention to the larger semiotic and linguistic problems in such naïve statements as "I am a *man*". The paper contends that the semiotic and linguistic problems with the first-person singular pronoun, *I*, are further linked to gender. Gender is an extralinguistic category of signs that shapes the extent of reference. To understand the relation between gender and the pronoun *I*, the research consults a wide spectrum of theoretical analysis: Linguistics, Gender-studies, Literary criticism, Discourse analysis, and Conversation analysis. The paper first clarifies the doubly-folded reference-system in the use of pronoun *I* with the help of linguistics and then proceeds to analyze the linguistic phenomenon called the referent *I*. Then the nature of referent *I* is investigated in terms of the gender of the referee or speaker in context. The principal inquiry of the paper deals with the argument that there is a gendered tendency in the pronominal system of references in particular, the referent *I,* and the implicit role of the speaker to generate such a tendency.

The First-person Pronoun *I*: A Critique

A pronoun is a part of speech that acts as a substitute for a noun to avoid unnecessary repetition. The word, pronoun, is etymologically derived from Latin '*prōnōmen*' and Greek '*antōnumíā*'; and its etymology informs its function of substitution as a system of reference (Hoad, 2002, p. 373). The pronominal system of reference includes the first-person (*I)*, the second-person (*you)*, and the third-person (*he/she)* pronouns in regards to person in the singular case. But this well-established grammatical practice obscures certain semiotic and linguistic problems.

Emile Benveniste locates one fundamental semiotic problem in the practice of referring the person by different denominations of the first-second-third person pronouns in *Problems in General Linguistics* (1971). He finds that the first-person *I* and second-person *you* 'belong' to person while the third person *he* 'lacks' the material sign of person (p. 217). *I* and *you* differ from other pronominal class of reference because they are not 'fixed' to a 'definable' object in an identical fashion of nouns as signifiers to material objects or mental images (p. 218). Language resolves this problem, which arises from the separation between the indicator (of person) and the instance of utterance (*I* and *you*), by forming "an ensemble of empty signs that are nonreferentia with respect to reality" (p. 219). The first-person *I* is, therefore, an 'empty' sign and it does not refer to a material object because it is practically tied to a system of utterance which varies according to the speaker.

The producer of *I* relies on a background systematicity that emerges from the difference in referring expressions, for example, John and *I* (Gaynesford 11). But the fundamental difference is the one that exists between *I* and personal proper names (p. 19). *I* can only be used for an object of expression and it doesn't inform "certain facts about the context—e.g. who is speaking" (p. 20). This linguistic phenomenon of *I* functions contextually for another strange semiotic fact that *I* is defined in terms of locution, not in terms of objects (Benveniste, 1971, p. 218). As *I* does not need an object for its semiotic function, it provides no information about the context. But *I* can still perform its grammatical function as a substitute for the proper name. For example, when John says "I don't go to school" and Mark hears it without noticing who says so, Mark understands that somebody doesn't go to school and the grammatical unit *I* doesn't reveal any information about the speaker.

Although *I* doesn't contain information about the context of reference, its lexical value is valid only in its context. Benveniste reasons that in two consecutive utterances of *I* by the same speaker or producer, one of the utterances is considered a reported instance. For example, I say, "I always get up early in the morning". In this linguistic phenomenon, Benveniste identifies the problem of *I* as a "combined double instance" of discourse (*Problems* 218). The speaker *I* produces in an act of utterance another linguistic *I* which is different and unique in its semiotic role. The linguistic *I* is a referent to the referee or speaker of *I*. When the referent *I* is separated from the referee *I*, it ceases to exist. The referent *I* then becomes context-free but the referee *I* remains contextually bound because the referee *I* is indispensable of the context.

The referee or speaker is a culturally signified human being and language introduces the human subject to the semiotic universe by a proper noun. The most immediate pronoun that represents the proper noun by the highest degree of proximity is the first-person *I*. In an instance of discourse, *I* obfuscates the referee or the speaker in its linguistic act of context-free signification. Furthermore, *I* is anaphoric in its nature of signification, that is, *I* always refers back to the antecedent proper noun. This anaphoric nature of the first-person *I* encumbers the referent *I* with the gender of the referee. For example, in the reported speech where John says "I am a *nurse*" the feminine noun *nurse* can't determine the gender of referent *I* because it refers back to John, the masculine proper noun.

Language: A Gendered System of Signification

Gender is the primary mark or signification that categorizes nouns, adjectives, and pronouns in three genders: masculine, feminine, or neuter (Hoad, 2002, p. 191). Gender acts as an informant of the word. A native speaker works through a shared system of 'gender-assignment' to nouns by some basic information about the noun: its meaning (semantics) and its form (Corbett, 1991, pp. 7-8). These two basic classes of information form two types of gender systems in a language, semantic (based on meaning) and formal (morphological and phonological); in English there exists only the semantic one (Livia, 2001, p. 14). In the English language, gender is "reflected only in pronouns" and in third person cases only (Corbett, 1991, p. 169-170).

In English grammar the referent *I* acts neuter because the gender of the personal pronoun is overt and conspicuous only in the case of the third-person *He/She*. But the referent *I* is not grammatically neuter across all languages. The English equivalent of referent *I* in such languages as Japanese, Thai, and Arabic is highly dependent on social context as its use differs in accordance with dialect, formality, gender, and social class. In the Japanese language, men use *watakushi, watashi* for formal greeting and *boku* and *ore* for the informal ones; while women use *watakushi* for formal greeting and *watashi* and *atashi* for informal ones (McCraw, 2011, p. 42). Only in the case of informal greeting, Japanese men and women use different phonetic units. The Thai language divides personal pronouns according to social ranks, The Royalists, Buddhist Monks, and the Commoners (Yuphaphann, 1992, p. 198). The Thai commoners use thirteen monosyllabic words to denote the first-person pronouns of which three forms stand for the gender of the speaker: *dìchǎn* for the female speaker, and *phom* and *kraphom* for the male speaker (p. 199). In the dialects of the Arabic language, in particular, of Yemen, the first-person pronoun for men is different from that of women. Men use *ana* while women use *ani* (Vanhove, 1995, p. 146).

In some cases, the gender of the referent is explicit in its use. Such use is realized and defined in a program called "gender-agreement" (Corbett, 1991, p. 105). In such nouns as *nurse* and *maid,* the gender-agreement denotes the feminine gender of the referent and presupposes the gender of the referee. In the instance 'I am a *nurse*' the referee *I* is supposed to belong to the feminine gender. But this linguistic function fails in three practical cases: first, when the gender of the referent is unidentifiable, for example, relative pronouns like *who*, and

epicene nouns like *friend* and *manager*; second, when "the referent is non-specific", for example, *someone*; third, when a noun denotes "a group of people of both sexes", for example, *villagers* (p. 218). These failures generate another semantic problem in the context where the gender of the referee is difficult to ascertain. For example, in the sentence "I am a friend of Stephen's" the referent *I* does not indicate the gender of the referee *I*. One of the possible forms of resolving this semantic problem in many Indo-European languages is to assume the gender of the noun as assigned by convention (p. 219). But convention runs on "the extent of sexism in language" (p. 220). In the assumption of gender, masculinity holds the majority and the highest probability of assignment. Hence the referee *I* of the aforesaid sentence is assumed to be masculine by convention.

Words, forming the linguistic reality of the world, share an intimate connection with gender-assignment. It is because "bodies cannot be said to have", as Judith Butler contends in *Gender Trouble* (1990), "a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender" (qtd in Livia, 2001, p. 15). The human body becomes a discursive category with the mark of gender that decides a gendered personal pronoun: "*is it a boy/girl*?"; *he/she* in compliance with the sex of the child (Livia, 2001, p. 16). Furthermore, language introduces the gendered body of the referee *I* to the world of signs through the course of gender-assignment. The origin of the linguistic gender is derived not only from the "distinctions of physiological sex that somehow become represented in language" but also from "the separation of the feminine out of masculine, both mythologically and grammatically" (Baron, 1986, p. 105-106). The masculine in the Indo-European languages is "more inclusive gender, serving as generic … as more worthy" and the feminine is "more limited in its range and importance, being only a variant of the masculine" (p. 107). These nominal categories "do reflect natural gender by Greek grammarians who saw language as a transcription of life" (p. 109). During the Middle Ages, the English language got rid of the grammatical gender to simplify grammar and learning for foreigners and to develop speech but retained "the metaphorical assignment of gender to such words as *sun, moon, earth, river*, even *English* itself in order to achieve a stylistic effect" (p. 109). Gender in the English language is "primarily natural", but "not entirely" because whenever the gender of a noun is non-referential or indeterminate, the masculine gender prevails over the feminine (p. 110). The preference for the masculine gender also owes to the literary practice of metaphorical gender assignment in accordance with Latin, Greek, or French (p. 110). This fact of masculinity, as more gender-worthy in forming the 'gender-agreement' of noun, establishes English as a gendered language that leaves out the feminine gender and underlines the male dominance under the guise of being neuter.

The sexist practice of gender-worthiness of the masculine is derived from the traditional conceptual framework of gender. Anna Livia introduces her book, *Pronoun Envy*, with the incident of the protest of women students in November 1971 at Harvard Divinity School against the practice of masculine reference to God and pronoun *he* for mankind in general (2001, p. 3). *Harvard Crimson*, the college in-house magazine, reports this incident as an act of 'pronoun envy'. Livia writes a whole book on this phrase to hold responsible for the sexist conceptual framework behind the accusation against *women*-student protesters. There, she contends that the phrase 'pronoun envy' refers to its precursor, 'penis envy', and

the coinage of the term to the popular perception of the women envious of the men for the lack of 'penis' (p. 4). She identifies this perception as a motif in Derrida's term 'phallogocentrisme' which similarly reflects the centrality of phallus at the signifying practice in Western philosophy (p. 5). Even "the first-person pronoun *I* [that] signifies man as an indefinite line placed alone or by himself at the center of things" and the second-person *you* that refers to the 'female' by the letter *u* joining two *i-s* are taken from Biblical myth of the creation of Adam and Eve (qtd in p. 6).

Like Anna Livia, Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* investigates the structural framework of the language as it is designed by men for systematic dominance and oppression of women. She finds patriarchy continues to validate, legitimize, and achieve dominance over the feminine gender in our daily life by limiting, ordering, classifying, and manipulating the world through the linguistic faculty of signification (1985, p. 3). Since the language operates through a collaboration of the material object and its concept, patriarchy utilizes the language to displace the actual image of the object with a biased patriarchal worldview. For example, Spender refers to Julia Stanley's finding in "Paradigmatic Woman: the Prostitute" (1973) of 'sexual inequality' which contends that there are 220 words for sexual promiscuity of women in comparison to 20 words for men (p. 15). Women are not only restricted lexically in articulation but also degraded at the basis of semiotics. The joint machinery of sexism and patriarchy has associated the signifying terms for women with negativity, unsuitability, insult, stigma, disenfranchisement, and sexual depravity (p. 16-19). The whole 'semantic space' keeps women out as it is evident in professional fields where the feminine epithets are coupled with the name of professions to mean a special category of professionals identifiable solely based on gender, for example, "a *lady* doctor, a *female* surgeon, a *woman* lawyer ... a wait*ress*, a steward*ess*, a major*ette*" (p. 20). The sexist language is "perpetuated and reinforced" through the sexist "observation of reality" (p. 141). The meaning or message of a communicational exchange is absent or "partially hidden" for women because the structure of language is "the product of male efforts" that accounts for "introducing sexism into the language": for example, there is no Hebrew word for a female deity in Old Testament (p. 145). Hence, the structural analysis of language and semiotics indexes to the [en]gendering tendency in the system of reference and the referent *I*, too, subscribes to this dominant male-centric linguistic worldview.

In this androcentric system of language, a gender non-specific noun, for example, *mankind* is assumed to be masculine in its property of gender. Furthermore, the word *man* is lexically used to denote the whole human race regardless of sex. The adjectives, *regardless* and *irrespective*, are often employed when a noun is used to refer to *species*, *genre*, *profession*, *class*, *race,* and *society* and the androcentric overtone of reference takes prominent shape. The androcentric tone becomes more audible when the speaker's identity is concealed. In a face-to-face conversation, the presence of the speaker-in-person informs the gender of referent *I*. But in writing, the speaker becomes a symbolic presence in the form of a proper noun or name and the referent *I*. In writing, especially in the first-person narrative, the speaker-narrator at times conceals gender among other forms of identity to sustain a nonnormative sexual identity. This leads to a major

hermeneutic problem because the reader remains confused with the gender of the referent *I*.

Literature: The Trope for Gender

During the 1970s and 80s, there develops a narrative strategy that fully exploits this hermeneutic problem out of gender non-specificity in the works of fiction produced in Western Europe, United States, and Canada: for example, Anne Garreta's *Sphinx* (1986), Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* (1969); Maureen Duffy's *Love Child* (1971); Sarah Caudwell's mysteries *Thus Was Adonis Murdered* (1981), *The Shortest Way to Hades* (1984), and *The Sirens Sanjj of Murder* (1988); and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) (Livia, 2001, p. 20). These works design a pronominal reference system contrary to the existing heteronormative one by turning off the grammatical indexes to the gender of the pronoun. In this deviant pronominal system, gender becomes a fact not given but explored out of practice and performance. Having failed the grammatical mark of gender identification, these works of fictions constitute a narrative strategy of suspense, manipulation, detection, and otherworldliness (p. 21-22).

Anne Garreta's *Sphinx* commences thus: "Remembering saddens me still, even years later. How many exactly, I don't know anymore" (2015, p. 1). Without mentioning a proper noun or name, the narrator continues with a referent *I* whose gender is unidentifiable even in relation to other characters. The narrator *I*, in order to conceal the nonnormative relation with partners, uses asterisk in their proper names: "At the end of the corridor we crossed paths with someone I would come to know later as A***, who, head shaved, was now coming out". Narrator's relation with A*** "was ceremonious at first": "after the kiss on the lips that everyone there was rewarded with upon arrival, I would listen to the details of A***'s day" (p. 8). But the head-shaven person, A***, requires "makeup of a completely different hue and variety than white skin" (p. 9). Then on the next page, the narrator *I* talks about a professor, "Padre***, a Spanish Jesuit" (p. 10). But the normative language compels the narrator *I* to refer to Padre*** with third person masculine pronoun *he*. Then "he proposed an outing he thought I might like, to a very exclusive nightclub" (p. 13). Their meeting for visits to a private nightclub, Apocryphe, continues and the narrator *I* senses that "he was hoping for a more intimate liaison, but falling in love with me would have posed him too many problems" (p. 15).

Here the referent *I* reveals no information about the gender of the narrator of *Sphinx*. Furthermore, the assumption of gender bends with the hermeneutic discovery of sexuality of the other characters, A*** and Padre***. A*** is a dancer, conventionally a feminine profession, with a shaven head, a sign of masculinity. But the fact that A*** wears make-up forms a definitive statement for femininity. The description of fashion is equally confusing with regards to gender. In a normative relation, if one is a woman then the other must be a man. If A*** is considered to be a woman with a shaven head, then the narrator is a man. But if the narrator is a man, then Padre*** seeking a liaison must be a woman. This textual analysis clarifies that: firstly, language bears a strong normative tendency in forming the notion of gender; secondly, nonnormative relations and queer

persons are indefinable because the 'man-made language' keeps women and the queer out; and finally, when the pronouns in particular, the first-person pronoun *I*, are gender non-specific, the reader has to rely solely on the context.

Context: A Play of Gender

But in cases where the gender of the referee is specific in the reported speech or face-to-face conversation, the message depends more on the context. In the following face-to-face conversation, John invites Michaela to go shopping.

> John: I need to buy clothes for my sister. Would you help?
> Michaela: Sure!
> John: Can we go to a nearby shopping mall?
> Michaela: Of course! When?
> John: Now!
> Michaela: I need time to get ready.
> John: I am waiting.

In John's reply, "I am waiting", it is assumed that John can decode the semantic load of Michaela's gendered expression which encrypts the message - 'I am a female and I want to apply make-up which takes time'. The feminine referee *I* paves the way for the message and gender sets up the context.

"Context", as Philosopher Kent Bach says, "is the conversational setting broadly construed" (qtd in Meibauer, 2012, p. 10). Bach's notion of conversational setting also involves mutual and relevant common knowledge. Through conversation speakers often share a common ground of culture: habits, rituals, greetings, and gestures. These facets of culture are expressed in terms of cues in contexts. The contextual cues, in turn, constitute representations of cultural meaning for a community or language ideology (Cameron, 2004, p. 447). In Michaela's statement, "I need time to get ready", it is the contextual cue that informs John why she needs time. The contextual cue is arguably the feminine habit of applying make-up before public exposure.

