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Literary Doubling in Self-Conscious Fiction: H.D., Anaïs Nin,
Ann Quin, Brigid Brophy and Kathy Acker

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Prague, 8th January 2018

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům. / I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Abstract

The thesis explores five twentieth-century female authors, who incorporate the phenomenon of literary doubling in their novels: H.D., Anaïs Nin, Ann Quin, Brigid Brophy and Kathy Acker. They can be divided into three groups.

The first group is represented by H.D. and Nin, writing in the first half of the twentieth century. They are modernists whose autobiographic fiction is influenced by the developments of psychoanalysis. While psychoanalysis is a continuous source of inspiration for them, they begin noticing its elements of repression and chauvinism.

The second group consists of Quin and Brophy, whose fiction directly reflects the changes that were happening on the feminist front. Their creative writing openly challenges and rejects the patriarchal structures that constrain it.

Acker, as a representative of the third generation, sees the oppression of women as an example of social oppression on a larger scale. A socio-political critique, her punk novels focus on centralization of marginal social groups.

There is doubling happening on various levels in the novels: doubling of real personages as characters, appearance of the author as a character, doubling among the characters, bipolarity of gender, ambiguity of language and meaning, etc. The purpose is to emphasize and draw attention to certain aspects of the fiction, which aims to subvert traditional discourse. The novels discussed are metafictional, an aspect further emphasized by the doubling. They are observed through the theoretical framework of psychoanalytic (Sigmund Freud, Otto Rank) and feminist (Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous) criticism, while their aspects as self-conscious fiction are framed by the post-modern criticism of Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon.

Key words:

Literary doubling; metafiction; H.D.; Anaïs Nin; Ann Quin; Brigid Brophy; Kathy Acker; feminist criticism; psychoanalysis; women's writing.

Abstrakt

Závěrečná práce zkoumá díla pěti autorek z dvacátého století, které využívají fenomén literární dvojakosti: H.D., Anaïs Nin, Ann Quin, Brigid Brophy a Kathy Acker. Autorky můžeme rozdělit do třech skupin.

První skupina je zastoupena autorkami H.D. a Nin z první poloviny dvacátého století. Autorky jsou modernistky, jejichž autobiografická próza je ovlivněna vývojem psychoanalýzy. Psychoanalýza se pro ně stává zdrojem inspirace, ale zároveň autorky docházejí ke zjištění, že nese známky omezení a šovinismu.

Druhou skupinu tvoří Quin a Brophy z počátku druhé poloviny dvacátého století, jejichž díla přímo odrážejí změny vyvolané feministickým hnutím. Díla svojí podstatou otevřeně zpochybňují a odmítají patriarchální struktury, které ženy omezují.

Acker, jako představitelka třetí generace, vnímá omezování práv žen jako sociální problém. Její sociálně-politická kritika vyjádřená punkovými romány dává do popředí okrajové sociální skupiny.

V díle je přítomna dvojakost na různých úrovních, například: odvozování postav od skutečných osobností, přítomnost autora jako postavy, poukazování na duplicitu postav, bipolarita pohlaví, dvojznačnost jazyku a významu, atd. Účelem je zdůraznit a zaměřit pozornost na některé aspekty prózy, která se snaží vyvrátit tradiční diskurz. Diskutované romány jsou metafikční, což dvojakost zdůrazňuje. Teoretickým rámcem je psychoanalytická (Sigmund Freud, Otto Rank) a feministická (Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous) kritika. Prvky metafikce v dílech jsou vymezená post-moderní kritikou Patricii Waugh a Lindy Hutcheon.

Klíčová slova:

Literární dvojakost; metafikce; H.D.; Anaïs Nin; Ann Quin; Brigid Brophy; Kathy Acker; feministická kritika; psychoanalýza; ženské autorky.

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I. Introduction

In their trilogy *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar expound that it was the rise of feminism in the second half of the nineteenth century (and the battle of the sexes that followed) that produced and shaped some crucial developments on the literary front:

Reflecting a crucial shift in mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American society, [the] sexual struggle became a key theme in late Victorian literature and ultimately a shaping element in modernist and post-modernist literature. [...] Thus both male and female writers increasingly represented women's unprecedented invasion of the public sphere as a battle of the sexes, a battle over a zone that could only be defined as a no man's land.¹

Modernist authors begin to envision a possibility of triumph for the literary woman, a possibility conditioned by the weakening of patriarchal authorities: loss of religious belief; Darwin's theory of evolution; the downfall of imperialism; World War I with the disillusionment it brought, destroying all aspirations for heroism. (NML, Vol 1, 22) For women, this signified an opportunity for a greater educational advancement and involvement in social and professional life. This entry into the public sphere enabled the female artist to rationalize and legitimize Gilbert and Gubar's "madwoman" – the nineteenth century enraged and tormented woman, that represses (and through this repression expresses) her anger at the patriarchal social order that confined her, and, in the case of the literary woman, her creative genius. (NML, Vol 1, 67) Women authors after modernism in the latter half of the century start to realize this modernist possibility of a literary triumph; their feminist advancement is reflected in their writing, which, more than ever before, deals with gender and its discontents. The concept of bisexuality becomes crucial: Gilbert and Gubar link it to social change and

¹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 1, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 4. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

feminist developments², but it also becomes a paradigm of the androgyny of human nature.

For Gilbert and Gubar,

[w]omen's works [...] frequently imagine female victory either through duplicity and subterfuge or through providential circumstance. In women's texts, men generally win tests of bodily strength, but women outwit or outlast men who fortuitously succumb to fatal mischances. (MNL, Vol 1, 67)

Further on in this thesis, I would like to explore how this duplicity and subterfuge is achieved in the twentieth century fiction of women authors, both modernist and post-modernist.

The five authors selected in this thesis can be chronologically divided into three groups. The first pair are Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961), more commonly known under her artistic name H.D., and Anaïs Nin (1903-1977). Both are modernist writers, whose writing was autobiographical and deeply influenced by the development of psychoanalysis at the turn of the century. H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* (1956) is an account of her psychoanalytic sessions with Sigmund Freud in Vienna, 1933. Similarly, in 1933 in Paris, Nin underwent therapy with Otto Rank, whose work was an ongoing artistic inspiration for her. As she did not distinguish between her life and her writing, Nin's *Winter of Artifice* (1939) is a reflection of her personal relationship with Rank. Both H.D. and Nin saw psychoanalysis as a way to cure their personal traumas; their writing was a talking cure, a way out. Creation of such literature empowered them as writers, and with this power came an awareness of the possibilities they had as literary women. They also became aware of the oppressiveness of psychoanalysis and their analysts towards them as women. Hence, they belong to the first generation of feminist writers, influenced by psychoanalysis, yet showing signs of dissatisfaction with its principles and beliefs when it comes to women.

² Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 216. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

The second group are two British writers whose works cover the middle of the twentieth century: Ann Quin's (1936-1973) *Berg*, published in 1964, and Brigid Brophy's (1929-1995) *In Transit* in 1969. Unlike H.D. and Nin, Quin and Brophy create parodies of the sexual order created by psychoanalysis; unlike the first generation, this second generation of feminist writers is open in its critique of psychoanalytic chauvinism and family model. In their novels, Quin and Brophy start a trend of repetition, cyclic continuation and elevation of the individual's personal traumas to the higher stratum of the family. Lastly, Kathy Acker (1947-1997), though unpaired, stands as a representative of the third generation of feminist writers in the 20th century. Most experimental of all the five authors, Acker is a radical feminist whose novels are an all-out socio-political critique of society. Three of her novels are discussed in this thesis: *Kathy Goes to Haiti* (1978), *My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini* (1987) and *Empire of the Senseless* (1988). Acker also discusses the Oedipus taboo, which directly connects her with the modernist writers, yet she views it through the critical punk-rock prism of a postmodern sampler and plagiarist.