But it is still unclear why John associates the 'need for time' with a gendered habit. This association can be seen as an interrelationship between the 'language ideologies' and the interactive practices between men and women (Cameron, 2004). Gender is a salient feature of the language ideology which is reflected not only in a "gender-appropriate behavior but also in a gendered discourse on the nature of language (p. 449). Hence, Michaela's habit of taking time before going out is a gender-appropriate behavior with which John is habituated as an acquaintance; and his understanding of the necessity of make-up is relevant only in a gendered discourse because Michaela's statement doesn't provide any clue about the reason behind her need for time.

Michaela's act of applying make-up is a gender-specific performance and her statement connects the act with the notion of gender. Apart from ideology, gender can also be understood as "a social construct" and "speakers are seen as 'doing' gender – doing femininity or doing masculinity – in everyday interaction" (Coates, 2012, p. 96). The interlocutors present themselves as "gendered beings" and this doing-gender is conducted unconsciously under the assumption that being man/woman is "a unitary and unified experience" (1997, p. 285). Hence,

the act of applying make-up can be considered an act of doing gender which constitutes Michaela's being a feminine person. But in this act, the gender of referee *I* is twice constituted: first, in its anaphoric reference to the feminine proper noun; and second, in its grammatical reference to the act of doing gender. Besides, the act is absent in her locution. The absence of any visible marker for the act of applying make-up reflects the unconscious way of presupposing gender in the act of utterance.

The context in which John interacts with Michaela is charged with gender. John's request to Michaela is a gendered act since he is asking help to buy womenswear which requires gender-specific experience and preference. In the request, John performs the act of doing gender, unlike Michaela. While Michaela implicitly presupposes gender in the act of utterance, John explicitly refers to the gender-specific experience which is limited to buying menswear. Hence John's request involves two acts: one, the request; and two, the act of doing gender. Here, John's explicit reference to his masculinity in the context of buying womenswear implies that doing-gender is a context-bound performance (Coates, 1997).

Michaela agrees to help John. The agreement affirms a relation between John and Michaela which is based on the distinction between masculine and feminine gender. It is because masculinity and femininity in a heterogeneous discourse are "relational constructs", that is, "a male speaker is, among other things, performing not being a woman" (Coates, 2003, p. 36). While John constructs his masculinity by stating his limited experience in womenswear Michaela's consent acknowledges such gendered distinction.

Besides, the gender-specific discourses form the context of interpretation. Meaning is closely tied to some essential cultural factors associated with gender. Deborah Tannen's book *You Just Don't Understand* (1990) illustrates how gendered differences in conversation style or 'genderlect' can lead to a misunderstanding between the interlocutors of heteronormative relations. Men and women share categorically different cultural universe even in the same household, religion, class, race, and country (1990, p. 43). Tannen identifies that the purpose of talk for women is intimacy and for men is independence; expectation in the conversation for women is connection while for men it is status. These essential cultural differences form different purposes, expectations, and interpretations out of the conversation. For these cultural differences, the man-woman conversation is a cross-cultural communication (1990, p. 18). In the conversation between John and Michaela, these cross-cultural differences are resolved in the peculiar act of agreement between them. The agreement is peculiar because both of them enact a sort of reconciliation between different expectations, interpretations, and interactions. This reconciliation is achieved by the tacit approval of each other's gender. Michaela understands why John needs help in shopping and John understands why Michaela needs time. This understanding of gender underlines the linguistic and semantic problems associated with gender.

Gender in Conversation: A Local, Emergent, and Contingent System

In cases where the speaker and the listener deliberately avoid gendered topics, discourse style, and behavior, gender becomes more dynamic. At this point,

context becomes a field of activity where participants produce the categories of gender and act to "accomplish in those productions" (Speer and Stokoe p. 15). Unlike the case of John and Michaela where gender operates as a linguistic category, the following conversation, taken from Stockill and Kitzinger's article (2007), showcases gender as an interactional category.

In a telephone conversation, Stan talks to Penny about a forty-year-old man's reaction to his long hair:

36 "Sta: I don't understa:nd it. I do:n't
37 uh scallies and (.) everyone (.)=**
38 =mentio:n (.) long hai:r when I'm on on a- Like
39 ((mimics)) "Oo:h hah hah hah hah" (think).hh
40 "Look at the fine head of hai:r".=I heard that.
41 =I heard that= an' I thought "they're ta:lking
42 about me and Kev", and like I thought "w- wh
43 what you doing man. You- you're like for:ty:.
44 You know. You- you're a grown man and you've
45 still not go- got over the fact that- that some
46 peo:ple have- have quite long hair." (p. 225-226)

The monologue demonstrates the joint play of ideology and discourse of gender in the context. Stan's object to sexist comment on his long hair charges the ideology or belief of the harasser with a narrow conceptual framework at odds with a man of 'for:ty'. The description of the 'grown man' turns the conversation into a discourse on gender where hair plays the role of gender-shifter and implies that 'long hair' is a stigma for males. The referent *I* in the opening sentence maintains the linguistic category of gender by frequent references to long hair with occasional hedges and laughter. The hedges and laughter indicate Stan's awareness of gender inappropriate fashion with long hair. For 'everyone' long hair is inappropriate because Stan belongs to the masculine gender. Hair is used not as a referent to gender but as a category. Stan uses a gender non-specific referent 'people' to suggest the categorization of people with 'quite long hair'. There is another gender non-specific referent, that is, 'everyone'. Together these referents form the case of gender neutrality in conversation. But in this case, the gender is maintained in interactional techniques such as hedges and laughter. The interactional gender in these referents, 'everyone' and 'people', shows the local, contingent, and context-specific capacity of reference without explicitly naming the category of gender.

Clare Jackson in the chapter entitled "The Gendered *I*" from the book, *Conversation and Gender,* demonstrates how the grammatically neuter *I* turns out to be interactionally gendered. In her analysis, Jackson magnifies the role of context as a contingent to the linguistic environment where the local use subverts the universal norm. Citing Schegloff, Jackson states that first-person pronoun *I* is "the default practice for doing self-reference" (2011, p. 33). For example

01 "Sta: I'm just waiting I just want my mum to
02 sort out this t- ticket and tell me what I'm
03 doing because like I'll just stuff it up won't I." (p. 34)

In contrast to the third-person pronouns, he/she, Jackson argues, *I* is a grammatically more problematic form of reference. For example,

01 “Pen: [I sa(h)y that thou(hh)gh:
02 Sta: No but that shouldn’t- why- why would
03 you say that, you- you’ve got
04 [longer] hair than me::
05 Pen: [.hh]
06 (.)
07 Pen: Huh huh I’m a °girl° [haHAHAHA .hhhh]
08 Sta: [Yeah ye- d- what]” (p. 35)

In this conversation, Penn and Stan reveal their categorical information of gender with additional cues in context: “you’ve got [longer] hair than me”. The specific use of a feminine referent,‘[longer] hair’, downplays the explicitly gendered use of the referent *I* in Penn’s statement: “Huh huh I’m a °girl°”. This instance becomes clearer in the following conversation:

01 “Sop: But is she a Mosher.
02 (0.7)
03 Emm: Yeah
04 (0.8)
05 Sop: But I’m really gir:ly huhuhu=
06 Emm: =↑Wh:at?
07 Sop: .hhh but I’m really gir:ly.
08 (1.4)
09 Emm: Well she’s turning me into a Mosher so
10 (0.9) better get used to it hhh.hhh” (p. 36)

Sophie uses the gendered term ‘gir:ly’ in contrast to an absent referee ‘she’. Since ‘she’ is a gendered reference, ‘gir:ly’ is coupled with a qualifier, ‘really’, to emphasize the higher degree of a categorical membership to the feminine gender.

In the last two examples of conversation, referent *I* is used as the category of gender explicitly. Jackson presents three instances where “the gendered *I* occurs in an environment in which gender has already ‘crept into’ the talk” (p. 44). In the first instance, Stan comments “Are y- No. Why woul- why the hell / would I be hot? Girls have long hai:r” (p. 40). Jackson observes that the *I* is a default self-reference but “in the production of the contrastive category ‘girls’ in his next turn.....*I* is, retrospectively, gendered” (p. 41). In the second instance, Michael in conversation with his fifteen-year-old sister comments: “Unless it’s when/*I* am taking a girl out, then she should pay”, (p. 42). Here, the referent *I* invokes an occasion which marks the heteronormative relation without declaring that ‘I am a boy’. The girl (Michael’s absent-in-conversation girlfriend) ‘should pay’ unless she is with referee *I* (Michael) indicates the popular norm for a man taking responsibility of a woman. The context ‘taking a girl out’, a date, is linked thus to another context ‘she should pay’, a payment. The context of date informs retrospectively the categorical membership of referent *I* to the masculine gender. Lastly, Mary, a fifteen-year-old girl, talks with Amy about her adjustment with the break-up of a relationship with Dan:

01 “Mar: Libby made me feel better ’cause
02 she said (.) well boys after a long
03 relationship they [tend to]kind of (.)=
04 Amy: [((coughs))]

05 Mar: =go downhill with girls whereas
06 girls go uphill.
07 (0.4)
08 Amy: [Mm::::
09 Mar: [So I've gone for Tom who's uphill.
10 (0.5)
11 Mar: Dan's gone for Tess who's downhill" (p. 43)

Jackson contends that the first person *I* in line no. 9 is not Mary-the-person, but the type of girls who have 'gone…uphill'. Here, the referent *I* indicates the normative conduct that ensures her categorical membership. Hence, it is made clear that the referent *I* can form gendered identities in terms of "emergent, locally occasioned features of on-going talk-in-interaction" (p. 45).

Conclusion

The first-person pronoun consists of two points of reference: one, a referee; and two, a referent. The referent *I* is a unique linguistic phenomenon because it varies with the speaker or referee. The referent *I* of John is different from the referent *I* of Michaela because John and Michaela are different individuals with different genders. The referent *I* embodies certain information of the referee in the instance of utterance which includes the gender and the proper name. The referent *I* in the English language is neuter but in the other languages such as Japanese, Thai, and Arabic, it is gendered. English is a gendered language and as a part of the language, the referent *I* has a tendency of getting gendered. The en-gendering of the referent *I* takes place in its relation to the speaker. The gender of the referent *I* depends on the referee *I*. Since the referee *I* is a context-bound reference, in relation to gender the referent *I* is also bound to the context despite being a free grammatical unit. The fact that the referent *I* has a gendered tendency becomes more evident in the context of queer texts where proper names are avoided to make the referee gender non-specific. But in the face-to-face conversation, where the gender of the referee is identifiable, interpretation of gendered expressions depends on contextual cues and the gender of the referent *I* works as a linguistic category. In the cases where gender is avoided in topic, style, and behavior, gender becomes more dynamic and acts like an interactional category in which the gender non-specific referents imply gender in the suggestion of categorical membership. Hence, the linguistic phenomenon of referent *I* is a local, contingent, and context-specific system of reference in relation to the gender of the referee.

Since the paper pays an exclusive attention to the first-person pronoun in the singular case, it has intentionally avoided the analysis of the second and the third-person pronouns, and the plural case. Furthermore, the nature of referent *I* is discussed broadly in the context of heterosexual relation; and the gender is primarily understood in the binary terms of heterosexuality. The nonnormative identity of a speaker can generate more linguistic problems with the first-person pronoun *I*. The paper excludes such problems in the discussion to focus its primary investigation on the gendered nature of the first-person pronoun.

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Gendered Aggression in Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* and *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You*?

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Abstract. *The Skriker* (1994), British playwright Caryl Churchill's contemporary classic, and *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You* (2006), a shorter, more recent play give profound insight into the dramatic and theatrical representation of gendered aggression. The way female, male and genderfluid characters enact violence subverts cultural understandings of gendered violence. In *The Skriker*, aggression is personal, acted out, sensory and bodily. In *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You*, it is global, achieved through dialogue alone, and it is rationalised. The two plays reveal the performativity of gender scripts through theatrical means.

Keywords: Contemporary British drama, Caryl Churchill, gender, aggression, verbal violence, performativity

Caryl Churchill entered the British theatrical scene in the 1970s. Her early works are mostly feminist plays relying on popular Brechtian theatrical methods. She gradually moved towards a more unique and experimental style as she started collaborating with fringe companies, such as Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock. She is noted for her dialogue techniques, constant reinvention of form and incredibly varied body of work with more than fifty plays to date. Common themes concern gender, violence, trauma, and identity. Her plays are also unequivocally political, reflecting on current events from an anti-capitalist point of view.

At first glance, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You* resembles a verbatim/tribunal play, [1] a form of documentary theatre with dramatised interviews concerning real-life events, which has been favoured as the main genre of British political theatre from the 1990s onwards (Rebellato, *Modern British Playwriting*, 41-42). In the Royal Court production of *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You*, [2] only two static characters appear on stage, a gay couple sitting on a sofa, whose rapid conversation focuses on violent and controversial events in the recent foreign policy of the United States. The American Sam and the British Jack [3] never leave their comfortable place, but the sofa they stay on is lifted upwards, reaching the ceiling by the end of the play. Therefore, Sam and Jack manage to quite literally rise above the complex moral dilemmas concerning the discussed political events, and they are allowed to just marvel at the beauty of global destruction.

Although the bombastic, fragmentary political dialogue resembles flashing headlines in the news, *Drunk Enough* is not based on witness accounts, real life interviews or personal documents, i.e., the preferred sources of tribunal/verbatim theatre. The inhuman acts described in the play are common knowledge, which makes them all the more horrible. Sam and Jack can be interpreted as the allegorical figures of Uncle Sam and Union Jack (Rebellato, "The Personal is Not Political," 35), an ordinary man falling in love with a country (Churchill, *Plays*

Four, 269), or an everyday couple: they could be anybody, since nothing personal is said about either them, the Bosnian War or the invasion of Iraq.

Sam and Jack having an intimately personal relationship is, however, significant. Following the renaissance of British queer drama in the 1990s, the focus was no longer on the tragedy of AIDS, a persistent sense of shame or the hardships of being closeted: the representation of LGBTQIA characters have adopted a more positive outlook (Sierz, 62). While the earlier trend preferred to treat queer characters as iconic figures representing their entire community, post-1990s drama slowly started to embrace them as individuals whose sexuality is only a part of their identity—not the sum of their entire being. The sexual orientation of Sam and Jack is not the main concern of *Drunk Enough*, but it plays a crucial role in how they define and enact masculinity through gendered aggression, which will be discussed in more detail later.

The earlier play, *The Skriker,* was written a decade before *Drunk Enough*; however, in Churchill's case, chronology is hardly a concern as there are no distinguishable trends in her varied body of work, safe for the increasing minimalism of her post-2000s plays. Indeed, *The Skriker* is in sharp contrast with the minimalism of *Drunk Enough* with its more traditional dialogue, complex plot and busy stage, filled with twenty-six characters altogether. The main characters are Lily and Josie, teenage mothers who are driven to desperation by an ancient fairy and death portent called the Skriker. The play was completed in 1993 and signalled an era that saw an alarming increase in the number of teenage pregnancies (Sierz, 2). *The Skriker* reflects on this crisis, and comments on other contemporary issues such as global warming or high-profile child murders: we learn that Josie killed her ten-day old baby, believing it to be a changeling, thanks to the Skriker's influence. She was admitted into a mental hospital; when she is released, she warns Lily of the Skriker who is following her still, but Lily does not heed her words. When the Skriker promises to grant her wishes, she wishes for flowers and thus enters a dangerous bargain. As the Skriker has the ability to shapeshift, Lily does not realise the danger she is in. Josie tries to protect her, but her violent outbursts at supposed strangers just make her look unstable. Josie follows the Skriker to the Underworld, and following her return loses Lily's friendship. Left alone, Lily starts to realise the toxic influence the Skriker had on her life, and tries to make a deal: fearing for her newborn's life and Josie's safety, she volunteers to go to the Underworld and serve the Skriker if she spares her loved ones. However, when she returns to the human world, she finds out that decades have passed in her absence. The Earth has become near inhabitable. Lily turns to dust as her great-granddaughter screams at her in mindless rage. The environmental concerns implied by this striking apocalyptic vision, continuously referenced throughout the play, tend to be the focus of academic analysis surrounding *The Skriker*. The present paper endeavours, however, to widen the scope beyond the immediate eco-political message by exploring the representation of gender and violence in the play.

If imagined on a binary scale, *Drunk Enough* could be considered a "male play" (with young men discussing the conventionally masculine issues of politics and warfare) while *The Skriker* seems more like a "female play" with a focus on the interpersonal relationships and emotional journey of Josie, Lily and the Skriker. However, the Skriker's character alone challenges the gender binary.

Although she is referred to with female pronouns, the Skriker is a genderfluid entity who appears as various male and female characters, as well as a genderless object in the dramatic text. On stage, the Skriker's actor steps in and out of gender roles as she portrays an American woman, a little girl, a lonely man or, memorably, a sofa. Her fluidity creates an identity that cannot be defined according to the gender binary.

The casting of the character tends to bring attention to the genderfluid nature of the Skriker. In a Hungarian collaborative production between Katona József Theatre, one of Hungary's most famous artistic repertoire theatres, and the Budapest Puppet Theatre [4], Réka Pelsőczy wore a suit and combat boots, which were only briefly exchanged for a sequin dress for the Underworld scene; her hair was cut short, and the make-up made her face angular and aggressive. Maxine Peake from the Royal Exchange Theatre's production [5] had a similar appearance with her cropped hair, masculine clothes and feminine charm; as Queen of the Underworld, she donned a costume and wig resembling Elizabeth I, to then go back to her workman's overall. Both actresses possessed male and female characters; notably, in the Katona-Bábszíináz production, the Skriker used actors and actresses as puppets, standing behind them. She would shift between talking in unison with the possessed person, talking over them or dubbing their speech. The ease with which the Skriker is moving between the categories of male and female problematizes the pre-supposed universality of gender and reveals it as something arbitrary and performative. Following Judith Butler, gender identity is revealed as nothing but performance: "there is no gender identity behind the the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (34).

The pronounced performativity of the Skriker's gender identity presents an interesting contrast with the theatrical representation of the gender identity of Lily and Josie. In the Hungarian production, Lily is heavily (and visibly) pregnant, which draws the audience's attention to sex, not gender. Josie is likewise defined by motherhood: her murdered baby is present as *absence*, the negative image of the blooming life represented by Lily's round belly. This contrast problematizes the seemingly simple gender representation of Lily and Josie. Their gender performance is a double act. Lily has the role of the good girl from fairy tales helping the Skriker appearing as a beggar, while Josie acts as her wicked opposite, refusing the Skriker's wish for a hug. When the Skriker utters her first curse, gold comes out of Lily's mouth when she speaks; Josie is coughing up frogs (a reference to the French fairy tale *Diamonds and Toads* by Charles Perrault). Lily is kind and nurturing, while Josie is paranoid, aggressive, and prone to violent outbursts. In this interpretation, Lily and Josie are the same person split into two parts, the good and the bad, the nurturing and the destructive: *a* woman, *a* mother, divided into separate bodies. Therefore, the three female leads of the play all have problematised gender identities: the Skriker is a genderfluid entity, while Lily and Josie make up one woman together.

The role of good and bad is further complicated by the fact that Josie's postnatal depression explains (even though it does not excuse) her aggression and the murder of her baby. She goes against the gender script of the nurturing mother, whose figure is still present through Lily. The bad girl and bad mother, the female destroyer is also present in the cultural script as a counterpoint to the

culturally acceptable behaviour (similarly how the fairy godmother contrasts the evil stepmother), but through complicating Josie's motivations through mental illness, aggression, and the constant contrast with Lily, her character becomes far more complex than the bad girl Fanny from *Diamonds and Toads*.

The masculine gender identity of Sam and Jack in *Drunk Enough* is chiefly expressed through broken dialogue that consists of unfinished sentences. Their fragmentary political discussion becomes more than a simple conversation: this is the tool they use to construct their gender identity which lines up with gender scripts determining cultural understandings of masculinity. The choice of topics (warfare and politics), the style of the dialogue (broken debate) and the reluctance of discussing personal matters all point towards culturally determined gender roles. We learn that Jack cheats on his wife with Sam, but we never meet her on stage: her voice is not heard, her perspective is dismissed, she has no place, no significance and no name in the world Sam and Jack inhabit. Marginalised through the dialogue that speaks her into being, she is mentioned less and less, until she completely fades away. Although Sam and Jack are staying in a hotel on a lovescapade, intimacy is notably missing. A closer look at Sam and Jack's dialogue reveals how they construct masculinity through the language of aggression.

> SAM: sitting around
> JACK: no
> SAM: so much to do because
> JACK: thinking
> SAM: no time for
> JACK: all right I'm just
> SAM: missing your
> JACK: not at all
> SAM: natural
> JACK: get on with
> SAM: because there's all this people we have to
> JACK: ok so here's the bridge right here and the people there are people going across not soldiers just
> SAM: North Korea
> JACK: blow it up
> SAM: there you go
> JACK: don't want you to worry because I don't regret
> SAM: death brigades
> JACK: right behind us
> SAM: in Guatemala... (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 12-13.)

Sam and Jack cannot talk about their relationship or emotions. The short, fragmented, roundabout attempts keep being pushed aside for the sake of politics. The tension is palpable at the beginning of their conversation, which could easily turn into an argument. They steer the conversation to politics to avoid a frank discussion. Jack is the one who suggests to "get on with [it]," (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 12) his annoyance evident, while Sam introduces their political conversation as if it was their duty to talk about it; thus, he justifies dropping the subject of their relationship with "so much to do" and "there's all this people we have to[—]" (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 12). They are in harmony when they

discuss foreign affairs, responding to each other instead of struggling with the uncomfortable topic of personal issues. Jack's suggestion to blow up North Korea is rewarded by encouragement. However, Jack's thoughts linger on the conversation they were trying to have, the things left unsaid. He reassures Sam that he has not regretted leaving his family for him, but this careful confession is ignored for the sake of Guatemalan death brigades. In response, Jack immediately joins the political conversation, abandoning his previous half-hearted attempt of relationship maintenance. Sam and Jack connect to each other intellectually, rather than emotionally. They follow a restrictive, binary gender script that developed through history where "men… rely on rationality because the principles governing society were created to support their needs, and those in control often advocate discipline and adherence to rules. Women's focus on relationships has developed in response to their relative disenfranchisement, because promoting relatedness and mercy are ways they can exert influence" (Porter, 42). They reinforce their idea of masculinity by designating a focus on relationships as feminine and foreign. They advocate a rationality that is closely connected to power, discipline, and aggression.

The fact that these two men are in a homosexual relationship is seemingly counter-script. Seemingly, since the playtext suggests that homosexuality in itself is not enough to subvert the patriarchal (and compulsory heterosexual [6]) understanding of masculinity. Sam and Jack have a highly conservative mindset; this conservativism seems to compensate for their 'liberal' sexual orientation. Sam represents the paradoxical figure of the Republican homosexual. Jack, ambivalent about politics and still struggling to come to terms with his own sexual orientation, is desperate to imitate Sam. Sam seduces Jack through hyperbolic and sensationalist political rambling in an attempt to make him into a partner who shares his conservative beliefs and never challenges him. He does not want discussions: he demands a conversation of echoes. Malkin links this behaviour to verbal violence: a character (Jack) is "converted" through language, "forced into pre-existing verbal molds which, implicitly or explicitly, implicate a ruling ideology" (8). Jack can only please Sam if he obediently internalises his conservative ethos. Therefore, their relationship does not challenge the patriarchal script, since it depends on the very same ideology: they are both performing patriarchal masculinity through dialogue. This ideology both preaches and constructs their gender identity, which is linked to aggression. They are devoted to their roles and refuse to challenge any aspect of the script.

Sam and Jack see aggression as innate to masculinity. Aggression is not limited to the topic and effect of their discussion. Their dialogue functions as verbal scenery: their words create—what they say appears in the mind of the reader/audience, filling the empty void of the page/stage. Their dramatic language is "one that acts physically upon its audience," provoking them and forcing them "to enter the exaggerated world of theatre" (Malkin, 3). Language here "functions as an element of the theatrical event, not as the focal subject at which the drama is aimed" (Malkin, 3). Sam and Jack use this dramatic language to conquer the world by whatever means they deem necessary.

> SAM: [...] throw the prisoner out of the helicopter, show the prisoner another prisoner being thrown out of the helicopter, beating obviously, rape of course,

> bright light, no sleep, simulate an execution so they think up to the last second they're going to die, play tape of women and children screaming in next room and tell prisoner it's his wife and children, sometimes it is [...] (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 33)

The reader/audience is forced to participate in the violence by conjuring up the sounds and images in their head. In scene three, Sam lists the countries to be bombed: Vietnam, Grenada, Korea, Laos, Guatemala, Cuba, El Salvador, Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon are destroyed one after the other in the reader/audience's mind. Jack notes, "it used to be a village and now [—]" (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 15), and Sam replies: "because we want it gone" (Churchill, *Drunk Enough*, 16). During this verbal apocalypse, Jack busies himself with a cup of coffee as Sam just goes on and on: China and Panama are next. He is compulsively listing all the countries the US have attacked or planned to bomb since the Vietnam war; by the end of his death toll, it feels like nothing is left of the Earth.

The two of them, however, are safe: white, middle-class men, the sons of major world powers, who lounge on a sofa and talk about bombings or the gruesome details of torturing political prisoners for fun. The aggression they enact is both passive and active: passive, since they are only talking about it, not committing the deeds themselves; and active, since on the stage, their words have the power to call these events into being and thus make them happen. This is supported by the recurring imperatives and the present tense when describing past events. Sam and Jack's parade of privilege and violent masculinity guarantees them both protection from harm and the means to do harm: to have power over the entire world.

Sam often uses first person plural when discussing politics, but he never clarifies who he means by *we*; he takes the universality of his identity for granted. If the universal is male, middle-class and white, then the only thing that can potentially place Sam into the category of the Other is his homosexuality. However, his relationship with Jack consists of reinforcing a universal idea of masculinity that is expressed through aggression. Sam and Jack perform gender through fascination with political aggression and verbal violence.

Theatrical adaptations further complicate Jack and Sam's gender-performance. In the Royal Court / Public Theatre production, props play a crucial role in performing patriarchal masculinity: they appear out of thin air as Sam and Jack are sitting on the floating sofa in button-down shirts and slacks. Invisible property masters hand them cigarettes, alcohol, even cocaine: the attributes of the Real Man, as self-destructive as their relationship is. The sofa itself can be seen as a symbolic prop of masculinity: it reminds one of Blair's *sofa government*. The former British PM preferred an informal, casual style of diplomacy, a key element of which was to have his guests lounge on comfortable sofas next to him. This idea connects to the tradition of English clubs: not anyone could enter these private, male circles, and likewise, only a select few had a place on Blair's sofa, despite the apparent welcoming camaraderie. The trend made it to the White House: President Bush left his writing desk to join his guests on cozy couches; one of his favourite visitors was none other than Blair.

The special relationship of Blair and Bush was a prominent feature of British foreign politics in the 2000s. Critics of *Drunk Enough* often interpret the play as

an allegory where Bush and Blair appear as a gay couple. [7] Rebellato is not fond of this interpretation ("The Personal is Not Political," 34-35), and I would argue as well that such reading is overly simplistic, since the play's questioning goes well beyond party politics, for instance, regarding gender, which the Blair/Bush reading completely disregards. Gender is a central issue in both *Drunk Enough* and *The Skriker*. Examining the link between aggression and gender is crucial to understand the deeper layers of conflict within the plays.

While Sam and Jack rise above the consequences of aggression both literally and metaphorically, *The Skriker* drags us down to the Underworld: Josie and Lily both follow the Skriker to hell. Their entrance to the Underworld is accompanied by an unbearably long and painful scream played through speakers both according to Churchill's playtext and in the Katona-Bábszínház production. Then a blast of loud music is heard, and man-eating creatures from British folklore flock to the stage to sing. *Drunk Enough* does not use sound effects: the sound of explosions only reverberates in the audience's consciousness as *words* fall like so many bombs. The insufferable cacophony of *The Skriker* had a different approach to aggression towards the spectators: the Katona-Bábszínház production starts with the creatures banging on iron rods, delighting in the intolerable sound and torturing the audience aurally for long minutes.

Chaos, the underworld, the *bodily* are associated with the feminine in Western tradition; but physical violence in women is seen as counter-script. "Women entering the realm of violence and achieving the ability to exact physical harm is an aberration," Porter points out (5). She elaborates, "despite societal lip service to nonviolence, men engaging in violence is at least expected and thereby normalized, whereas women engaging in the same behaviors are viewed as aberrant" (46). The discourse surrounding female aggression is thoroughly gendered. Violent women are not seen to be in control, and the aggression associated with the feminine sex is seen as unreasonable, unpredictable, *theatrical*. "The 'female' has occupied a symbolic and social site deemed potentially uncontrollable… Female violence, it followed, was an… an eruption of not wholly disciplined subjects, partial outlaws." (Elshtain, 169).

Churchill subverts such general concepts of gendered aggression in *Drunk Enough* and *The Skriker*. Although according to the patriarchal script men are active and women are passive, the reverse can be observed in these plays; furthermore, as it has been mentioned, *The Skriker* even goes beyond the gender binary. When all is said and done, Sam and Jack merely sit and *talk*, disregarding the effect their words can have on the audience. Their violence is verbal, not physical. Their verbal violence is always directed at *someone else*, and they themselves do not get damaged by it: if anything, it reinforces their relationship, saves them from several breakups, and serves as escapist bonding. [8] They enact verbal violence on the outside world, so they do not have to deal with the problems of their private life.

Aggression in *The Skriker* is presented quite differently: it is overwhelmingly active and often physical, subverting the gender script. Physical violence and bodily harm are closely linked to the character of Josie. She is haunted by the murder of her baby yet insists that Lily's child must be put into the oven to test if she is a changeling. She keeps attacking the Skriker: she shoves and pushes her when the Skriker is disguised as a homeless person, wrestles her to the ground

and stuffs dirt into her mouth when she is in the body of a little girl and threatens her with a knife when she is disguised as a man. Her paranoia towards the disguised Skriker could be interpreted as personal (and somewhat justified) vendetta for tricking her into infanticide, but at the end of her arc, Josie moves beyond revenge and starts killing strangers. While Josie ending up a serial killer might seem to reinforce the concept of female violence as uncontrolled and psychotic, Josie is more clear-headed than ever: she has a plan. She becomes a killer to distract the Skriker from Lily. "I'll do terrible things, I promise," she tells her. "Just leave it to me. You don't have to do anything. Don't do anything. Please." (Churchill, *The Skriker*, 48). Josie is motivated by a desire to keep Lily safe, although at this point they are no longer friends. If the Skriker's attention is on Josie, Lily walks free. By the end of the play, Josie transforms from a psychotic aggressor to a violent saviour. The motivation of Josie's murder spree is, paradoxically, female solidarity. The bad girl fights for the salvation of the good one: she is not afraid to get her hands dirty, and she will go to any length to save her former friend. Aggression at its most brutal thus becomes an expression of selfless love. Josie surpasses the gender script that can only describe her in the terms of aberration and insanity. While she never breaks free of her role as the Skriker's victim, there is a sense of redemption in her character arc.

The Skriker's connection to gendered aggression is similarly complex. As a genderfluid entity, she has no gender script to internalise or subvert. Her connection to aggression is expressed through the double role of perpetrator and victim. She finds a childlike delight in violence, which she relates through speech: her monologues, narrated in a nonsensical language, punctuate the play. She takes the role of chorus/narrator to narrate how she tricks and abuses humans, mostly young mothers. When she takes the girls to the Underworld, it is revealed that she feeds on human blood, thoughts, and dreams. She is a destructive parasite, possessive, jealous. Whether she disguises herself as male or female, she tends to play the victim: pretending to be Lily's childhood friend, she invents a backstory implying that she was sexually abused; when she acts as Lily's male admirer, she refers to a traumatic childhood. Her parade of victimhood is not all fiction. In the world of the play, the fairy-world has been poisoned by human activity. The Skriker is desperate to find out how humans make her sick and might be on a quest of revenge. She refers to an idolised past she cannot remember, where she might have been a more benevolent creature. She still possesses the power to grant wishes. Her destruction might be evil sadism or a morally more ambiguous quest of revenge for all the good humanity ruined. By divorcing aggression from the realm of gender, her character frames violence in more universal terms.

While academic interest tends to focus on the political aspects of *The Skriker* and *Drunk Enough*, the analysis of gendered aggression gives us valuable insight into the representation of gender and violence on the contemporary stage. *The Skriker* subverts the patriarchal script of gender through the introduction of a genderfluid character, exploring female violence through Josie's arc, and counter-script motherhood performed as a double act. Aggression is an integral part of the gender performance of the three main characters. In *Drunk Enough*, masculinity is constructed through dialogue and it is closely linked to aggression. Gender roles are culturally determined and performed through the use of props and dialogue

that is laden with verbal violence. Churchill's innovative techniques push contemporary theatre beyond the gender binary and explore gendered aggression from a new, non-traditional angle.

Notes

[1] According to Rebellato's definition, the difference between tribunal plays and verbatim plays is that tribunal plays edit pre-existing interviews into plays, while verbatim plays conduct their own research. Tribunal plays were popular in the 1990s; in later decades, preference shifted to verbatim plays (*Modern British Playwriting*, 41-48).