What connects these five writers is their engagement with psychoanalysis, both positive and critical; the feminist tone of their fiction that mimics the parallel development of the three generations of feminist writers; their experiments with language on various levels and the doubling that we encounter in their fiction. H.D. and Nin use doubling in autobiography – real life people become textual doubles, characters; they also make use of doubling in the creation of their personal mythology and symbols. Quin and Brophy deal with the doubling of gender and narrative perspective: Brophy's androgynous Pat narrates his/her story through both the female and male perspective, and Quin narrates her story through Berg, the only male protagonist in the novels explored. Brophy's doubling happens on the level of language as well, where she mediates a disintegration of the category of gender through language play and puns, emphasizing the instability of the phallogocentricity of language. Acker constructs

a double of herself in the fiction: the protagonist of *Empire of the Senseless* is an agglutination of minorities' and marginal social groups' characteristics that, by becoming a protagonist and a speaking subject, are brought to the center of the novel. In addition, through plagiarism Acker doubles the already existing characters and plotlines by other authors. All five authors engage with the question of bisexuality and fluidity of gender, emphasizing its nature as a construct. Lastly, the fiction they write is self-conscious: it connects history/real experiences and fiction, inserts the author to the narrative and brings to attention the fiction's awareness of being a construct.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how and why these five authors use the doubling in their self-conscious fiction, through the theoretical framework of psychoanalytic, feminist and postmodern theories. In the following chapters, I will first summarize relevant theoretical notions by Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank, French post-structuralist feminist critics Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva and theorists of the post-modern metafiction Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon. Further on, I will discuss the selected works by the five authors in more detail and, lastly, attempt to reach some conclusions on the doubling encountered in them.

II. Theoretical framework

1. Psychoanalytic criticism

As a field of studies, psychoanalysis offers many intriguing and controversial ideas and has fostered many representatives from the medical and literary worlds that have devoted themselves to research of the human psyche. Relevant to the discussion of the selected works in this thesis are Sigmund Freud, who is the central figure in H.D.'s *Tribute*, and whose theories appear in the works of all the other authors in one form or another; and Otto Rank, who has discussed in detail the problematic of the double, and thus is of vital importance for the phenomenon traced in the novels chosen for this thesis.

1.1. Sigmund Freud

Freud's importance for the 20th century development of both psychology and literature is immense, since his theories bring back the focus on the individual, which had been diminished during the 19th-century Victorian ideal of the well-being of society as such. In a sense, he brings back a revival of the romantic focus on the individual's inner life, which resulted in not only modernism, but, potentially, the rise of feminism as well. Two aspects of his work support Freud's strong connection with, and affinities towards literature: firstly, he uses literature and representations of people in literature to support his theories (antique drama, legends, folk stories). Secondly, he can be seen as creating literature of a kind. Many of his works are written in a language acceptable for the general non-medical audience, and they also have the form of narratives (for example of his own dreams or anecdotes), where Freud himself becomes a character.

The first notion to be discussed is Freud's interpretation of dreams, as strong material for the investigation of the traumatized human psyche. Dream work is primarily a result of an extraordinary compression or *condensation*:

The dream is reserved, paltry and laconic when compared with the range and copiousness of the dream thoughts. The dream when written down fills half a page; the analysis in which the dream thoughts are contained, requires six, eight, twelve times as much space.¹

Dreams represent desires, yet they are not always clear: sometimes there is an unrecognizable connection between the dream's meaning and its content. This Freud calls *displacement*:

A psychic force is expressed in dream activity which on the one hand strips elements of high psychic value of their intensity, and which on the other hand creates new values, by way of over-determination, from elements of small value, these new values subsequently getting into the dream content.²

The obscurity of the latent content Freud attributes to the condition of repression of thoughts and their absence from the conscious mind, which he identifies as the driving force for both the displacement and condensation. Dreams are thus concealed realizations of repressed desires.³

When discussing repression, Freud states that the strongest instinct to be repressed is sexuality: it becomes the strongest suppressed desire that manifests in dreams of adults. Due to the suppression, the manifest content of the dream is usually asexual and is presented through *symbols* (my emphasis). An important note Freud makes here is that some symbols appear to be the same for speakers belonging to one range of speech and culture, such as representation of sexes etc. In this way, the dream interpretation is complete, since symbols help in understanding the elements of the dream.

¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2015), 235.

² Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 258.

³ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 122.

When discussing children's sexuality, there are two important complexes to be mentioned as relevant for the novels discussed: the castration complex and the Oedipus complex. The first one Freud elaborates on more in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*:

It is quite natural for the male child to presuppose in all persons it knows a genital like his own, and to find it impossible to harmonize the lack of it with his conception of others. This conviction is energetically adhered to by the boy and tenaciously defended against the contradictions [that is, the loss of the penis of women] which soon result, and are only given up after severe internal struggles. [...] [The little girl] is immediately prepared to recognize [the differently formed genital of the boy], and soon becomes envious of the penis; this envy reaches its highest point in the consequentially important wish that she also should be a boy.⁴

Following this is the Oedipus complex, which Freud first noticed when observing and analyzing the dreams of children in *Interpretation of Dreams*. He finds evidence in, surprisingly, literature itself – Sophocles' drama based on the legend of King Oedipus. He finds that the reason the drama moves us is due to the fact we unconsciously desire the death of the father and reunion with the mother: "There is an unmistakable indication in the text of Sophocles' tragedy itself that the legend of Oedipus sprang from some primeval dream - material which had as its content the distressing disturbance of a child's relation to his parents owing to the first stirrings of sexuality."⁵ The blinding in the Oedipus legend stands for castration, similarly to how, according to Freud, boys fear castration as a punishment by their father.

The castration complex is also important for Freud's essay "The Uncanny," which is crucial when dealing with literature and the concept of doubling, which is a phenomenon observed by all the five authors in this thesis. The uncanny relates to properties of people, things, impressions, situations and experiences that are frightening and foreign. As Freud concludes though, the uncanny is related also to the things we are already familiar with, the homely aspect of things, to which something unexpected is added. Examples of uncanniness are

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2009), 45.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 281.

automatons (animated objects that are not human), manifestations of insanity, father figures who aim for punishment by castration (Freud gives the example of the Sandman, punishing children by taking their eyes and blinding them – connected with the Oedipus complex, where blinding is castration as well), telepathy/omnipotence of thoughts or doubling (or repetitive occurrence) of self or things in the exogenous world. On the topic of doubles, Freud connects to Otto Rank's study *The Double*, by layering the uncanny aspect of this double's development as an external agent observing and criticizing the self, acting as a conscience.⁶ Formerly this double used to be a part of the self and the uncanniness comes with the estrangement from the self.