[2] *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You*, play by Caryl Churchill, directed by James Macdonald, Royal Court Theatre, London, 10 November 2006. The play transferred to the USA in 2008, premiering in The Public Theatre, Manhattan, March 2008. The director and the stage design were unchanged.

[3] In recent editions (such as Caryl Churchill, *Plays Four*, Nick Hern Books, 2010) Jack is named "Guy;" however, in earlier editions (Caryl Churchill, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?*, Nick Hern Books, 2006) he appears as Jack. I chose to refer to him by his original name, since the confusion regarding whether he is ought to represent the Union Jack is addressed in the text.

[4] *Az Iglic,* play by Caryl Churchill, directed by Gábor Tengely, Budapest Bábszínház Puppet Theatre, Budapest, 18 October 2013.

[5] *The Skriker*, play by Caryl Churchill, directed by Sarah Frankcom, Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester International Festival, Manchester, July 2015.

[6] Butler argues that gender is constructed as binary through the regulatory practice of compulsory heterosexuality to uphold a hierarchical binary (*Gender Trouble*, 24; 202).

[7] For example The Guardian (Michael Billington, "Drunk Enough to Say I Love You? Royal Court Theatre, London." *The Guardian*, 23 November 2006) or The Independent (Paul Taylor, "Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?, Royal Court Theatre, London: Satirical Tipple with an Odd Taste." *The Independent*, 24 November 2006); other examples are quoted in Rebellato's "The Personal is Not Political…", pp. 34.

[8] Interestingly, in director Benedict Andrews' production (*Betrunken Genug Zu Sagen Ich Liebe Dich?*, Schaubühne Berlin, December 2007, Berlin) the aggression gets physical as Sam and Jack abuse each other.

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Gendered Spaces

Domesticity in the Novels of David Lodge

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Abstract. The paper examines a number of novels written by David Lodge to find out if the representation of women had changed throughout Lodge's works written in different decades. Since it is often the case that women are represented through domestic, private spaces in Lodge's novels, the paper inspects the places female characters occupy in the structure of the narratives and the places women inhabit in the fictional worlds of the novels. While closely investigating the chosen four novels that seem the most relevant to such an analysis, the research also includes some other novels by the same author in which the presence of domestic spaces is significant.

Keywords: domestic space, David Lodge, home, gender

With the emergence of feminist literary criticism, David Lodge acknowledged the relevance of this approach's assessment in regard to one of his early works, *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962) (213). In the novel's afterword written in 1983, he attributed the behaviour and underlying views of the main character of his novel to the effect of the times in which the novel was written (saying that "neither [the main character] nor his creator had heard of 'sexism'" in 1962) and further added that, in any case, the presence of a certain amount of sexist views in the narrative was necessary due to the nature of the main character's environment (military service) in the story (*Ginger* 213).

Without aiming to answer the question of whether Lodge's novels are indeed sexist (moreover, it would not be correct to judge on the basis of the opinions alluded to or expressed by the characters or the narrator of the book), this paper aims to examine a number of novels written by Lodge to find out if the representation of women had changed throughout Lodge's works written in different years. To do so, a close inspection will be conducted of the places female characters occupy in the structure of the narratives and, more literally, the locations women inhabit in the fictional worlds of the novels. The spatial arrangements of the narratives are important for a number of reasons, the most significant of which being the fact that the spaces the characters occupy in the novels and the ways the characters behave in those spaces are often defining for the development of the story and the representation of the characters. It is not unusual for Lodge's novels to describe women in and through domestic spaces, hence, domesticity and its representations are the primary focus of this paper.

It is, of course, necessary to include *Ginger, You're Barmy* as a part of this investigation, as it was the criticism of this novel that induced his reaction. It is also important to take a look at a novel written close to the time when said afterword was produced. *Nice Work* (1988) not only was published in the same decade but also features a female academic and a supporter of feminist views as

one of its main characters. As the change of attitudes in the following decades may also be of interest, it is reasonable to include *Therapy* (1995) and *Deaf Sentence* (2008) into the analysis. In three of these novels the protagonist is male, and even in the fourth one, namely, *Nice Work*, the narrative is often focalised through the male protagonist. The majority of female characters take a role of a love or sexual interest in the stories.

The investigation into the chosen four novels will be accompanied by a brief overview of the presence and representation of women in and through domestic spaces in the other novels written by Lodge to provide a better understanding of a general trend or the absence of one. The descriptions of domestic spaces themselves play a significant role in a number of Lodge's works, and it is beneficial to see how the representation of these spaces correlates with the representation of women, since such an investigation may expose additional meanings and narrative characteristics of the novels at hand.

Starting the investigation into the domestic spaces, it is important to point out that the value of such spaces is defined both by the value of privacy of the inside, the internal space of home and by the framework of attitudes towards everyday objects that prevail in a given society. According to Gaston Bachelard, inside and outside are binary oppositions (211). These complete opposites are often loaded with a set of connotations, and in many cases one item of the pair is seemingly positive, while the other one is perceived as negative.

> Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative. (Bachelard 211)

Even though in many cases it can be difficult to attribute positivity and negativity to the notions of inside and outside, home and the world outside it, feminist historians argue that gendered dialectics of domestic and public develop into the oppressive state of "imprisonment" inside the domestic space for many women. As a result of the industrial revolution and the diversification of activities, home ceased to be the space of both work and dwelling, and thus acquired its gendered qualities (Gillis 4). The inability of women to participate fully in the social and working life of the society led to home and domestic life being reimagined as their sole sphere of competence and responsibility.

> The identification of women with the private sphere from the late eighteenth century onwards played a central role in creating new forms of gender inequality and domesticity emerged as an ideology that legitimated these new gender inequalities. [...] For many feminist historians, the emergence of separate spheres represented a retrograde step in the history of women because the distinction between public and private was also gendered. The private sphere was imagined as feminine—the 'proper' place for women—while the public sphere was imagined as masculine. In the process, women became economically dependent on men as they were excluded from the public sphere of paid labour. Women's lives were thus solely defined by their responsibilities as wives and mothers. (Gillis 4)

The shift that happened in the 18th century has been affecting women to a different degree throughout the following centuries. While the situation has been evolving

since, the 20th century witnessed a high degree of polarisation of the dialectics of inside and outside in regard to male and female spheres of control and interest. Thomas Foster argues that even though the 20th century is marked by the "desanctification" of the inside and outside binary as a gendered one, it is still a prevailing way of understanding the dichotomy of public and private for many people.

> While it may never have been entirely valid to 'characterize women's lives by the distinction of public and private domains', as Haraway argues, it is still necessary to account for the power that the public/private distinction held in the literary imagination, even after the impossibility of a strict demarcation between these gendered spaces began to become apparent. I agree with Foucault that modernism 'desanctified' nineteenth-century oppositions between a masculinized public sphere and a privatized feminine one, but what Foucault ignores is the fact that desanctification does not mean that these oppositions cease to circulate or to organize ideological formations and power relations. (Foster 6)

Outside of the gendered context, when it comes to the home itself, it is important to trace the value of objects that constitute home, since the objects that surround people are believed to affect the way they construct their identities:

> ... men and women make order in their selves (i.e., "retrieve their identity") by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine, to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience; they constitute the framework of experience that gives order to our otherwise shapeless selves. Therefore the things we make and use have a tremendous impact on the future of humankind. (Csikszentmihalyi 16)

The objects inside homes are the ones people interact with the most, as they constitute their everyday life and are designed and picked to fulfil the basic needs of and provide comfort to the members of the household. Even though the dichotomy of inside and outside has been getting less gendered over time, it is often the case that women as "household managers" are responsible for the state of the home in general and objects inside it in particular, hence the domestic space often defines women through the choices they make in regards to the household.

It is often the case that women are represented through domestic, private spaces in David Lodge's novels. Such representation may be motivated by the tradition of identifying women with the private sphere of life in general and domestic space in particular, as well as by the structure of the given narrative, or a number of other reasons to be discussed in the paper. For instance, both the aforementioned tradition and narrative structure can be listed as forming factors for the representation of women (mostly, *a* woman) in the novel *Ginger, You're Barmy*.

The female character in question is Pauline, a love interest of the novel's main character. It would be incorrect to say that Jon Browne and Mike Brady, the protagonist of *Ginger, You're Barmy*, compete for Pauline, Mike's love interest who later becomes Jon's girlfriend, as Jon never admits his interest in Pauline to

Mike. However, Pauline is seen as a prize, since Jon envies his friend and believes Mike is not worthy of having such a girlfriend.

Jon repeatedly compliments on Pauline's femininity, which, for him, is manifested through her manners, clothes and, most notably, her home: "The mingled perfumes from her dressing-table, the teddy-bear in which she kept her night-clothes ..., the prints of Degas's ballet dancers on the wall, the stockings and petticoats hung out to dry on the line in the kitchen..." (*Ginger* 141). The description gives an exhaustive picture of Jon's impression of Pauline and of what he perceives as feminine: she is well-groomed, cultured, and somewhat infantile. Pauline's home defines her in Jon's eyes, which also gives another layer to the understanding of Jon's character. The domesticity of her character is emphasised by the fact that Pauline is rarely seen (narrated) outside her flat: while other characters move around, travel between and within cities, Pauline is present in the narrative almost exclusively over the phone or while hosting guests in her flat, which also implies her being at home. It is possible to say that the reason for her narrative 'confinement' is that Jon, as the narrative's focaliser, only has a chance to interact with her in certain circumstances, however, their visits to the theatre are also mentioned throughout the story while never narrated. No matter if the reason for the absence of such visits in the story is the fact that they never actually went to the theatre, or Jon's (or, possibly, the implied author's) selective representation of their relationship, it is still a fact that Pauline's story happens mostly inside her flat. Pauline may be perceived as a narrative tool rather than an active participant of the events, as she lacks agency of her own. It is also possible to assume that Jon felt obliged to "look after" Pauline, since he thought he was the reason for her loss of her partner, Mike. This interpretation, however, renders Pauline helpless and lacking agency too.

As soon as she leaves her domestic space, the situation and Jon's attitude toward her change drastically. After Jon is demobilised and leaves the army, and Mike is imprisoned (partly due to Jon's indecisiveness about helping his friend), Jon and Pauline go on vacation to Majorca (the destination she intended to visit with Mike originally), where it becomes clear that Jon's guilt over what happened to Mike impedes the enjoyment of his "victory":

> "I tried to will myself into enjoying the long-awaited holiday by reminding myself that I was free; but I felt less at ease in the glaring gaudy, hedonistic resort than I had been in the Army. The dusty offices of Badmore, the gloomy huts of Catterick, tugged at my thoughts with a strength like nostalgia. And at the core of my uneasiness was of course Mike, silently reproaching me from his cell in the county gaol." (*Ginger* 204)

Even though Jon receives the "prize", as he married Pauline at the end of the story, he is never satisfied with the outcome. The epilogue re-establishes Pauline as 'domestic' (however, not "feminine" any more). Jon's decision to move his new home closer to the prison where Mike is held is undeniably significant. The house can be perceived as the manifestation of his guilt, as he intends to visit and, to a degree, mimic Mike's conditions of confinement: the new house is small, uncomfortable and situated in a secluded area, a "damp, isolated place, where the local industry is a prison" (*Ginger* 207). The house can, indeed, be seen as a metaphor for prison, in which Jon is confined voluntarily not only - at least to a

degree - physically, but also by the contract of being married to the woman who is not a loved, appreciated, or, in fact, desired one. He fulfils "no more than statutory requirements of a husband and father" (*Ginger* 208) without any interest in Pauline's life, her psychological state or her comfort.

Domesticity in *Ginger, You're Barmy* is an inevitable part of Pauline's characterisation, as well as the way of establishing Jon's attitude to people and spaces. Jon is the subject of most activities and attitudes, while the domestic space and, by extension, Pauline herself are very often seen as merely the objects of his actions and decisions.

Similar to the female character of *Ginger, You're Barmy*, in *The British Museum Is Falling Down*, written three years later, Adam Appleby's wife, Barbara, is always portrayed at home. The domestic space in this case, however, helps to represent both of the characters:

> It comprised only two rooms, plus kitchen and bathroom. One of the rooms had originally been a living-room, but this had long ago become Adam's and Barbara's bedroom, while the children occupied the other. This seemed the logical and inevitable design of a good Catholic home: no room for *living* in, only rooms for breeding, sleeping, eating and excreting (*The British Museum* 88)

Barbara is confined in these conditions due to the young age of the couple's three children, and Adam, whose life is, effectively, lived at the Reading Room of British Museum, associates home with his wife and kids, and sees it mainly as a source of discomfort and financial difficulties.

Nice Work is different from *Ginger, You're Barmy*, as well as the other novels represented in this analysis, in a number of ways. Unlike the main characters of the three other novels involved in this analysis and the majority of Lodge's novels in general, *Nice Work* has Robyn Penrose as its main character. Robyn (an interestingly unisex name) not only is a woman but also a firm supporter of feminist and liberal views. Being a lecturer in English literature at Rummidge University which is currently in crisis, she is invited (if not forced) to participate in the Shadow Scheme which implies that she will visit an industrial institution and "shadow", i.e. follow, its manager to understand how said institution works. She is sent to the factory called Pringle & Sons Casting and General Engineering to become a "shadow" of Vic Wilcox, a middle-aged factory manager of working-class background.

The initial Shadow Scheme is one-sided in its original form. It is only Robyn who needs to become a shadow and "learn the trade", while Vic is invited to take a more pre-eminent, teaching, position. Vic, under Robyn's long-term influence, turns it into a much more equal version where he also has to participate as a "shadow". It is undeniable, however, that Vic is interested in Robyn herself more than in her literary insights, and, similar to the novel discussed previously, the decision is made by him, and he forces Robyn to accept it.

In terms of occupied space, Robyn is mainly represented through the university she works for and her attitude to both the university and the factory she has to attend weekly. The space of academia, Rummidge University, becomes the location that is closely associated with her character throughout the novel. However inviting it might be to suggest a binary opposition of male and female spaces in regards to the Pringle's factory Vic works for and Rummidge University,

such an allocation would hardly be correct. It is difficult to associate Rummidge University with femininity, as it is dominated by male scholars. In fact, Robyn is the only woman among the teaching staff of her department, and she occupies the rather unstable position of a "Temporary Lecturer in English Literature" (*Nice Work* 21). Joan Acker explained in her 1992 article that multiple institutions, including the academy "are institutions historically developed by men, currently dominated by men, and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically. These institutions have been defined by the absence of women" (567). Robyn's academic life is in many respects controlled by the choices other (male) members of the faculty make, including the decision on Robyn's participation in the Shadow Scheme, which is made by Phillip Swallow, the head of department, and other male members of the faculty who do not want to participate in the activity themselves (*Nice Work* 55).

Robyn's domestic space, even though it is not mentioned frequently in the novel, plays an important role in the introduction of the character. The first of the chapters devoted to Robyn follows her around her house as she gets ready to leave for work, and the interior of the home, along with the way she interacts with it, serves a major role in the establishment of Robyn's character. It is safe to argue that "within modernity the interior became a marker of people's changing identities, one of the only stable (if temporary) frameworks for the construction of the 'self ' and social status" (Sparke 17), and the descriptions of the characters' dwellings can often serve to represent their beliefs, class and gender roles.

Robyn's living room is full of "books and periodicals everywhere — on shelves, on tables, on the floor — posters and reproductions of modern paintings on the walls" (*Nice Work* 30), and has a variety of drafts of her dissertation at the very centre of the room. The centrality of her research in her life is proven (and sometimes questioned) multiple times throughout the novel, but this is the first glimpse that serves as a foundation for further development of this side of her character. As she is seen walking "across the floor, putting her shapely boots down carefully in the spaces between books, back numbers of *Critical Inquiry* and *Women's Review*, LP albums by Bach, Philip Glass and Phil Collins [...] and the occasional wineglass or coffee cup, to the desk" (*Nice Work* 30-31) it becomes clear that the space of home is inseparable for her from the space of work, they have merged and, even though have not became interchangeable, the home environment is not defined as such for Robyn. "'I never stop working,' said Robyn. 'If I'm not working here, I'm working at home'" (*Nice Work* 240), she explains later in the novel, and her home is a clear evidence of her words. Another indication of this fusion of functions and the loss of "domestic" properties of home is Robyn's attitude to cleaning. According to Gaston Bachelard, home acquires its properties of the space of comfort and safety through a number of rituals, one of which is cleaning (68). Even though initially he attributes the process of "building the home from the inside" (Bachelard 68) to women, he then elaborates that "a human being can devote himself to things and make them his own by perfecting their beauty" (Bachelard 69), associating the act of perfecting with the result - the state of being "polished". In this regard, Robyn's domestic space is lacking "homeness" as well - she is not preoccupied with perfecting it, but rather utilises it according to her needs: "she puts her soiled breakfast things in the sink, already

crammed with the relics of last night's supper, and hurries upstairs" (*Nice Work* 27). Robyn is not a "domestic" woman, surely not in Bachelard's terms.

Robyn's attitude to the space of her home is contrasted with that of Marjorie's, the wife of Vic Wilcox. Vic calls his wife "softhearted or softheaded" (*Nice Work* 8) and lazy for sleeping through the morning ("No wonder the country is going to the dogs" (*Nice Work* 13)). He mostly sees her and talks to her in the kitchen, and, symptomatically, about the kitchen. The first time the reader encounters Marjorie in the novel, she tries to negotiate the purchase of a microwave oven that would supplement her collection of kitchen tools, the purchase Vic assumes to be motivated by the fact that all their acquaintances already possess microwaves. This scene paints a portrait of Marjorie as of a woman who is mostly focused on her home, while also being painfully aware of its imperfections and trying to fix them by perfecting the physical world around her rather than focusing on the relationship with her husband and children. While she is struggling to be "no worse than other people", Vic despises her attempts and does not find any interest in communicating or indeed spending time with his wife, especially once he meets Robyn.

Robyn unknowingly brings distress to the Wilcox household even before she appears in their house. Vic not only becomes more and more distant, but also tries to reformat his wife's domestic routine (which is a rather vital part of her identity) by suggesting practices that she is not used to:

> "We never have a starter," said Marjorie.
> "There's always a first time."
> "What's got into you, Vic? Anybody would think the Queen was coming."
> "Don't be stupid, Marjorie. Starters are quite normal."
> "In restaurants they may be. Not at home."
> "In Robyn Penrose's home," said Vic, "they'd have a starter. I'd take a bet on it."
> (*Nice Work* 163)

As Marjorie, urged by her husband's neglect and change of character, explores other sides of her identity, Vic starts appreciating his wife and the domestic space closely associated with her more, noticing both "the smooth surfaces of the fitted kitchen and all the shining gadgetry arrayed upon them" (*Nice Work* 267) and the changes in Marjorie's looks and behaviour. While Marjorie is still associated with the kitchen where Vic usually spends time with her, the description differs from the previous ones as it creates a more positive representation of Marjorie. Not only does such a shift take Marjorie out of the domestic sphere, but also gives an opportunity for character growth. However, it is important to highlight that this growth only happens out of necessity and is somewhat forced by Vic, whose indifference threatens their marriage in Marjorie's eyes. Despite this fact, it is possible to say that both Robyn and Marjorie, even though at some point defined through their domestic spaces and attitudes to them, are not associated with the domestic spaces they occupy by the end of the novel. The changes in Marjorie's relationship with herself and the space around her are seen as positive by Vic, through whom the parts of the narrative that include Marjorie are focalised.

Nice Work is the last novel in David Lodge's *Campus Trilogy* and the first that has a female character at the centre of the narrative. Other academic novels, written somewhat earlier, focus on male academics and mostly portray women as

belonging to the domestic sphere, often controlled or affected from the outside by the male scholars.

In *Changing Places*, the first part of the trilogy, Phillip Swallow, a professor from Rummidge University in England, and Morris Zapp from Euforia State University in the US exchange workplaces for a semester, while their wives stay at their respective homes. While the domestic settings stay stable and mostly unchanged, they get "invaded" by the visiting main characters. In this case, it is possible to say that the homes of each of the professors may stand for their identities, hence identifying and highlighting the change that happens within and outside of them throughout the novel.

In *Small World*, the second book in the trilogy, the main character, a PhD student Persse McGarrigle, sets off on a quest to find the woman he fell in love with, Angelica Pabst, and the domestic spaces do not play any significant role in either the development of the story or the representation of characters. However, it is important to point out that the novel contains the following dialogue:

> "Exactly! Even two campuses wouldn't be enough. Scholars these days are like the errant knights of old, wandering the ways of the world in search of adventure and glory."
> "Leaving their wives locked up at home?"
> "Well, a lot of the knights are women, these days. There's positive discrimination at the Round Table." (*Small World* 63)

It is, evidently, a commentary on the previous novel of the trilogy (and, possibly, *The British Museum Is Falling Down* as well) that indicates a certain change in the attitude towards women and their place in the narratives both inside the trilogy and in the further novels.

The main character of *Therapy*, Laurence, does not inhabit any particular space himself, as he circulates between his family house in London suburbs and a flat in West End. At the beginning of the novel, it seems unclear whether to consider both of these places his home or neither of them, as home is supposed to have both physical and symbolic boundaries (Dovey, 36), and there is a certain discrepancy between the two when it comes to Laurence's "homes". His wife, Sally, spent years staying at home and raising children, but, as they grew up and moved out, she started working on her career, which meant she was rarely present at home. While the space of the house is rarely mentioned, its atmosphere is represented through the relationship between Laurence and his wife:

> She brings home piles of boring agendas and reports to work through in the evenings and at the weekends. We sit in silence on opposite sides of the fireplace, she with her committee papers, I connected to the muted television by the umbilical cord of my headphones (*Therapy* 72)

The domestic qualities of the space are ruined, according to Laurence, by Sally's introduction of her work tasks into the domestic routine. Their marriage is on the brink of collapse, even though Laurence does not notice it until Sally announces that she wants to divorce him. As the home environment is presumed to be predictable and stable (Dovey, 37), it is at this point that the house ceases to be a home for Laurence. However, as it becomes apparent later, the "home" environment for Laurence is extended to other locations as well (even if they are his personal spaces, not family ones), as even though he is used to meeting Amy,

his friend and a frequent conversation partner, in the flat in London, their relationship is platonic up until the point when they leave the spaces of Laurence's dwelling. Home, it seems, is a space of routine that gives Laurence comfort - be it the house in the suburbs or the flat in the centre of the city.

However, he often perceives his wife as merely an element of this routine ("routine" is a word that appears quite frequently in the novel), and her remarks and requests are frequently left unattended if even noticed. As his wife leaves him, he initiates a quest to find a new interest and lover, and the choices and arrangements he makes in the process are representative of not only his attitude to these women but also of his understanding of what "home" is. Three women become the objects of his pursuit, and, interestingly, he only shows his interest to all three of them once he is outside his home and outside of London (or, for that matter, the UK), the city where he lives, works and spends most of his time. Since "home is an experience of complete insideness that can only develop over time" (Dovey, 37), it seems possible to say that the opposition of insideness and outsideness lies for Laurence not only in physical spaces, but also in the difference between the routine of his family life and the adventurous life outside of this routine. Each of his pursuits of romance can serve as an illustration of such a distinction, for Laurence invites or follows each of the three women he is interested in to faraway places. He even takes Amy, who used to be his friend and a frequent visitor of his London flat, as far within Europe as it seems possible, to Tenerife.

The representation of women and their roles in the main character's life, hence, is closely linked with the places and spaces they are associated with. Since home is a space of routine and repetition, none of which are usually welcome in a romantic relationship, it is reserved only for a marital relationship, while new and fresh interests are represented through outsideness, through travelling and the experience of new places. Such a distinction introduces a variety of interpretations of the roles and characters of women, but only as perceived by the main character of the novel. The dialectics of inside and outside come into play here too, defining home as inside and accompanying this allocation with a set of expectations and stereotypes.

As Laurence is deprived of both his homes by the end of the novel (he leaves the house to his wife after the divorce, while the city flat gets burgled), he is supposed to start a new life and rebuild his routine of insideness, but whether he does so is questionable.

In the novel *Deaf Sentence*, the main character, Desmond's, relationship with his wife, Fred (another "masculine" name, short for Winifred), is quite similar to Laurence's in *Therapy*. While he is retired, her social life and career are going upwards. The house the couple live in is not only the domestic space of their everyday life, but also the space of extensive communication with the outside world, since the house is "extravagantly large for just the two of [them], but Fred likes to throw big parties, and to host inclusive family gatherings at Christmas and similar occasions" (*Deaf Sentence* 61-62). The house itself and the process of perfecting it are sources of pleasure for Fred, "living space is her luxury: some people like fast cars, or yachts, or second homes in the Dordogne, but she prefers to spend her money on space she can enjoy every day" (*Deaf Sentence* 62), hence

the house is indeed perceived as home in Bachelardean terms, and this creates certain expectations regarding the nature of Fred's relationship with the house.

However, Fred's developing career is undermining her everyday participation in the life of and care for the household; she "leaves the house early in the morning, comes back late in the evening, cooks a perfunctory dinner, or [Desmond makes] one with pre-cooked chilled meals from Marks & Spencer's" (*Deaf Sentence* 232), which affects Desmond's life negatively, as such a situation contradicts his set of expectations regarding their roles in the care about the house:

> While he was still employed himself Desmond was amused and pleased by his wife's success in her late entrepreneurial career. If there was a slight decline in domestic comforts as a result of her busy life - more prepared food from the supermarket for dinner, an occasional shortage of clean socks and laundered shirts - that was a small price to pay for the satisfaction she obviously derived from it, and his own social life was enlivened by contact with new people and places through association with her (*Deaf Sentence* 32-33)

The dependence of Desmond's domestic comforts on the ability and willingness of his wife to perform the majority of the chores is understandable and predictable. His disaffection for what he calls a "dull routine of a house-husband" (*Deaf Sentence* 235) is confronted by his own childhood memories, which give the reader better understanding of Desmond's preconceptions about home, and the reality of the present day state of the house he spent his childhood in.

Desmond's home is not the only domestic space elaborated on in the novel. Throughout the narrative, Desmond visits his father's house which used to be Desmond's home, and compares it to his wife's house. Since "the homes of our past set the ground for our very perceptions of attractiveness and ugliness" (Dovey, 37) and, by extension, set the standard of domestic life, the comparison draws Desmond to certain conclusions about his life both in childhood and at the present moment. While Desmond remembers his childhood home as a comfortable and welcoming place, he eventually realises what kind of difficulties and limitations his mother had to endure to keep the house the way it was. It took the presence of another woman, Desmond's first wife, for him to realise "what a limited, home-bound existence Mum had led for most of her life, living vicariously on the anecdotes her musician husband and scholarly son brought back from the wider world" (*Deaf Sentence* 262). The parallel between the insideness turned into constraint for Desmond's mother and the insideness of Fred's comfortable home that does not depend on her willingness to sacrifice her life for other people's convenience is further extended to motivate the difference between the ways Desmond and his father tend to their homes.

Even though Desmond is not exactly enthusiastic about participating in the chores, he understands the necessity to respect (even though somewhat unwillingly) his wife's right to not be limited to the inside space of the house. Meanwhile, his father's house is deteriorating after the death of Desmond's mother, which implies and illustrates her vital role in keeping order in the house.

> I shrink from sleeping in the sagging, lumpy and always slightly damp bed in the back bedroom which was my room as a boy, and sharing the cheerless bathroom and smelly toilet [...], and making my breakfast in the cramped kitchenette where

> everything is covered with a film of grease - the chairs, table, plates, cutlery, cups and saucers, toaster, saucepans, work surfaces, everything - from the daily precipitation of molecules of burned cooking fat. The house has never looked really clean since Mum died thirteen years ago, but it's gone steeply downhill since Irena, Dad's Polish home help, got sick and retired (*Deaf Sentence* 38-39)

If one were to extrapolate Desmond's experience of home on the society in general, it would be possible to say that the generation of Desmond's father established the role of a woman as defined by (if not limited to) the household and the needs of the men in the family. Desmond's generation seems to redefine the dichotomy of the outside belonging to men and the inside where women are imprisoned and set up a new standard for the presence and responsibility in domestic spaces.

The four novels at the centre of this analysis illustrate a variety of attitudes towards domestic space and a number of different approaches to the representation of women in association with home. It is a common denominator for the majority of the novels to be focalised through and express the opinions of the male main characters, who in many cases unknowingly perpetuate the stereotypical gendered dichotomy of the inside and outside, the domestic space and the rest of the world.

While the first analysed novel, *Ginger, You're Barmy*, represents and characterises the sole female character through her domestic space and does not grant her any agency, the situation changes in the following ones. The female characters in the other novels discussed are not bound to their domestic spaces, although the focalisers' tendency to associate women with the space of home is still present and often motivates the characters' actions and attitudes. While *Nice Work* has a female character as one of its protagonists, who is identified with the space of academia much more than with the domestic space (if at all), it characterises the character through the space of her home. The majority of the female characters of *Therapy* are not identified with the private spaces at all, but it is possible to assume that the reason for it is the fact that they do not represent the "domestic" type of relationships for the male protagonist. The last of the analysed novels, *Deaf Sentence*, pays attention to the balance of private and public and where the female characters stand in relation to the spaces of home. It introduces the shift in the attitudes towards women and their role in both private and public spheres of life among different generations of men, and illustrates this shift through the representation of male characters' opinions about house work and the balance of their involvement in it. Even though these issues are never central for the aforementioned novels, they play an important part in the construction of the narrative and representation of the characters. It is, however, evident that the attitudes towards the space of home and the relation of this space to the female characters are very often used as an instrument used to represent the male protagonists.

It is not unreasonable to say that, metaphorically, *Deaf Sentence* may be seen as an answer to *Ginger, You're Barmy* regarding the ideas they express about women and femininity. The shift in attitudes and expectations in regards of the issues brought up above may be understood as a dialogue between the past and the present of the perception of the domestic space and the roles of men and women in it.

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Male Irish Vocatives in Seán O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy*

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Abstract. In this paper I aim to look at how male vocatives are used in Seán O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy* through a multidisciplinary methodology that is Corpus Stylistics in which I study the linguistic features of the usage of vocatives in the literary context they appear. The depiction in these early 20th-century plays of Irish identity and Irish masculinity is represented through working-class male characters, providing thus, an identity that was familiar to the audiences of the period; however, the way in which male characters are addressed may also supply some information regarding how male characters are viewed in society, from being seen as powerful when addressed as 'captain' or 'sir', to feeling subjugated when addressed as 'boy' or 'child', amongst other examples.

Keywords: Irish identity; Masculinity; Corpus Stylistics; Vocatives.

1. Introduction

In opposition to the ideals of the Irish Literary Revival during the beginning of the 20th century, Irish playwright Seán O'Casey (1880-1964) astounded the audience at the Abbey theatre with his representation of working-class Dublin. O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy* resisted the ongoing tradition of portraying an idyllic rural Irish landscape or inspiring audiences to rebel and go to war. Irish men had been for a long time portrayed on stage by the stock character named as 'the stage Irishman'. A character created for English audiences who was likeable but also who would make a fool of oneself for the entertainment of the audience (Graves, 1981: 29). However, during the Irish Literary Revival, this clown character was stripped from his buffoonery and re-clothed in Celtic allegory, re-mythologising him once more (Singleton, 2001: 293). Despite O'Casey's contrariness to the representation of the mythological Irish identity at the beginning of the 20th century, as Hidalgo Tenorio (1996: 217) puts it, O'Casey created a micro-universe populated by anti-heroic characters, cowards, deceitful men and women desperate for an Ireland that would not take their loved ones away by dying defending an ideal led by dreamers. In a country where the ideal identity was represented by the heroic warrior Cúchulainn (see Meany 2006; Clarke, 2009), considered to be the greatest hero of the Celtic Mythology and the Irish equivalent of Achilles (McMahon, 2008: 77), Irishness was a complicated matter to achieve, more of a mythological than a realistic image (Meany, 2010) in which the stereotype of "hypermasculinity" and "the Gael" (Nandy, 1983: 50) was passed on from one generation to the other.

In this preliminary study I aim to analyse and present how masculinity and Irish identity is described through the use of male vocatives amongst all the characters in the *Dublin Trilogy*, that is, how male characters are addressed and how that conforms their identity in Irish society during a convoluted period. As will be shown later on, male characters may feel subjugated when addressed as little boys or on the contrary, may feel empowered when addressed by a military

rank, as could be 'captain' or 'sergeant'. For this study I will take on a multidisciplinary approach that will allow me to look for both the linguistic and the literary aspects of the use of male vocatives. This article will begin with a brief introductory note on Seán O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy*, Irishness, and masculinity, followed by the theoretical framework this study is based on, that is, Corpus Stylistics, and an overview on some studies made with vocatives. In section 3, I will briefly describe the methodology and the online toolkit used for this study, and in section 4 and 5 I will present the results, analysis, and conclusions, and how everything contributes to the depiction of Irishness and masculinity.