This connection to the self is explored in the study "On Narcissism," where Freud deals with patients he terms paraphrenics, who display two characteristics: megalomania and disinterest in external objects and persons. When interest, and in consequence the libido, is withdrawn from external objects, megalomania directs it inwards to the person's ego, thus resulting in narcissism.⁷ Through studying the erotic life of humans, Freud observes transference from the mother, as the earliest erotic object, into the self and thus, he postulates primary narcissism in everyone due to the presence of both these love objects in all humans. In some cases, narcissism may manifest itself in a domineering fashion in the object choice, in which case it is a result of homosexual tendencies. He also assesses love as an activity of the ego that can contribute to the intensification of narcissism: when loving involves deprivation and longing, it diminishes self-regard, whereas requited love raises it once more.⁸ When the libido is repressed, the ego is erotically depleted and love satisfaction is impossible, it turns to the ego once again to replenish the missing love, that now becomes self-love.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", *The Critical Tradition*, Ed. David H. Richter (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 522.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Freud's 'On Narcissism: An Introduction'*, ed. Joseph Sandler et.al. (London: Karnac Books, 2012), 5.

⁸ Freud, *'On Narcissism: An Introduction'*, 30.

While relation of the self to self seems to be imperative when it comes to the problematic of the double, there is another connection that continuously reappears in Freud: the interdependent relationship between the development of self and of society. This phenomenon has been noted by literary figures at the beginning of the century: “All human relations have shifted, those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature,” (NML, Vol 3, 8) states Virginia Woolf as early as 1910, connecting the dynamics of individual relationships to the social ones. Freud determines a connection between ontogenesis (development of the repressed individual) and phylogenesis (development of the repressive civilization), where “ontogenesis may be considered as a repetition of phylogenesis insofar as the latter has not been varied by a more recent experience. The phylogenetic disposition makes itself visible behind the ontogenetic disposition.”⁹

Freud’s importance, though unequal for the authors discussed, is primarily in setting the theoretical ground for further discussions and development of ideas concerning the human psyche for the rest of the 20th century. Most authors did not follow his doctrines per se, and he was also attacked by feminists for his chauvinistic and sexist views on women’s dependency on the phallic order. Many, however, saw him as a continuous source of inspiration and as a major force that often drove their narratives forward, or, perhaps, inwards, in opposition to a technological century very much out of human control.

1.2. Otto Rank

In his study of the double, Rank claimed it to be a product of the necessity to insure against the destruction of the ego by death. He develops the idea through examining doubles in literature, concluding that they all show coinciding motives:

⁹ Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, Preface.

We always find a likeness [in the double] which resembles the main character down to the smallest particulars, such as name, voice, and clothing—a likeness which, as though "stolen from the mirror" (Hoffmann), primarily appears to the main character as a reflection.¹⁰

Rank also discusses the autobiographic literature of writers as an artistic expression, fictive worlds originating in the biographic one, rather than Freud's view of autobiography being a product of the author's narcissism and megalomania. Through an examination of their biographical literature, he concludes that what connects all these authors is a "pathological disposition towards psychological disturbances,"¹¹ resulting in a splitting of their personality and uncanny interest in one's own person and psychic states, usually accompanied by an inability to love objects extraneous to the self. Yet, writers are not necessarily conscious of these unhealthy tendencies. Rank sees many of them belonging to the collective mythological past, and further deals with the ethnopsychology of these impulses. What Rank's study demonstrates, as summed up by Harry Tucker, is that the "use of the double-theme derived not so much from the authors' conscious fondness for describing preternatural situations, or separate parts of their personalities, as from their unconscious impulse to lend imagery to a universal human problem—that of the relation of the self to the self."¹²

This he once again confirms in his study on the artist and the artistic expression *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*, where he observes the impulse of the personality for the eternalization of itself. This is especially important for examining the work of Anaïs Nin, but also literature that is influenced by psychoanalysis in general. He summarizes the relationship of the artist to their art as follows:

The artist, as a definite creative individual, uses the art form that he finds ready to his hand in order to express a something personal; this personal must therefore be somehow connected with the prevailing artistic or cultural ideology, since otherwise he could not

¹⁰ Otto Rank, *The Double*, ed. Harry Tucker, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 33.

¹¹ Otto Rank, *The Double*, 48.

¹² Otto Rank, *The Double*, xiv.

make use of them, but it must also differ, since otherwise he would not need to use them in order to produce something of his own.¹³

This relationship is conditioned by the author's dualism, which Rank defines through examining the historio-geographical development of art. He defines two tendencies: naturalistic production (South) and abstract production (North). These are not mutually exclusive, one or the other can take the upper hand or they can exist parallel to each other in the work of art. They correspond to the innate dualism of the creative personality: life and death, body and soul, matter and spirit, individual and society.¹⁴ This dualism is potent in Nin's fiction, where she creates double characters in *Winter of Artifice* that represent the two opposing sides of Rank's dualism. His study further examines the connections of art to religion, as both, in his opinion, strive towards immortality. This relationship is discussed in H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, where her desire for artistic creation and self-assertion is compared to the founding of a religion.

2. Feminist criticism

The fundamental notion of feminist criticism is gender, as a culturally constructed sexual identity, rather than just a biological distinction. Feminist critics engage in deconstructing the assumptions posed about gender by social circumstances, including the image of the mother and the wife. Through deconstruction, women aim at making a difference through and with their writing, focusing on female experience previously overlooked,¹⁵ as for example in Kathy Acker's fiction. In addition, due to the objectification of woman as commodity and a symbol of power for the man, there are very few instances where woman has been allowed the position of a subject, in both society and writing. Feminist criticism approaches the

¹³ Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (New York: Agathon Press, 1968), 7.

¹⁴ Otto Rank, *Art and Artist*, xlvii.

¹⁵ Martin Procházka, *Literary Theory: An Historical Introduction* (Prague: Nakladatelství Karolínium, 2011), 118.

subjectivity of writing in two ways: emphasizing the subject position in writing, thus saturating it with female experience and perspective (writers such as Nin, H.D.) or annulling the subject-object (and simultaneously the male-female) distinction altogether (Quin, Brophy, Acker). These two ways of writing can be seen to parallel a distinction made by Gilbert and Gubar in their chapter on the second generation of feminist writers and critics in the second half of the 20th century:

[M]id and late century theorists aligned themselves in two camps: gradualists (who believed in working within established social structures in order to achieve strength) and radicals (who wished to obliterate most extant social institutions).¹⁶

The first group promoted androgyny, the mother-women, the New Women and New Men, all of which were creations of the new order of equality that did not rebel against the existing structures, but in turn influenced the structures to reshape and reorganize with her, as she gained sexual and political liberty. The sensitive New Men were able to “open up to feelings that give them a real sense of inner strength, especially when they share the daily chores of living and child rearing that wives used to shield them from.” (NML, Vol 3, 370) The graduals were also against a world with strong sexual polarization and saw their utopia as a society that could freely explore the androgynous possibilities of human nature.

The radicals (or vamp critics, as Gilbert and Gubar also call them), reject the hegemony and order of the institutional structure of the academy and the intellectual structures of author, genre, canon, gender, race, nationality, class. (NML, Vol 3, 376) For them, the existence of a literary tradition and the renovation of this literary tradition mean reinstalling the oppressions of the past, subjugating to a hierarchy where the female was essentially subordinate. By breaking the given categories, they break patriarchy and the binaries it is constituted from, especially when it comes to the gender system altogether. For the radicals, the mother figure

¹⁶ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 369. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

was aligned with the goddess and the lesbian. Gender for them was a multiplicity; instead of asexuality, they preferred bisexuality and interchangeability of gender.

Feminist critics I will focus on more for the purpose of this thesis are Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. Despite belonging to the more radical group, their importance is in the breaking of categories that they promoted, from both a social and a rhetorical point of view. The novels discussed in this thesis use their method and concepts to present social paradoxes and, in turn, criticize as feminists, while deconstructing feminism as such.