2. The Dublin Trilogy and Irishness

The *Dublin Trilogy* is composed by the following titles: *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). All set in Dublin during different periods of the 20th century, they show the lower characters of a city struggling with poverty and still carrying the scars and grief of a famine. Let us now have a very brief description of the plays: *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the first part of the *Dublin Trilogy*, takes place during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). In this play, Donal Davoren, a poet, lives in the tenement slums of Dublin and will be thought of being secret member of the IRA and an assassin. This will unravel when he and his roommate find a bag with Mills bombs, that is, hand grenades used by the British army, and Minnie Powell, an idealistic girl, helps them hide them and dies tragically shot by the British police. *Juno and the Paycock* takes place some years later and revolves around Juno's family, her good-for-nothing husband, who asks to be called 'captain,' although he was never at sea, her traumatised son, Johnny, and her daughter Mary who will try and marry an Englishman but will be later abandoned and pregnant. In this play, Juno's husband, 'Captain' Boyle and his friend Joxer are easy-going men who enjoy a leisure lifestyle while the rest work without a care in the world, while opposite to them, Johnny, after losing an arm in the War of Independence wonders constantly whether sacrificing an arm will be enough for the Irish army, or if they will ask of him to come back to the army and make the ultimate sacrifice: die for one's country. Finally, *The Plough and the Stars* takes the audience back to 1916, during the Easter Rising. In this play, a number of characters will behave scandalously when the rising began, especially a couple of men (Fluther and the Covey) who instead of going to the barricades to fight against the English, will go to the pub and try to get their way with a prostitute. This play became infamous and started a riot during its first performance in the Abbey Theatre due to the contraposition of a man addressing the crowds (inspired by Patrick Pearse, a revolutionary leader during the Easter Rising) and Rosie, the prostitute, complaining about how bad these meetings are for business.

O'Casey was highly criticised by his representation of Dublin's working-class, and as mentioned before, through the performance of these plays, O'Casey tried to represent the unheroic elements of the war. Not only is O'Casey portraying the working-class, but also how problematic Irish masculinity can be. O'Casey's way of picturing the pangs of the poor (Kiberd, 2009: 218) instead of describing the heroic deeds of the army was a way of discarding the patriotic arrogance of

men absorbed in the struggle for Irish independence based on useless sacrifices. His literary efforts insisted on opening up the definition of Irishness to incorporate groups not included by the Revitalists (Connell, 2014: 188). Irish identity from this point of view was not something to look for in the past that the Revitalists so hard tried to bring back, but in the future. Hence, by looking at these male characters' behaviour and fictionalised speech through a new lens, thus, it is possible to see how Irish masculinity and its identity was transformed on stage creating thus realistic societal behaviours in the characters' manner of speaking.

As will be shown later on when exemplifying the use of male vocatives in the plays, O'Casey represented a fictionalised Irish speech that would be recognisable for the audience, not only by hearing it, but also by reading it. The characters' speech has been kept as such in this study and I have emphasised in bold the male vocatives in the examples presented.

3. Male Vocatives and Corpus Stylistics

This preliminary study aims to link a linguistic and a literary approach in order to widen the scope of the results, so that there is both a quality and quantity element in the results of the same. Hence, from the field of digital humanities and Corpus Linguistics, Corpus Stylistics was coined. It can be described thus as an innovative tool that both uses the linguistic framework and analyses the individual qualities of texts through literary interpretation (see Semino & Short, 2004; Mahlberg, 2007; Semino, 2011; McIntyre & Walker, 2019; Montoro, 2019). There have been many studies that pay close attention to the linguistic features and the literary ones from a corpus as it offers to connect quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Mahlberg & McIntyre, 2011), and Toolan (2009: 23) realises how the clash between corpus linguistics and literary studies comes from the fact that corpus linguistics has paid attention to the typical, repeated occurrences but ignores the occasional exception and literary linguistics combines not only the different elements in a text but also allows for a closer look at masculinity, for instance, or the indexicality of sociocultural and socioeconomic elements through language.

Hence, the aspect I will look at in this paper will be the use of vocatives in fictionalised conversations as they may show how male characters are perceived in Irish society by the way in which they are addressed. There have been several studies regarding terms of address and vocatives (see Chao, 1956; Brown & Ford, 1961; McIntire, 1972; Zwicky, 1974; Rubin, 1981; Braun, 1988), and several ways of distinguishing the different types of vocatives without coming to a consensus. Brown & Ford (1961) for instance, in their analysis of American English, consider the principal choice of the use of vocatives to be first name and title with first name, although these terms of address may develop if the relationship amongst the speakers develop, too, into that of friendship and familiarity. Zwicky (1974) distinguishes between *call vocatives* when the addressee wants the addresser's attention and *address vocatives* when the addressee maintains and emphasises the relationship with the addressee. Studies regarding the use of vocatives in conversation (see Wilson & Zeitlin, 1995; McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2003; Clancy,

2015) consider that the use of vocatives are not only associated with establishing relationships amongst the speakers but also with marking the speakers' discourse boundaries, thus supporting the idea that the use of one or another type of term of address as a vocative may imply a connotation in the delivery of the utterance whether it is used for topic-changing purposes, interruptions, or maintaining communication. What's more, Clancy (2015: 233) observes how in the instances in which there seems to be an "asymmetrical" relationship amongst the speakers, the use of vocatives is strong in order to mitigate or soften the possible conflict arising in a conversation regardless of whether the speakers are father and son, friends, or enemies.

The study of vocatives and address forms are closely linked because they tell us about the way language is used in a particular community and how they organise social relationships (Fasold, 1990: 39), thus, Leech (1999) distinguishes between all the different terms of address that can be used amongst speakers, that is, the devices used by the speaker of an utterance to refer to the addressee, and vocatives which are the use of one particular type of address in a conversation. Leech (1999: 109-113) thus, identified several sematic categories that indicate familiar and close relationship and also those which show distant and respectful ones: endearments (*baby*, *love*), family terms (*mommy*, *daddy*), familiarisers (*man*, *buddy*), familiarised first names (shortened versions of first names or with the pet suffix -y/-ie, for instance *Jackie*), first names in full (*Jaqueline*), title and surname (*Mr. Smith*), honorifics (*sir*, *madam*), and others (*boy*, *you*, *everyone*). A combination of these terms of address as well as the distinction of conversational vocatives made by McCarthy & O'Keeffe (2003) will be used for the analysis of the Dublin Trilogy corpus. In their analysis of vocatives in casual conversation and radio phone calls, McCarthy & O'Keeffe (2003: 160) distinguish six types of vocatives:

i. Relational: McCarthy & O'Keeffe (2003: 160) agree on the fact that this category is the most frequent one in a set of conversations as it aims to maintain and/or establish social relations amongst speakers rather than transmit information or exchange goods or services. This category also includes compliments, small talk, greetings, offers, and thanks.
ii. Topic management: This category incorporates any instance of the use of vocatives that "expand, shift, change or close the topic" (McCarthy& O'Keeffe, 2003: 162). This category is also very frequent in conversations.
iii. Badinage: In this category the speakers are known to make use of humour, irony, and general banter, as well as light-hearted jokes in a camaraderie environment.
iv. Mitigators: This category includes any instance in which there is a challenge or an attempt at a conflicting situation that could offend or be sensitive towards the addressee.
v. Turn management: McCarthy & O'Keeffe (2003: 165) consider this category to be an infrequent category in their study; however, as will be shown in section 4, in the Dublin Trilogy corpus is the third most frequent category due to the fact that I have included imperatives and commands in this category as they usually indicate in the play that there is an interruption happening. Hence, this category includes interruptions,

imperatives, and addressee identification when there are more than two speakers.

vi. Summons: this category encompasses all the instances in which the addresser calls the addressee to come or to give attention.

Within these categories, I have also divided the vocatives found in the Dublin Trilogy Corpus by creating five different subdivisions based on Leech's model (1999) and based on the fact that the vocatives that are looked at are addressed at male characters:

i. Proper names: this subcategory incorporates characters' names including surnames, honorifics, and last names. This is the most frequent category in the Dublin Trilogy Corpus.
ii. Nicknames: in this subdivision I include any nickname the male character may have, as well as pet names, e.g. 'Johnny' in *Juno and the Paycock* or 'Dolphie' instead of 'Adolphus' in *The Shadow of a Gunman*.
iii. Male nouns: this category comprises all the different nouns that are used to address male characters. This category alongside *nicknames* are equal in frequency, however, the usage of male nouns is more varied, e.g. 'boy,' 'man,' 'captain,' 'lad,' 'fella,' 'sir,' or 'mister'.
iv. Insults: In this subcategory I include any type of noun and adjective that is addressed to male characters whether they are actually expletives or used as an insult, e.g. 'lowser' or y'oul' reprobate'.
v. Endearments: this subcategory encompasses terms that show affection toward the male character the vocative is addressed to. This subdivision, as well as *insults*, is not highly frequent. The few endearments found include 'duckey,' 'dear,' or 'child'.

As will be seen, all these categories and subdivisions play a role in the way male characters are viewed by the audience and how they are somehow representative of how Irish masculinity is portrayed by Irish authors at the beginning of the 20th century. In the following section I will present the methodology, the creation of the corpus, and the digital software used for the analysis of the *Dublin Trilogy* plays.

4. Methodology

4.1. The corpus

The Dublin Trilogy Corpus was created for this preliminary study as a way to look closely at specific features of the male characters' speech, in this case, the use of male vocatives. Following the different methodologies building a corpus can have (see Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Wynne, 2005; Reppen, 2010; Nelson, 2010), I retrieved the texts from Hickey's Corpus of Irish English (2003), a public domain collection of Irish-English written texts that includes theatre, poetry, and prose from the 12th up to the 20th century. After that, the texts were checked with a printed version (O'Casey, 1998) and uploaded to the software *Sketch Engine*, which will be dealt with in the following section. Despite corpora being as big as millions of words (see the British National Corpus (BNC) with 100 million of

words https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/), The Dublin Trilogy Corpus is composed by 64,922 words which would allow for a closer look at specific research features and to a certain extent, to document adequately the researched linguistic aspect regarding male vocatives.

4.2. Sketch Engine and Corpus Query Language (CQL)

In order to carry out the corpus stylistics analysis in this paper, I will use the corpus tool software Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004). Although when first designed the purpose of Sketch Engine was mainly lexicographic, by 2014 the software included computational linguistics, sociolinguistics, language teaching, and a wide variety of uses. Amongst all the different research aspects that Sketch Engine provides the user with, the one I am going to use and present here is the use of concordances through CQL, that is, Corpus Query Language. Concordances, also known as KWIC (Key Word in Context), in the field of digital humanities is considered one of the basic features when analysing corpora (see Biber, 1990; Sinclair, 1991; Evison, 2010; Tribble, 2010). It allows the user to find specific words or phrases, providing thus possible hypotheses and the ability to test them when analysing a corpus. Sketch Engine displays the concordance lines as shown in figure 1 below, and allows the user to modify the search, to get a random sample, to order the samples alphabetically, or to click on any example and see the result in context. When searching for a word or a specific sentence in a corpus, Sketch Engine allows the analyst to search for it using the basic display or the advanced one. The latter is the one that provides the user with the possibility of searching concordances through Corpus Query Language.

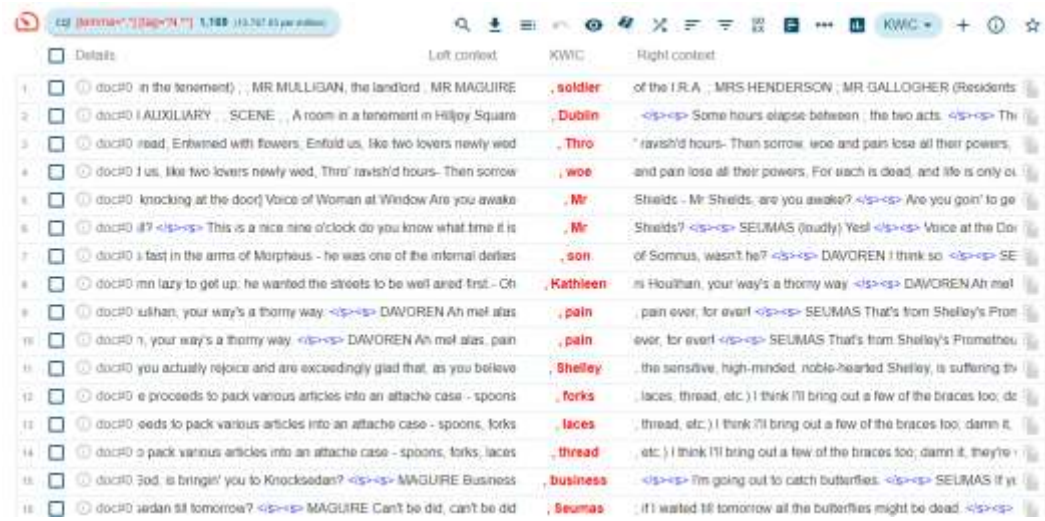


Figure 1. Display of concordance lines in Sketch Engine.

CQL is a code used in Sketch Engine which helps search for complex grammatical or lexical models or to search for criteria which cannot be set using the standard user interface. CQL has made available the search of patterns within the Dublin Trilogy Corpus in a specific way so that I started the line of research from a general

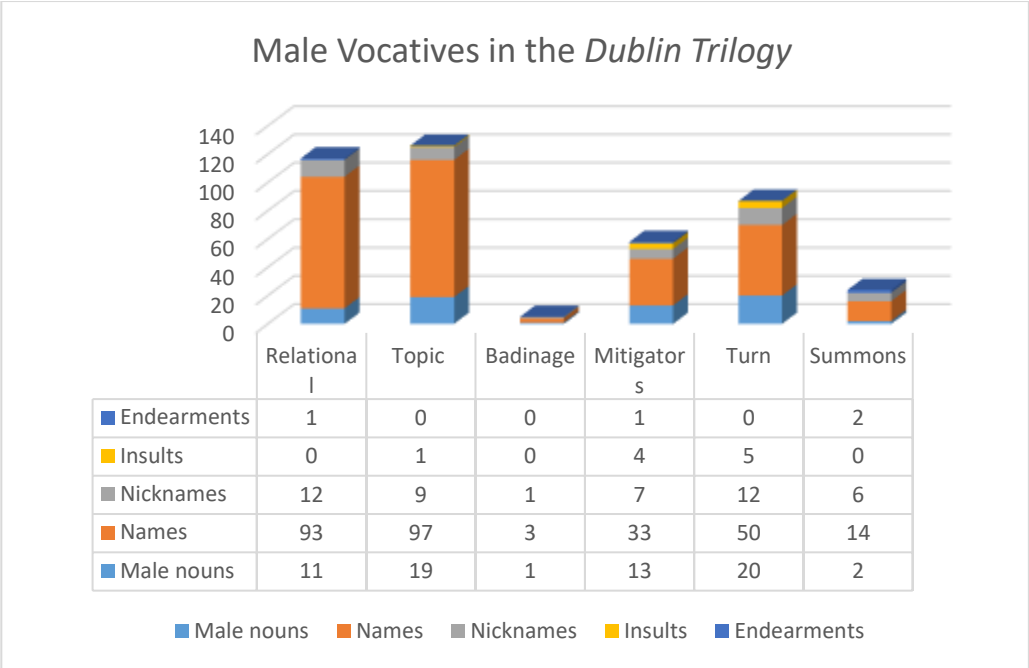
view to a more specific one. Hence, using the model Moreton (2015) proposes I have searched for vocatives in my corpus using the following CQL formulas:

CQL1. [lemma=","] [tag="N.*"]
CQL2. [lemma=","] [tag="J.*"] [tag="N.*"]
CQL3. [lemma=","] [tag="PP.?"] [tag="N.*"]
CQL4. [lemma=","] [tag="PP.?"] [tag="J.*"] [tag="N.*"]

As has been mentioned before, and as how the queries above show, this study followed a general-to-specific approach in terms of vocatives searched. In CQL1 what I looked for were every instance in which there was a comma followed by a noun with the most numerous result of 1,169 instances which I had then to scan and classify to make sure the results provided by the query were indeed, vocatives. Some of these results, although vocatives were not included due to the fact that they were female vocatives ('Rosie,' 'lass,' etc.), interjections such as 'God', or 'Oh my God', or enumerations in a conversation. CQL2 and CQL3 search for instances where there is a comma, an adjective (J.*) or a pronoun (PP.?), and a noun (N.*) providing results such as 'me bucko,' 'my husband,' or 'little bum'. CQL2 presented 57 results and CQL3 48 results which were then scanned and classified as I am going to present later in the findings section. CQL4, then, combined all four searches in that I searched for every instance in which there was a comma followed by a pronoun, then an adjective, and then a noun which displayed 12 instances such as 'me young Covey'. Using this methodology then I proceeded to classify and analyse the results both quantitatively and qualitatively in the following section.

5. Results and Analysis

As has been mentioned before in section 2, I have used the vocative model presented by McCarthy & O'Keeffe (2003) for the division of the Dublin Trilogy's vocatives as well as my own division of male vocatives based on Leech's (1999: 109-113) address forms. As can be seen in figure 2 below, the topic management category is the most frequent one in terms of vocative usage with a total of 126 instances, that is, 30,2% of the total, followed closely by the relational category with 117 instances, 28,1%. Then, the turn category with 87 instances, with a 20,8% of the total results; mitigators is the next most frequent category with 58 instances and a 13,9%; summons with 24 instances and a 5,8%, and finally badinage with 5 instances and a 1,2% of the total results.



	Relational	Topic	Badinage	Mitigators	Turn	Summons
Endearments	1	0	0	1	0	2
Insults	0	1	0	4	5	0
Nicknames	12	9	1	7	12	6
Names	93	97	3	33	50	14
Male nouns	11	19	1	13	20	2

Figure 2. General view of Male Vocatives in the *Dublin Trilogy*.

These results could initially show how, in the plays, due to the conflicting period they are depicting, there are a lot of topic management vocatives so that the audience follows the thread of the conversation, but also there are numerous turn-taking situations in which characters interrupt each other, or use vocatives in order to make sure the audience knows to whom the remark is addressed. Then, due to the creation of conflict in the development of the plays, there are mitigators and summons to introduce the different characters in the scenes. Last but not least, because of the dramatic nature of the plays, there does not seem to be a lot of badinage addresses amongst male characters, mainly because there does not seem to be a lot of fraternity amongst them. The usage of male vocatives, especially male nouns in an indirect way or insults in a more direct way, position the addressee in one of the two ends of the dominance spectrum: the speaker can position the addressee in the subordinating end of the spectrum by calling them 'child,' or 'boy,' or heighten their position by addressing the male character as 'captain' or 'sergeant'.

Let us now look at each of the categories defined by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) closely. In figures 3-8 I present the percentages of each vocative category and the male address forms in the Dublin Trilogy Corpus. Overall, it seems that the most frequent term of address is that of names, from proper names to surnames, including instances in which honorifics like 'Mr.' and the surname are used. Male nouns like 'daddy,' 'father,' 'boys,' 'man,' or 'captain,' alongside nickname forms from the characters' original names like 'Jim,' instead of 'James,' 'Dolphie,' instead of 'Adolphus, 'Willie,' or 'Johnny,' are the next two most frequent categories, however, they are not always used equally in the different vocative categories. Finally, subcategories like endearments or insults are of little

frequency, however, insults are more frequent than endearments, which could mean how characters in the play tend to insult men more than provide compliments, as a way of creating conflict.

In the relational category, shown in figure 3, it is possible to see how names conform the 80% of the instances in the Dublin Trilogy Corpus. As in the analysis carried out by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003), this category is usually the most frequent one as it is used as an establishment for a conversation or to exchange meaningless utterances. It is also a large category due to the fact that it includes greetings, apologies, and compliments. The instances with proper names are used to fulfil the functions mentioned before and there is a tendency in the usage of 'Mr', especially in *Juno and the Paycock*, to use it as an honorific that could be equal to a lord, see for instance in *Juno and the Paycock*, example (1) below, Mr. Bentham is an Englishman wooing Juno's daughter and he gets the fairest of treatments from Juno, Mrs. Boyle:

(1) MRS BOYLE [fussing round] Come in, Mr. Bentham; sit down, Mr. Bentham, in this chair; it's more comfortabler than that, Mr. Bentham.

As a way to enhance the addressee, the male nouns uttered in the relational category are also used in a similar fashion: the addresser uses terms like 'captain,' 'sir,' or 'sergeant,' as a sign of respect, as if the addresser wants to fall in good graces with the addressee. See for instance example (2) from *Juno and the Paycock* and example (3) from *The Plough and the Stars*:

(2) JOXER Them sentiments does you credit, **Cap**; I don't like to say anything as between man an' wife, but I say as a butty, as a butty, Captain, that you've stuck it too long, an' that it's about time you showed a little spunk.

(3) WOMAN (to Peter) Wasn't it an awful thing for me to leave my friend's house? Wasn't it an idiotic thing to do?... I haven't the slightest idea where I am... You have a kind face, **sir**. Could you possibly come and pilot me in the direction of Wrathmines?
PETER (indignantly) D'ye think I'm goin' to risk me life trottin' in front of you?

In example (2), Joxer is complimenting Mr. Boyle for standing up to his wife Juno, and uses repeatedly 'captain,' although Mr. Boyle has never been one. In example (3), amid the Easter Rising riots and looting, a woman in distress asks Peter for help by addressing him as 'sir,' however, in other circumstances, this could have helped into convincing him, but not when there is chaos outside. Peter, alongside the Covey, went straight to the pub when the rising began, and they are not going to risk their lives by trying to be heroes.

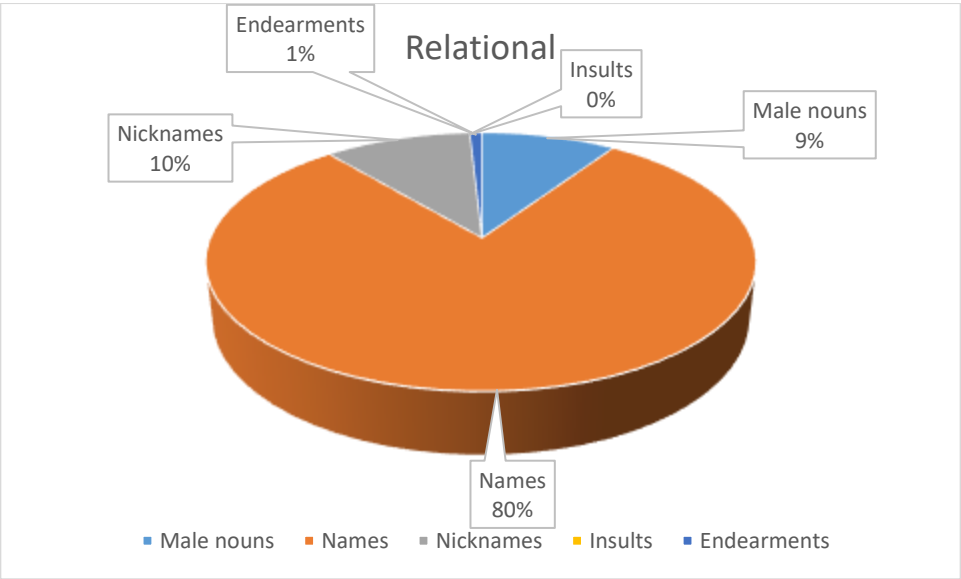


Figure 3. Relational vocatives.

Regarding the vocatives in the topic management category, shown in figure 4 below, the names subdivision covers the 77% of the total in this category and in this case the usage of male nouns as a way of establishing a position in society is more frequent than in the previous one with a 15% occurrence. In this subdivision there are more instances of male nouns such as 'comrade,' 'da,' 'man,' 'mister,' or 'bucko'. All these different uses of male nouns as vocatives in the topic management category could further indicate how they establish a social distinction amongst the speakers and addressees. It is also shown how there are insults in this category which provide a point of conflict in the plays whereas the usage of nicknames or endearments play a stronger role in the following categories. Regarding the usage of the male nouns, see for instance in example (4) how 'comrade' is used in *The Plough and the Stars* by the addresser as a mean to present himself both as an equal and as morally superior because of his knowledge and how 'me bucko' is used in example (5) by Mrs. Madigan in *Juno and the Paycock* as an indirect way to show how she has some power over Boyle, despite being more or less the same age, but by addressing him with a term used for younger men, she seems to be the one in charge.

(4) THE COVEY Fight for your counthry! Did y'ever read, **comrade**, Jenersky's Thesis on the Origin, Development, an' Consolidation of th' Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat?

(5) MRS MADIGAN I'm goin' to th' pawn to get me three quid five shillins; I'll brin' you th' ticket, an' then you can do what you like, **me bucko**.

BOYLE You can't touch that, you can't touch that! It's not my property, an' it's not ped for yet!

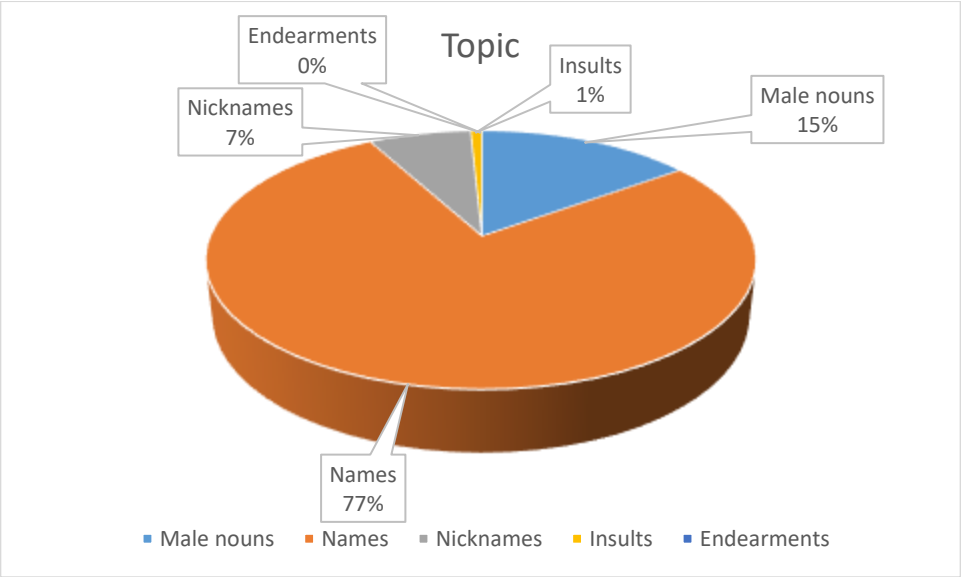


Figure 4. Topic management vocatives.

In the badinage category, there is a significant lack of results in which there is some sort of banter. Although the percentages in figure 5 show how the subdivision of names is a 60% of the total use of badinage vocatives, this equals to three instances in the Dublin Trilogy Corpus. Similarly, the male noun and the nickname category conform a 20% of the corpus with only one example in each category. It is interesting to see how despite the conflict existing in the plotlines of the plays of the *Dublin Trilogy*, there is more attention paid to the power struggle by using insults, mitigators, interruptions, and imperatives as is going to be shown through the categories of turn and mitigators, than through the use of comedy in the badinage category. In example (6) I present the usage of an honorific as is 'Mr.,' followed by the ironic remark of the addresser, in which it is clear how Nora feels about Fluther in *The Plough and the Stars*:

(6) NORA Now, let it end at that, for God's sake; Jack'll be in any minute, an' I'm not goin' to have th' quiet of his evenin' tossed about in an everlastin' uproar between you an' Uncle Pether. (To Fluther) Well, did you manage to settle th' lock, yet, **Mr. Good**?

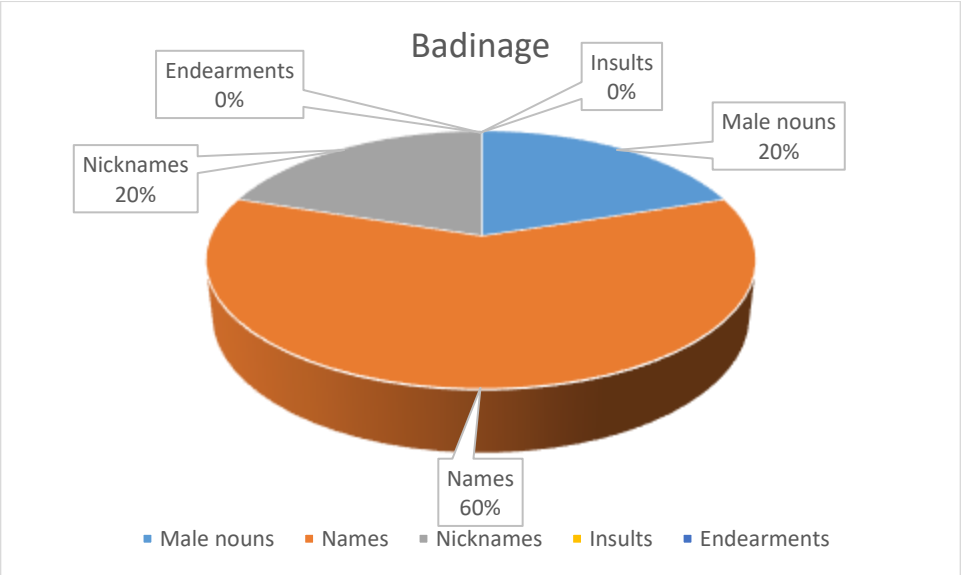


Figure 5. Badinage vocatives.

In the category of mitigators, as can be seen from figure 6 below, there is more variety when it comes to the use of vocatives. This category shows all the examples in which there is a conflict or a challenge, and the speakers may infuse the conflict or may try to subdue it. The subcategory of names as vocatives is still the most frequent one with a 57%, but significantly less frequent than in the topic management or in the relational categories. In this subdivision there is still the use of proper names and honorifics but also, there are four instances in *The Plough and the Stars* in which the addressee, Covey, is referred to as 'young,' and the addresser, Peter, wants to portray himself as having the upper hand, as shown in examples (7) and (8) in which Peter repeatedly insists to Covey not to make him lose his temper, or else:

(7) PETER (flinging the dungarees violently on the floor) You're not goin' to make me lose me temper, **me young Covey**.
(8) THE COVEY She knew who she was givin' it to, maybe.
PETER (hotly to the Covey) Now, I'm givin' you fair warnin', **me young Covey**, to quit firin' your jibes an' jeers at me...

The usage of male nouns has a 22% and in this category it is possible to find, similarly as in the topic management one, an array of different vocatives: 'captain,' 'comrade,' 'boys,' 'man,' and 'sir'. See how the instance in which 'boys' is used, as a way to infantilise the addressees in example (9), and 'man' is used, as an equal term of address amongst men in example (19):

(9) MRS GOGAN Oh, don't start a fight, **boys**, for God's sake; I was only sayin' what a nice costume it is--nicer than th' kilts, for, God forgive me, I always think th' kilts is hardly decent.
(10) JERRY Let me kiss your hand, your little, tiny, white hand!
BOYLE Your little, tiny, white hand--are you takin' leave o' your senses, **man**?

The nicknames used in the mitigating category are usually used by a third party who tries to soften the conflict by addressing one of the other male characters with a 'Johnny,' or a 'Willie,' so that the nerves become calmer. Because this is a category full of conflict, it is not surprising to see how there are a number of insults that appear in this section with a 7%. These insults go from chastised ones such as 'little bum,' to very colourful ones such as: 'you louse,' 'you lowser,' or 'you wurum'. It is interesting to see as well how these expletives are usually presented with the pronoun 'you', as if to intensify the insult by specifying to whom is referred.

The endearments subdivision with a 2% shows an endearment that could have been classified as male noun, but because the neutrality of the term it was classified as an endearment in which a mother consoles her young-adult son after a nightmare, see example (11):

(11) JOHNNY [after taking some drink] I seen him.... [...] he turned an' looked at me ... an' I seen the wouns bleedin' in his breast.... Oh, why did he look at me like that? ... it wasn't my fault that he was done in.... Mother o' God, keep him away from me!
MRS BOYLE There, there, **child**, you've imagined it all.

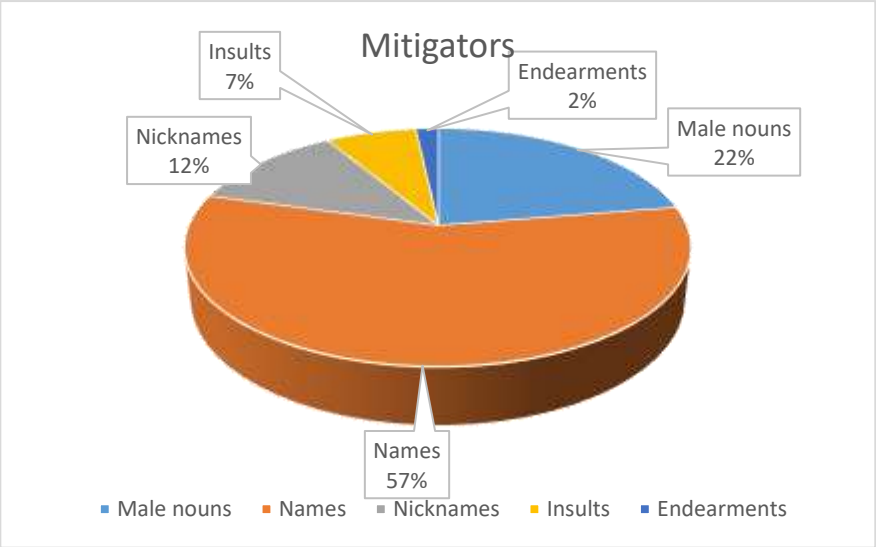


Figure 6. Mitigator vocatives.