2.1. Hélène Cixous

Her significantly titled essay “Newly Born Woman” begins with a breakage of the binaries mentioned above: Cixous’s initial issue is the centrality of logocentrism that couples everything, based on the ecclesiastical pair man/woman. This does not only apply to the sphere of language: it is present in art, the family, religion, society, culture. The only way for each part of the pair to make sense is an all-out war, a universal battlefield¹⁷, where, for example, ‘high’ is defined by negating and destroying the ‘low’. These hierarchical couplings signify an organization that, according to Cixous, is a subject to man and sexual difference as such is represented with the opposition activity/passivity, where woman plays the passive part. This passivity extends to motherhood:

No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother. Either woman is passive or she does not exist. What is left of her is unthinkable, unthought. Which certainly means that she is not thought, that she does not enter into the oppositions, that she does not make a couple with the father (who makes a couple with the son). (39)

The centrality of the father (phallogentricity) can be traced back in (literary) history; though this, Cixous connects phallogentricity to logocentricity, and as an alternative of this order she proposes two forms of bisexuality. The first is a fantasy of a complete being, a unity veiling

¹⁷ Hélène Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1994), 38. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

sexual difference – more asexual in a sense. Opposed to this is the second one that she defines as the “location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, [...] the non-exclusion of a difference or of a sex.” (41) Aligning with her feminist agenda, for Cixous the woman is bisexual already, since she has not been trained to a specific phallic monosexuality. This enables her to write as a woman, meaning to write from both the masculine and feminine perspective, admitting that she is herself and an other at the same time. Writing becomes a constant questioning of one another, exchange with the other, gaining knowledge of the other within ourselves – a multiplicity, an “endless body, without ‘end’, without principal ‘parts’; if she is a whole, it is a whole made up of parts that are wholes, not simple, partial objects but varied entirety, moving and boundless change, a cosmos where Eros never stops traveling, vast astral space.”(44) This multiplicity creates the newly born woman – she is constantly changing, both masculine and feminine. The unity in multiplicity is perhaps the most important notion influencing writers in the second part of the 20th century, where in the midst of increasing labelling and categorizations, writers, and especially women, found a way to affirm their art without having to defend its existence against set templates and canon. Kathy Acker, for instance, is deeply influenced by Cixous in terms of representing language and concept breakdown by proclaiming war to not only the category of gender, but to notions such as author, character, plot etc.

2.2. Julia Kristeva

Kristeva’s essay “The System and the Speaking Subject” presents an overview of the whole field of semiotics as she sees it. She starts by summarizing the discoveries of semiotics, that all ideologies (such as myths, moral codes, arts, rituals etc.) and social practices are articulated like sign systems, like language. They are determined by a set of signifying rules present in the order of language: “that this language has a double articulation (signifier/signified); that this duality stands in an arbitrary relation to the referent; and that all

social functioning is marked by the split between referent and symbolic and by the shift from signified to signifier coextensive with it.”¹⁸ In addition, she shows the necessity for these ideologies and social practices to be inseparable from their communicative function and to subserve social communication (for instance studying myths as examples of community knowledge). Yet Kristeva’s critique focuses on how, besides the social sphere, the model semiotics as it is has no way of apprehending anything connected with desire, pleasure or play in language, that are often considered to be forms of discourse that have poetical, rather than empirical status. She thus bases her critique of this system on the theory of the speaking subject.

The focus on the speaking subject as a divided subject (conscious/unconscious) should aid in exposing the operations characteristic of both these sides to the forces outside of the logical system, to drives and to social constraints. In semiology, termed *semanalysis* by Kristeva, meaning becomes a signifying process instead of a sign-system. In poetic language, which is important for the purpose of this thesis, this might result in deviations from grammar, over-determination of a lexeme due to intertextuality, syntactic irregularities etc. – all of these Kristeva groups as primary processes, corresponding to metaphorical and metonymic language, that in turn correspond to the processes of displacement and condensation in psychoanalysis. Through such disruptions in the code, she postulates the heterogeneity of biological operations in respect to signifying operations, and the way to preserve this heterogeneity is in the poetic language where the heterogeneity originates from. (31) This new semiology focusing on signifying practices, Kristeva proposes, should be open to including and discussing the works of fiction writers who have challenged the order of language. The condition for all this, however, is that the subject of this semiotic

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 26. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

metalanguage must question itself, must emerge from the shell of the ego and reconnect with the drive-governed opposition of itself. (34)

Kristeva's discussion of the subject and the definition of the subject by its negativity is important from a feminist perspective, since notions of the self as such have been at the core of the feminist debate; similarly to Gilbert and Gubar's gradualists and radicals, in *Julia Kristeva and Feminist Thought*, Brigit Schippers frames the debate as happening "between those who subscribe to a position of a coherent, unified self, and those who, variously influenced by psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and deconstruction, put forward ideas about a decentered, unstable and inherently fluid subject."¹⁹ Kristeva's subject is inherently fluid and multiple; it is a subject-in-process, as she terms it, and when it comes to the femininity of this subject, she states:

The belief that 'one is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that 'one is a man'. I say 'almost' because there are still many goals which women can achieve: freedom of abortion and contraception, day-care centers for children, equality on the job, etc. [...] On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot 'be'; it is something that does not even belong in the order of being. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say 'that's not it' and 'that's still not it'.²⁰

The operation of the negative is then connected with dissolution of all categories, including the one of gender, but it also is connected with outlining a specifically female subjectivity. In her most famously quoted feminist essay "Women's Time," Kristeva envisions this multiplicity and fluidity to be the mission of the third generation of feminists, who would celebrate difference over unity and would rejoice in the potential of female semiotic subjectivity. Kristeva's feminism is criticized since there are not many instances where she explicitly links her work on semiotics to the feminist agenda. Her fluid subjectivity, however, is a concept that writers use in their fiction, as in the case of Brigid Brophy, whose *In Transit* protagonist's main dilemma is deciding whether she/he is a male or a female, resulting in her

¹⁹ Brigit Schippers, *Julia Kristeva and Feminist Thought*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 35.

²⁰ Schippers, 37.

being both. The name of the protagonist Pat fails as a signifier, since it is too ambiguous to define the sex of the persona it is associated to, and is thus in need of a certain fluidity, to be able to serve its proper function. Similarly to Brophy, Kathy Acker's constructed protagonist

3. Self-conscious fiction

Postmodernism, as a cultural phenomenon within whose framework the terms 'self-conscious metafiction'²¹ and 'historiographic metafiction'²² were theorized by Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon, distinguished itself in the second half of the 20th century. Its occurrence was gradual, and, in many ways, interconnected with modernism. Modernism's fictionalized autobiography and use of stream of consciousness break away from the realism and naturalism of the previous ages. Paradoxically, while intensifying the status of fiction as a construct (the work of art as an object), this construct was breaking the boundaries between art and life more than ever before, becoming aware of its own existence and methods. The developments of modernism set the ground for further theorizing of metafiction, whose development in later years was observed parallel to external changes in society.

Postmodernism has gained many negative connotations due to its contemporariness with the intensification of mass (and pop) culture and technological development (used for the purpose of war instead of social advancement, bringing disillusionment) that are seen to define civilization as we know it, a civilization that the previous generations of critics and theorists had deemed repressive. Despite these trends, the quality of life does not decline – it simply changes in nature, a change that can be trailed back to the modernist years at the beginning of the century. The literary works of five authors central to this thesis are all self-

²¹ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction : The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (Taylor and Francis e-Library, 1984), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/detail.action?docID=165759>, 2. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

²² Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 5. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

conscious fiction, since they radically break the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, and, consequently, between art and life.

3.1. Linda Hutcheon

Hutcheon explores postmodernism as a contradictory deconstructive phenomenon: one that “uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concepts in challenges.”(3) She follows the development of this phenomenon by exploring specific examples from literature, architecture, sculpture, painting, film, dance, music, philosophy, linguistics etc. She rejects its equation to the contemporary, locates it on the American and European ground, and defines it by exploring a few postmodern concepts, mainly focusing on literature. She examines a specific type of novel genre she calls *historiographic metafiction* that has its roots in the past, yet is strongly self-reflexive: “its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs [...] is made on the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.”(5) This genre rejects any notions of master narratives formed by natural hierarchies. History is such a human construct – Hutcheon does not claim that postmodernism treats history as obsolete, but it certainly reimagines it, existing only as a *text*: our access to it is limited by textuality; the evidence and eye-witnesses are all texts.(16) Continuing Kristeva’s debate on the subject, Hutcheon states that:

[The postmodern] perceiving subject is no longer assumed to a coherent, meaning-generating identity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate [...] or resolutely provisional and limited – often undermining their own seeming omniscience. (11)

This brings forth the centralization of the marginal, a technique used in feminist narratives focusing on the woman’s sexuality, or, for example, in Acker’s *Empire of the Senseless*. By juxtaposing this unfamiliar otherness, postmodernism theorizes a decentralized society (from Culture to cultures), that goes against any homogenization that globalization seems to impose. This heterogeneity also leads Hutcheon to agree with Kristeva once again that there

is a need to move away from the expectation of a single and unified meaning, and to give advance to the *signifying process* instead. Hutcheon also discusses intertextual parody in historiographic metafiction. While parody becomes a tool of critique, intertextuality (according to both Kristeva and Hutcheon) is a key concept since the focus moves from the author-text relationship to the reader-text relationship, relying on the reader's knowledge to recognize the traces of the literary and historical past in the text. (127) Intertextuality and parody are most consciously used by Brophy and Acker in their novels. However, Quin, Nin and H.D. also refer to external texts and histories, those histories being their personal ones. Using autobiographical references in fiction affirms the self-consciousness of the novels that connect the author's biography with fiction.

3.2. Patricia Waugh

Discussion of 20th century literature mainly revolves around the genre of the novel. Waugh starts her discussion of the postmodern aspects of the novel by defining *metafiction*: “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship of fiction and reality.”

(2) The self-conscious fiction possesses certain awareness of its own mechanisms and structure. It is also driven by opposition: the creation of an illusion (fictional world) and the unveiling of the same illusion. Waugh claims that literary fiction (constructed out of language), can be a good model for learning about reality, since the knowledge of our world is mediated to us through and constructed by language. The authors she explores as having begun exploring the sense of fictitiousness in their novels are Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. The crisis and loss of belief in authoritative systems of order emerges in modernism and continues to post-modernism, the difference according to Waugh being that: “[m]odernist self-consciousness, [...] does not systematically flaunt its own condition of artifice in the manner of contemporary metafiction.” (21) Loss of order for the modernists was recovered at

the deeper level of the mind, as seen in H.D. and Nin, who focus on the psychological being rather than the social. Post-modernist metafiction carries further the assumption that constructing a novel does not differ from the way one constructs one's own reality. The commentary of the creator in such novels is explicitly stating that the novel is a game, playing make-believe; this is usually achieved by manipulating with the relationships among signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic. Another characteristic of metafiction is employing "parody, using a specific previous text or system for its base [...] because language is so pre-eminently the instrument which maintains the everyday." (53) This can be observed in Brigid Brophy's *In Transit*, a novel where puns and word play is shaping the 'reality' of the protagonist, while parodying genre, modern art and various socio-political ideologies. Waugh concludes that metafiction problematizes the notion of 'truth' and 'reality' in literary fiction; writers are faced with the paradox of the identity of fictional characters as being non-entities that are, nevertheless, somebody, and the problem of referentiality, both explicit and implicit, leading ultimately to plagiarism as a tool of critique.

III. H.D. – *Tribute to Freud*

Proclaimed the “most delightful and precious appreciation of Freud’s personality that is ever likely to be written”¹ by Freud’s biographer Ernest Jones, *Tribute to Freud* is one of H.D.’s many controversial prose works. *Tribute*’s place in the 20th century western literature is unique, not only from a biographical and historical perspective, but also due to the fact it poses as a valuable record for psychology as a science. It is a story about the psychological self-portrait and personal mythology of a woman living in Europe between the two world wars. Like H.D.’s visions, the work itself builds bridges in literature, connecting art with psychoanalysis, religion and history, while being shaped by the social dynamics characteristic of the first generation of feminist criticism. In a sense, H.D. has created the piece in the image of the shrine of Delphi, a strong symbol in her personal mythology connecting medicine, religion and art. This is represented by her third visionary writing on the wall, the tripod, which signifies H.D.’s efforts to bring these three elements together, forming a “new vehicle of expression or a new form of thinking.” (50) Her efforts were, nevertheless, obstructed by her own fears and psychological crises – for more than a decade after 1931, H.D. refrained from publishing any poems or books, and it is at the beginning of this decade (1933 and 1934) that H.D. became a patient of the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. Her purpose for seeking out treatment according to *Tribute* is as follows: “I wanted to dig down and dig out, root out my personal weeds, strengthen my purpose, reaffirm my beliefs, canalize my energies and I seized on the unexpected chance of working with Professor Freud himself.” (53) H.D. sought to fight her fears of another world war, while simultaneously solving her emotional and sexual crisis, caused by traumatic experiences with her family, such as the death of her brother in World War I, but also damaged relationships with the men

¹ H.D. *Tribute to Freud* (Manchester: Norman Holmes Pearson, 1984), vi. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

in her life: the broken engagement with Ezra Pound, the unsuccessful marriage to Richard Aldington, the estrangement from her close friend D.H. Lawrence... Her treatment with Freud was meant to cure H.D. of her fears of war and it was based on her dreams, memories, visions and intuition, primarily focusing on the visions, the “light on shadow” as she calls them – the three images she saw on the hotel wall in Corfu, Greece. These three writings emerge as a central point in the analysis recorded in the two parts of *Tribute*: “Writing on the Wall” is H.D.’s actual artistic work, accompanied by the notes she took during this time in the “Advent” part of the book. In both of these, we have two different doubles of Freud and H.D. as characters. There is the ‘real’ Freud and H.D. and there are their textual representations as characters in *Tribute*. On the micro-level of the text itself, H.D. applies symbols and mythology from the collective past to her own personal experiences: by connecting ontogenesis and phylogenesis, she mythologizes her personal experiences in addition to creating universal symbols that double the concepts of personal importance for her – one example being Freud himself.

“Writing” and “Advent” both focus on her analysis, yet they only show the full picture when read parallel with each other. Without “Advent,” “Writing” presents a more romanticized description of H.D. and Freud’s relationship. Example of this complementation of mirroring texts can be the instance when in “Writing” H.D. throws into the narrative Freud’s enigmatic sentence: “The trouble is – I am an old man – you do not think it worth to love me.” (16) She does not go on to explain the meaning of the sentence, whether it was connected to her therapy, or if this sentence signified a certain intimacy between the analyst and analysand. In “Advent,” H.D. comes back to it once again, not exactly with an explanation but with a continuation:

The Professor said to me today, when I entered the consulting room, ‘I was thinking about what you said, about its not being worthwhile to love an old man of seventy-seven.’