In the category of turn topic, as can be seen from figure 7 below, the subdivision which contains proper and last names occupies a 57% of the turn total, as in the previous category. However, there are no endearments in this section, providing thus more male nouns with a 23% and nicknames with a 14% but only 6% in insults. In this category, as has been mentioned before, most of the instances in which vocatives are used are in relation to interruptions, addressing a third person, or imperatives and commands. Even honorifics are also used in commands by either male or female characters perhaps as a way to soften the interaction as in example (12) where in *The Shadow of a Gunman*, Mr. Grigson

needs to specify who is addressing in the room as there are more than two people, therefore interrupting his speech so as not to cause offense:

(12) GRIGSON (stumbling towards Davoren and holding out his hand) DAVOREN! He's a man. [...] I don't know what you are or what you think, but you're a man, an not like some of the goughers in this house, that ud hang you. Not referrin ' to you, **Mr Shields**.

In the use of male nouns regarding the turn taking category, the male nouns I have mentioned before are still in use here with one more addition: 'mate'. There is still the use of 'captain,' 'man,' and 'father,' alongside two instances of 'mate:' one in *The Shadow of a Gunman* and another one in *The Plough and the Stars*. Interestingly enough, in both cases, despite the British soldiers being around, it is Irish men who utter the vocative and use a command, and as a way of finishing up the conversation, see for instance how Fluther is tired of the Covey lecturing him and decides to stop the blabbering by saying: "Don't be comradin' me, mate," which may sound even more insulting and categorical by addressing someone with a vocative that connotes a certain superiority by the cultural implications of the same.

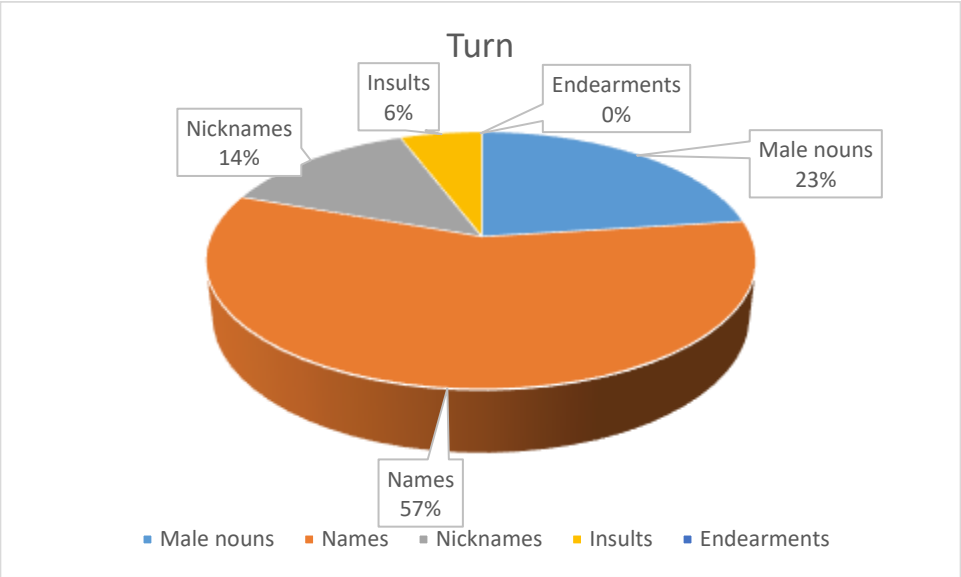


Figure 7. Turn management vocatives.

In terms of nicknames usage, there seems to be a way of using them to diminish the impact a command may have on the addressee and they even may have an endearment tagged along, as in *The Plough and the Stars* when Rosie, a prostitute sheltering in a pub during the Easter Rising, asks for a pint although she owes the barman money, and thus she softens the delivery of the nonchalant order:

(13) ROSIE (to Barman) Divil a use i' havin' a thrim little leg in a night like this; things was never worse... Give us a half till tomorrow, **Tom, duckey**.

Regarding insults, there are some instances in which, again, the formula of using the pronoun 'you' as an emphasiser of the insult is used but there is also the case

of a British corporal in *The Plough and the Stars* in which he answers a question posed by the Covey as such:

(14) CORPORAL STODDART Ow, cheese it, **Paddy**, cheese it!

Therefore, insulting the addressee by using an ethnic slur for Irish men, and ordering through a command to the addressee to stop his blabbering, something that the Covey has been asked to do multiple times so far, shows how vocatives may carry an established identity when used. Other insults in this category include: 'y'oul' reprobate' and 'you blighter'.

The next and last category that will be analysed here is the one concerning summoning vocatives. As can be seen in figure 8 below, the use of names to summon male characters into the scene or into attention still conforms the majority of the total in this category with a 59%; however, it is interesting to see how for the first time, the use of endearments is slightly higher than in the previous categories, with an 8%, just like the use of male nouns.

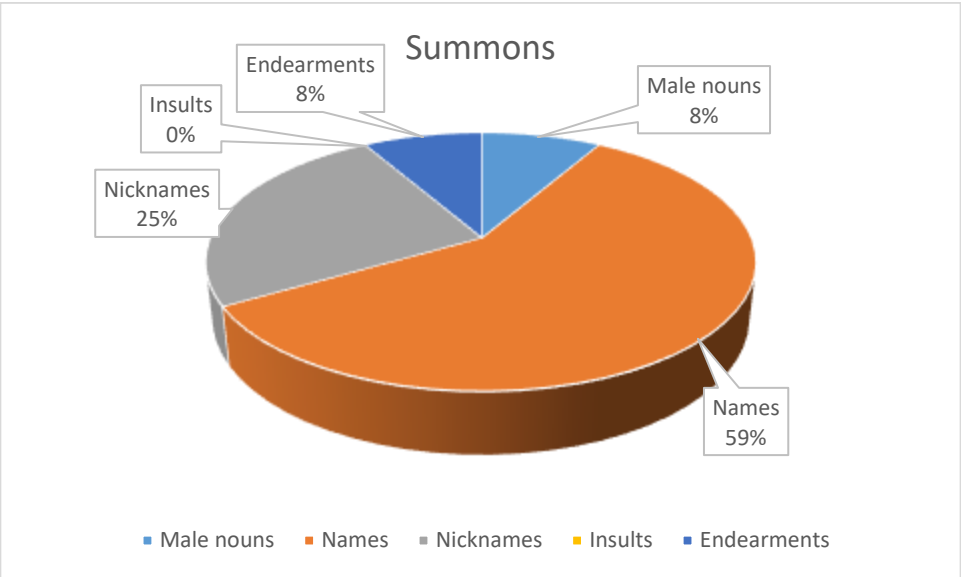


Figure 8. Summon vocatives.

Regarding nicknames, which is the second most frequent subdivision in the summoning category, as it has been happening before, the use of nicknames to order around, or to summon other characters work as a way of smoothing the harsh way of calling out to someone, nevertheless, in some cases, the male character is addressed as such because their nickname is the only term of address presented for him and has never changed since he was a boy, as is the case of Juno's son, Johnny, in *Juno and the Paycock* in example (15). Other instances show the use of nicknames as a way to convince the addressee to do something, as in *The Shadow of a Gunman* in example (16), in which the vocative is also accompanied by an endearment in order to strengthen the petition while at the same time, making it sound sweet:

(15) MRS BOYLE [calling] **Johnny, Johnny**, come out here for minute.

(16) MRS GRIGSON (imploringly) Come on downstairs, **Dolphie, dear**; sure there's not one in the house ud say a word to you.

As mentioned before, both the usage of male nouns and endearments conform an 8% of the percentage regarding vocative summons, and in both categories, apart from one case of 'boys,' used in *The Plough and the Stars* by Fluther to address the other card-players in a round, it is Nora, in the same play mentioned above, who uses a number of terms of address that are summoning. Nora addresses and summons her husband Jack from the barricades during the Easter Rising as 'my husband,' 'my sweetheart,' or 'my lover', thus being the first character to openly address a man with a possessive pronoun, which at points embarrasses Jack in front of other men. This shows, to a certain extent, how endearments, and their lack thereof, conforms a society in which there are a lot of ways of addressing men in the power struggle, but not in a tender context, creating thus expectations for Irish men to create an identity that fills the role of a strong male leader, especially in the context of the beginning of the 20th century, when Ireland was in turmoil and retrieving heroic images such as the aforementioned legendary Cúchulainn.

6. Conclusion

In an attempt to add another layer to the analysis of how gender and identity are bonded with language, this preliminary study has aimed at compiling and presenting the initial results of the usage of male vocatives in Seán O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy* by creating a corpus of the three plays and compiling them in the corpus linguistics software Sketch Engine. Through a multidisciplinary methodology in which linguistics and literature are mixed, I presented the division of vocatives, as done in McCarthy & O'Keeffe's (2003) study of conversational vocatives, as well as adding a second division in which the vocatives were classified from the search done through CQL into five subcategories: names, male nouns, nicknames, insults, and endearments. In this way, I was able to present to what extent vocatives are used in certain contexts as a way of creating a conflict, control, subdue, diminish, or heighten the addressee. In the same manner, these vocatives and the context they are taken from (beginning of 20th-century Dublin, in the middle of chaotic times) provide a window to see the other side of the Irish Literary Revival and its mythological creation of an Irish hero who willingly sacrifices himself for his country showing thus how the lack of endearments addressed at men but the numerous honorifics and male nouns provide an identity space for Irish men to fill with manly behaviour and language.

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Stijn Praet and Anna Kérchy, eds. *The Fairy-Tale Vanguard: Literary Self-Consciousness in a Marvelous Genre*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.
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Even though fairy-tales have enjoyed a largely unblemished popularity for centuries, they are often labelled as literature for children only and, as a consequence, they are sometimes deemed unworthy of serious critical attention. In more recent times, however, the genre has become the subject of increasing debate among scholars, and a variety of new approaches have emerged for its study. One such approach is presented in *The Fairy-Tale Vanguard: Literary Self-Consciousness in a Marvelous Genre*, edited by Stijn Praet and Anna Kérchy, a book that features an exciting selection of essays on the hitherto unexplored metaliterary aspects of the fairy-tale genre.

The collection begins with Praet's introduction, which lays a solid theoretical foundation for the following chapters. By briefly recounting a scene from Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books*—an allegorical account of library books personified and pitted against one another to fight out the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns—Praet reminds us that metafictional devices were utilised long before the advent of postmodernism. The fairy-tale has lent itself especially well for literary self-reflection, which he attributes to two factors: first, the authors' awareness of the genre's marginalised status and their attempt at defending the artistic value of their work by engaging in peritextual discourse; second, the genre's formal characteristics that leave plenty of room for literary experimentation. Praet concludes that this self-referential tendency has been conspicuously present in fairy-tales since the early days of the genre, and the essays in the rest of the volume, focusing on texts from the seventeenth century to the present day, provide ample evidence for this claim.

The book contains twelve studies organised into two parts. The first part, titled "Metaliterary Reflections," opens with two chapters on early fairy-tale advocates from seventeenth-century France. Sophie Raynard analyses peritextual pieces from the writings of Mademoiselle Lhéritier, Madame d'Aulnoy, and Madame de Murat, showing that the aristocratic trio eagerly advertised the budding genre to the elite as modern literature worthy of recognition and praise. Similarly addressing an elite audience (more precisely the young Bourbon princess), Charles Perrault's "The Beauty Sleeping in the Wood" can be viewed as an experimental reworking of Apulieus's *The Golden Ass* and, as Ute Heidmann argues, familiarity with the latter is necessary to decipher the hidden message about the dangers of courtly life in the former. Kérchy's contribution takes us to Victorian Britain and offers an insightful commentary on how imaginative agency

is celebrated in Lewis Carroll's Alice books. Empowered by her fantasising capabilities, the titular character can even turn into an author herself, which Kérchy sees as a forerunner of postmodernist metaperspectivism. Jessica Tiffin examines how the short fiction of E. Nesbit, another remarkable British writer of juvenile literature, reflects on the archaic conventions of the fairy-tale by playfully questioning the relevance of the genre in the light of the social and technological developments of the Edwardian age. Björn Sundmark goes through all of Pär Lagerkvist's eleven *Evil Fairy Tales*, proposing to read them as the practical demonstration of the Swedish avant-gardist's artistic manifesto declared in his *Literary and Pictorial Art: On the Decline of Modern Literature—On the Vitality of Modern Art*. Emeline Morin's essay concludes part one, in which she compares two postmodern rewritings of Grimms' classics, *The Brave Little Tailor* by the French Eric Chevillard and *Briar Rose* by the American Robert Coover, and finds that both of them employ a self-reflexive strategy to challenge generic norms, though she also highlights the differences that result from the distinct cultural contexts in which they were conceived. These six chapters do a great job underlining the metafictional dimension of fairy-tales and the fact that they gather their primary sources from four different centuries clearly supports the thesis posited in the introduction.

The second part, "Intergeneric, Stylistic and Linguistic Experimentations," begins with Richard van Leeuwen's account detailing the impact of the *Thousand and One Nights* on European literature in general and on French fairy-tales in particular. Identifying the narrative cycle's generic eccentricity as the main reason for its immense success among Europeans, van Leeuwen investigates the influence of the Arabic tales in three stories by Jean-Paul Bignon, Jacques Cazotte, and Jean Potocki. Helene Høyrup discusses the innovative aspects of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy-tales, placing emphasis on the Danish author's unique blend of colloquial and literary language, as well as his narrative technique of addressing children and adults at the same time. Daniel Gicu's chapter traces the role of fairy-tales in the formation of Romanian national literature in the nineteenth century through the work of Arthur and Albert Schott, Nicolae Filimon, and Petre Ispirescu. Gicu also points out the paradoxical nature of the project: though these collections were meant to be authentic, the stories were carefully edited in order to establish a language and style that is distinctly Romanian. Maria Casado Villanueva's analysis focuses on the relationship between the fairy-tale and the Modernist short story, contending that fairy-tales can be an ideal resource for Modernists in their quest to challenge the reader's expectations. To illustrate this, she breaks down how the Cinderella-motif is appropriated in D. H. Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" and "Catherine Mansfield's "The Tiredness of Rosabel." Michelle Ryan-Sautour elaborates on Rikki Ducornet's peculiar fiction that draws on the traditions of the fairy-tale, nonsense, and surrealism, noting that the compact short stories in *The Complete Butcher's Tales* and *The One Marvelous Thing* evoke a strong sense of wonder in the reader through the author's uncommon use of language and orthography. In the final chapter, Willem de Blécourt defends *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*, Tommy Wirkola's 2013 fairy-tale adaptation, stating that the film, in spite of its overwhelmingly negative reception from critics, should be a compelling watch for those with a scholarly interest in the fairy-tale tradition. The chapters in this

section are less preoccupied with the self-reflexive facet of the genre, as they rather concentrate on the fairy-tale's inclination to play around with literary conventions. In this regard, the main objective of part two is to shed more light on the second contributing factor identified by Praet in connection with the volume's main theoretical assumption.

The merit of the volume is further enhanced by some additional material. Besides the aforementioned chapters, each part includes a short overview of the contents of its respective section. These are important structural units, since they not only function as cohesive forces within the book, but also aim to reflect on the two concepts that constitute its title. The fairy-tale, as Ruth B. Bottigheimer argues, has undeniably permeated our culture for a long time, yet it still does not have a universally accepted definition, which allows it to cross borders with various other genres, as some of the contributions in the book set out to show us. While the definitions may vary, the fairy-tale canon remains largely constant. According to Elizabeth Wanning Harries, this is one of the major weaknesses of current fairy-tale scholarship, and a truly vanguardist approach should seek to extend the scope of investigation beyond the usual suspects of our Western tradition. Aware of the challenges of such an undertaking, she gives due credit to the editors for taking a step in the right direction and making room for studies on some lesser-discussed figures. Finally, the collection is rounded out by an interview with Ducornet, nicely complementing chapter eleven dealing with her fiction. The interview provides a fascinating insight into the author's creative influences, her writing process, and her view on the role of wonder in everyday life.

Overall, *The Fairy-Tale Vanguard* is a highly satisfactory collection that offers a fresh take on fairy-tale criticism. It is by no means an exhaustive inquiry into the genre's self-reflexive qualities, but that is perfectly understandable, because such a project, given the vast size of the corpus, would exceed the confines of a single volume. Instead, the book should be treated as an ideal starting point for further research, introducing a new way of looking at the subject matter and inviting academics to add to and extend on its original postulation. The generally well-structured chapters can be individually relevant to those interested in the specific topics covered in them, but this collection is best read as a convincing whole. All things considered, *The Fairy-Tale Vanguard* will surely be a welcome addition to any fairy-tale enthusiast's library.

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