I had said no such thing and told him so. He smiled his ironical crooked smile. I said, 'I did not say it was not worthwhile, I said I was afraid.' (141)

“Advent” thus gives a more realistic perspective on their relationship, which appears to be very hierarchical and mystified in the first section. It also emphasizes the figure of H.D. and her actually being very aware and conscious during her analysis. It places her in a position of control, where she stops being a subject of the analyst, but rather becomes an equal partner. She also openly states her biggest fears: the Nazi menace and death, both of which are channeled through (and connected to) Sigmund Freud himself. On the fear of Nazism and war, H.D. confesses: “I cannot talk about the thing that actually concerns me, I cannot talk to Sigmund Freud in Vienna, 1933, about Jewish atrocities in Berlin.” (135) Death is connected to Freud not only through his Jewishness, but also since he reminds H.D. of a previous friendship that has ended and of a friend that is now dead: “I cannot be disappointed in Sigmund Freud, only I have this constant obsession that the analysis will be broken by death. I cannot discuss this with the professor. When he first greeted me, he reminded me of Lawrence.” (141) D.H. Lawrence appears to be in the center of H.D.’s preoccupied mind in “Advent,” despite being minimally mentioned in the first part. These missing elements emphasize that the two protagonists and two narrators are different in the two sections of the novel. “Advent” concretizes H.D.’s fears, but it also reflects the fact that analysis is not a one-sided action from the analyst towards his patient; it is a work in progress, where the patient (and the woman in this case) is not a passive element under the ‘enchantment’ of the analyst. H.D. as the patient in “Advent” is a conscious entity, following the unconscious movement of her free associations, but controlling her words and actions.

What are the results of the analysis then? The three writings on the wall that are central to the book are the head of a man, a chalice and a tripod. The first image of the man’s head and shoulders are identified with the figure of a dead brother or lost friend. H.D. is aware of the impersonality of this figure – it might have been anyone, of any country, (45) as she mentions

in “Writing.” The immediate association made is with Alvan, the brother she lost in the war, the impersonality of the figure standing as a symbol for the unnamed soldier and the devastating tragedies of war in general. Yet, the loss of a man for H.D. is also connected to her estranged friendship with D.H. Lawrence and his consequent death. The Lawrentian figure haunting her poems² is exemplary of the magnitude of this loss for her; as Gilbert and Gubar mention in *Letters from the Front*, the third volume of the *No Man’s Land* trilogy, H.D.’s issue with Lawrence was that, similarly to Ezra Pound, his artistic consciousness was strictly gendered, that it is masculinity that is the source of spiritual potency. (NML, Vol 3,179) At the same time, both H.D. and Lawrence shared the efforts to infuse modern society with pagan mythological energy. For both, the woman is the vortex of sensuality and wisdom coming from the ‘underworld’, only for Lawrence this energy and the cult of the Mother is destructive. In spite of the chasm between them, his loss is not something H.D. openly discusses in “Writings on the Wall”, yet her notes in “Advent” uncover her recurring obsession with Lawrence: substituting her father’s birthday for the death-day of D.H. Lawrence, recalling his symbol of the phoenix (opposed to Freud’s owl), claiming dislike for his enormous novels yet showing hostility to any criticism on them... The first writing, the man’s head, is not only a reflection of the past into the present circumstances; if, as H.D. states, there is a “present that was in the past or a past that was in the future,” (9) perhaps this writing signifies the losses of human lives that are to come in the future years, a vision fed by her war anxieties.

Freud’s diagnosis for H.D. is that she suffers from megalomania – she has an innate desire to be a symbolical founder of a religion. This happens initially as a result of H.D.’s dream of a Princess, where she sees scenes from the Old Testament. According to the dream, she is only the child Miriam who is the witnessing Moses’s entrance into the royal family. According to

² For example “Euridyce,” where she dramatizes the male-female rivalry, conforms to Lawrence’s idea of the divided male and female artistic consciousness.

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, H.D. desires the opposite of just witnessing – she wants to act and become a prophetic figure herself. Out of all the memories and dreams that H.D.'s therapy produced, Freud identifies the writings on the wall as the most “dangerous” symptoms of her condition. The core of their problematic is the fact that H.D. has seen these visions in the first place, and that she attributes personal importance to them:

We can read my writing, the fact that there was a writing, in two ways or in more than two ways. We can read or translate it as a suppressed desire for forbidden ‘signs and wonders’, breaking bounds, a suppressed desire to be a Prophetess, to be important anyway, megalomania they call it – a hidden desire to “found a new religion” which the Professor fretted out in the later Moses pictures. Or this writing-on-the-wall is merely an extension of the artists’ mind, a picture or an illustrated poem, taken out of the actual dream or daydream content and projected from within (though apparently from outside), really a high-powered idea, simply overstressed, overthought, you might say, an echo of an idea, a reflection of a reflection, a ‘freak’ thought that had gotten out of hand, gone too far, a dangerous symptom. (33)

The writings on the wall are a result of H.D. building her personal mythology by doubling her personal past with the collective past of the western civilization. In terms of family her mother Hellen is connected to Hellas – Greece and Helios – the sun; both have as a common denominator the Shrine of Delphi, reflected in the tripod. There is Athens, Freud's favorite figure and H.D.'s symbol of Greece – Athena, the goddess of war that always had Nike (Victory) next to her. Athena signified the past war, but also the one to come, that H.D. thought would end in victory. The symptoms, as H.D. concludes, can be understood as they translate into her personal symbols, yet “[t]he original or basic image [...] is common to the whole race and applicable in almost any time.” (51) And then there is Freud himself. As a part of her personal mythology, he stands for much more than her analyst – he becomes a symbol, a myth, and, lastly, a text she incorporates into her writing.

Through the process of free associations, H.D. reaches the conclusion that the tripod has signaled the arrival of Freud into her life: the union of art, magic and medicine, rooted in the figure of the blameless physician Asklepios. Freud's arrival is the symbol of victory for her: victory in the internal chaotic war that has been raging in her psyche:

Another question, another question mark, a half-S, the other way round, S for seal, symbol, serpent certainly, signet, Sigmund.

Sigmund, the singing voice. Sieg-mund the victorious mouth or voice of utterance. There was Victory, our sign on the wall, our hieroglyph, our writing. There was the tiny bronze [Athena], his favorite among the semi-circle of the Gods, or 'as other people read: Goods' on his table. There was Nike, Victory, and Nike A-pteros, the Wingless Victory, for Victory could never, would never fly away from Athens... (88)

Freud becomes an anchoring point for her psychological being. He is the Shrine of Delphi, and the shrine needs its priestess. H.D. is not trying to found any new religions; she is merely a prophet of the religion that Freud preaches. The associations leading up to this conclusion in "Writing" are intensely religious in nature: H.D. alludes to the New Testament parables, such as the Parable of the Tree and its Fruits, which deals with Jesus testing the false prophets of Christianity. There is the staff of Moses ("thy Rod and thy Staff"³ – references to the Bible once again) and there was the dream of Moses and the child in the bushes witnessing his arrival at the royal household. There is the simple biographical fact that Sigmund Freud was a Jew, and H.D. connects him to the "[other] Jew who said, *the kingdom of heaven is within you*. He said: *unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (104) By proposing the final connection of Freud to Christ, H.D. fortifies that psychoanalysis is her shrine, her cathedral, (147) as the Professor deduced from her dream, and he is the singing voice that initiated her into the practice. She often connects the Professor with fatherly figures, be it her father, the astronomy professor, or Papalie, her Moravian grandfather (Freud being born in Moravia himself), thus connecting Freud to her religious childhood. The individual's childhood is the childhood of the race, but the past also exists to evoke the future, as H.D. states at the beginning of "Writing." (9) By analyzing the past of his patients, Freud was able to shape their future and influence their present understanding of themselves. In this, H.D. makes the explicit reference to Asklepios, Apollo's son:

³ Psalm 23:4.

The half-man, half-god [...] went a little too far when he began actually to raise the dead. [...] Our Professor stood on this side of the portal. He did not pretend to bring back the dead who have already crossed the threshold. But he raised from dead hearts and stricken minds and maladjusted bodies a host of living children. (101)

Analysis as a 'religion', then, has a potential to save humanity from the restrictions of the past.

The question remains: why does H.D. find it necessary to create a symbol out of Sigmund Freud? The answer can be found in the Professor's teachings again: the desire for immortality, for survival of the soul after death, what he calls the last and greatest fantasy, the ultimate wish-fulfilment and dream. H.D. admits that she would have "set the hour glass the other way round" if she could, she would change her years for his. She seems to possess the knowledge that Freud will be born again, would "wake up when he shed the frail locust-husk of his years, and find himself alive." (43) Doubling in this case serves the purpose of self-preservation, or preservation of the image, the ego of another. At the same time, H.D. envisioned Freud to be the ultimate cure for humanity; in a world torn apart by wars, chaos and fragmented egos, Freud could be the protector of the human soul: "He is the infinite old symbol, weighing the soul, Psyche, in the Balance." (97) She reshapes Freud's message into a universally pacifistic message of Eros, of love, that pronounces all humans as one, since they share the same unconscious. If, H.D. continues, the dream is the common property of the civilization:

In the dream, man, as at the beginning of time, spoke a universal language, and man, meeting in the universal understanding of the unconscious or subconscious, would forgo barriers of time and space, and man, understanding man, would save mankind. (71)

Perhaps this is what H.D. wanted her most prophetic message to be: her initial mission for starting psychoanalysis was fortifying herself for when war would come, to help war-shattered people to cope with the trauma that was her personal one (WW I, death in her family), but had the tendencies to disrupt long-term the generations to come. This utopian /

dystopian, vision of H.D.'s drives the creation of her personal myth; by attempting to make sense of herself, she attempts to make sense for the world, and out of it.

As previously mentioned, H.D. creates both a symbol and a text out of Freud. While she uses his symbolism as an accolade to psychoanalysis, the textual level is a critique, and does not emphasize H.D. the patient (patients, experiencer), but H.D. the author and, thus, creator of her story (agent, causer). Freud literally becomes text, a character in her story, but his teachings are also textualized and demystified through language. Looking at their relationship, the tripod symbolizes the teacher-student connection of Freud and H.D.; just as in Greek mythology, Delphi (the doctrine, Freud) is the protector of musicians, artists and physicians and the temple of Delphi needs its priestess (the student, H.D.). Her role is to keep the sacred unity of medicine, religion and art, and she is also a prophet. The student and teacher, however, do not always agree; H.D. shows signs of distrust for the absolutism and implied sexism of Freud's teachings. She describes their relationships as playing "hide-and-seek [...] and patiently and meticulously patching together odds and ends of [their] picture-puzzle," while at the same time spelling words upside down and backwards and crosswise. (119) Their mutual relationship, then, is a game of words, story-telling – same as psychoanalysis. Just how much depends on language she shows by constantly returning to the 'Gods – Goods' pair, referring to Freud's statues; it is purely a matter of perspective and one letter that makes the difference between the two.

As an artist, H.D. knows the limitations of this 'newfound religion.' Psychoanalysis works through language; it is a practice of telling one's story, healing through the 'talking cure'. Although the patient's story, the psychoanalysts often create their own case studies, like Freud's *Dora*, where even though the narrative is focused on the patient, it is delivered through the analyst's voice, acknowledging only his authority and authorship. According to Meegan Kennedy, who explores H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* and the creation of psychoanalytic

narratives, Freud's case studies always originate in the autobiography of the exclusively woman patient, who produces the 'hysterical' narrative in a formally confused and irregular state that is then 'cured' (made smooth and legible) by the interpolation of the analyst's rational interpretive discourse."⁴ If one consequently examines Freud's definition of the "hysterical" narrative, it becomes clear that it is descriptive of H.D.'s *Tribute*:

[The patients'] communications run dry, leaving gaps unfilled, and riddles unanswered . . . [or they are] totally obscure and unilluminated by even a single piece of serviceable information. The connections . . . are for the most part incoherent, and the sequence of different events is uncertain. Even during the course of their story patients will repeatedly correct a particular or a date, and then perhaps, after wavering for some time, return to their first version.⁵

By producing the "hysterical" narrative, H.D. seems to rebel against her analyst and criticize him, which is paradoxical, since, after all, their analysis was supposed to be a success. She cannot stop questioning his authority (perhaps revealing the meaning of the unfinished question marks, almost like the letter *S* for *Sigmund*?) and she produces Freud's case study instead. The roles of an analyst and analysand are reverted, or at the very least, H.D. becomes her own analyst, partially rejecting Freud's deduction of her symptoms: "So again, I can say the Professor was not always right. That is, yes, he was always right in his judgements, but my form of rightness, my intuition, sometimes functioned [...] the quicker." (99) H.D. goes on to imagine what she would have said to the Professor, had she been able to put it all in words: "You are a man. Yofi is a dog. I am a woman. If this dog and this woman 'take' to one another, it would prove that beyond your caustic implied criticism – if criticism it is – there is another region of cause and effect, another region of question and answer." (99) The distinction she makes between a man and woman is important here, since a feminist reading of *Tribute to Freud* uncovers H.D.'s criticism of Freud's chauvinistic views regarding the

⁴ Meegan Kennedy, "Modernist autobiography, hysterical narrative, and the unnavigable river: the case of Freud and H.D.," *Literature and Medicine* Vol. 30, Iss. 2 (Baltimore: 2012), Proquest http://literature.proquest.com/searchFulltext.do?id=R04893972&divLevel=0&queryId=2911307781839&trailId=152513CDC1A&area=abell&forward=critref_ft

⁵ Kennedy.

female sexuality and how “women did not creatively amount to much, unless they had a male counterpart [...] from whom they drew inspiration,” (NML, Vol 3, 203) similar to the views of D.H. Lawrence and Pound.

Gilbert and Gubar observe this rebellious feminist streak in H.D.’s work. They attribute it to her general rejection of the father-daughter paradigm, where a dismissal of erotic relationships with men meant a dismissal of the phallic activity of the woman and her sexuality in general:

H.D. swerves from Freud, however, by interpreting such renunciation not as a stage distinct from the ‘ultimate nominal feminine attitude in which the young girl takes her father as a love object’ but as a damaging repercussion of the female fetishization inflicted by a heterosexuality based on the father-daughter paradigm. (NML, Vol 3, 183)

Instead, H.D. analyses the aspect of the mother-attachment a child developed when disappointed in the relation with the father and patriarchy, an aspect Freud refrained from including in his studies. “Advent” is especially rich with references to H.D.’s mother. The section opens with the mysterious “I cried too hard...” (115) to go on to describe a day in an Austrian village H.D. visited with her mother. It is the first in an array of many traumatic memories that form the constellation of her life. She goes back and forth between these traumas through free associations, anchoring them all to the moment of present analysis with Freud, the moment of writing of her notes, where they all start connecting to each other and making sense. Her mother is present in many of these experiences and memories, which leads Freud to believe that at some point in childhood, H.D. did not make the “traditional transference from mother to father, as is usual with girl of adolescence.” (136) It also appears that the only romantic connection H.D. has made was with the Dutchman Van Eck she had met on a boat trip; this figure she connects to her maternal uncle, to church, to art, meaning that, once again, he referred her back to her mother. Also, there is the name Helen, Hellas, Helios... The maternal attachment goes against Freud’s teachings, and the choice to focus on

it in *Tribute* is H.D.'s critique that shows the importance of the female tradition, from mother to daughter, where artistic values and talent is a part of the personal history and (as Freud would have to agree) a part of the history of the race.

H.D. has opted for the creation of a hysterical narrative even after the analysis with Freud; she was creating what Cixous years later would term 'female writing', 'woman's writing', conditioned by bisexuality as the "location within oneself of the presence of both sexes." (41) Women, unlike men, are able to admit the presence of this 'other' in them, which in turn raises the paradoxical question of writing as 'feminine' or 'masculine'. However, it appears that bisexuality for H.D. is not only a matter of literature. She observes all the doubling in her life: "There were two of everybody (except myself) in that first house on Church street," she begins her list:

There were the two brothers who shared the same room; the two half-brothers might turn up at any time, together; there were two maids who slept in the room over the kitchen. There were my two parents in their room. [...] My father had married two times; so again, there were two wives, though one was dead.

Then in later life, there were two countries, America and England [...]. So in me, two distinct racial or biological or psychological entities tend to grow nearer or blend, even, as time heals old breaks in consciousness. (32)

By admitting this duality in her, H.D. uncovers that, perhaps, what Freud was trying to heal, after all, were not only her fears of an external war, but her internal conflict as well, her bisexuality. Freud is opposed to her doubling inside; when H.D. mentions she thought she could have been happy with her friend Frances Josepha, whom she was infatuated with in her adolescent years, he radically rejects the thought: "No, not biologically". H.D. seems to conform to this opposition, yet the clues in "Advent" testify to the opposite. Her immediate reaction to Freud's rejection is that "though I have been so happy with the Professor (Freud - *Freude*), my head hurt and I felt unnerved." (152) H.D. connects this to memories of war she then goes on to share with Freud. Yet, it is obvious that there is a conflict in her about Freud himself; despite her praise of and devotedness to him, H.D. cannot agree with the Professor's

views. She has, until the point of their analysis, (and continues to in the future) lived with her companion Bryher, who took the place of Frances Josepha, both in her dream and in her life.

(152)

The multiplicity of writing is reflected in the language of *Tribute*: H.D. uses puns and alternative spellings to liberate the multiplicity that words have as well: *pears-pairs* (linking her childhood memory to the doubling of family figures), *gods-goods* (linking Freud's symbolism with his crude materialism), *Van Eck-Vaneck* (her love interest the Dutchman and her maternal uncle), and finally, even *Sigmund-Sieg Mund*, the victorious voice, *Freud-Freude*, joy. Hence, the doubling of words and meanings in H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* challenges the singularity of meaning and liberates language from the tight dichotomy of signifier-signified. The word play is a vehicle for psychoanalysis itself, as already mentioned. Together with the breaking of semantic and linguistic bonds, it brings one closer to a more infantile state, where language has the ability to express desire and pleasure, hence creating Kristeva's dual speaking subject, both conscious and unconscious. In H.D.'s *Tribute*, meaning is a work in progress, it changes and operates fluidly through language that does not only mediate, but also create H.D.'s personal mythology. Such a release of one's creativity is an act of liberation for both the woman artist and language, just like psychoanalysis liberated H.D.'s sexuality from the heterogeneous man-woman dual conditionality.

IV. Anaïs Nin – Winter of Artifice

In her interview with Barbara Freeman, Nin answers the question of whether there is any distinction between her art and life by stating: “[N]o, they only feed each other. [...] They tyrannize over each other in a nice way. There’s a standard I’ve set, that I want to live and work and write everything as closely together as possible.¹” By admitting her writing blurs the line between fact and fiction, Nin creates literature that is self-conscious. Her *Diaries of Anaïs Nin*, a work of 6 volumes encapsulating her life from 1931 to 1966, are another example of this. Joan Bobbitt’s article on “Truth and Artistry in the ‘Diary of Anaïs Nin’” focuses on the instances where the autobiographical *Diaries* are more fictitious than Nin’s fiction. Most notably, Bobbitt discusses the omission of relevant people and experiences from the *Diaries*, which excise from Nin’s work “everything humanly important, everything that does not affirm her masks and personal fictions. While she offers her self, she presents only a metaphor of self.”² This may be one way of looking at Nin’s work; another would be to examine the facts that can be found in her fiction, since for Nin there is not difference between the two. One such instance is Nin’s representation of her psychoanalyst Otto Rank as a character in her novelette *The Voice*, part three of her trilogy *Winter of Artifice*.

The personal and professional relationship between Nin and Rank begins with their therapy sessions in 1933, but lasts throughout Nin’s lifetime, as a source of inspiration for her writing. Sharon Spencer, who explores the Rank-Nin relationship in her article “Beyond Therapy: The Enduring Love of Anaïs Nin for Otto Rank”, defines it as having five dimensions: “patient and therapist; lovers, perhaps even fiancés; master therapist and

¹ Barbara Freeman and Anaïs Nin, “A Dialogue with Anaïs Nin,” *Chicago Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2. *Voices, Faces: The War, the Rest: A Context*, Chicago Review (1972): 32, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25294674> 21 Nov. 2017.

² Joan Bobbitt, “Truth and Artistry in the ‘Diary of Anaïs Nin’,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Indiana University Press, (May, 1982): 276, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831260> 20 Nov. 2017.

apprentice [...]; philosophical mentor and student [...]; and, finally and most important, their bond as a male muse and evolving woman artist.”³ Nin was deeply influenced by Rank’s concept of the duality of the author, implementing it in her fiction by creating doubles of characters that complete each other, such as Djuna and Johanna, discussed further on. Despite the complementary relationship between Nin and Rank described by Spenser above, there seems to be a negative dimension underlying it, which can be observed in *The Voice*. An engaging and volatile character, the Voice’s initial role is to balance out the imbalance that characters such as Djuna and Lilith represent. He is a point of order, towards which his patients gravitate. Unlike a silent observant Freudian, the Voice’s psychoanalytic method is similar to Rank’s: both listening and communicating with the patients in a reassuring voice. He is the one helping them reach completion, put the broken pieces together, as one of the patients concludes at the end of the psychoanalytic session:

Because you alone make me feel I am a woman. I feel that I get confused, lost, that somehow or other I butt my head against obstacles, blunder, but that you can take all this and direct it, transform it; that you lead me out of this great disorder.⁴

The analyst, both the real life person and his double in the fiction, is meant to fulfill the purpose of gluing together the fragmented parts of the selves. He is a fatherly figure whom they all try to please, surprisingly adding another figure to their list of oppressive partners and/or fathers. If the Voice is Rank’s double, could he perhaps have represented such an oppressive male figure for Nin as well? If their relationship was indeed one between lovers, one needs to consider how this affair influenced Nin’s representations of relationships in her novels, which all seem to be quite unhealthy. In addition, Nin seems not to miss the chance to turn the tables on the Voice. In the last part of the novelette, she humanizes the remote cold character he is. The Voice tells one of his patients:

³ Sharon Spenser, “Beyond Therapy: The Enduring Love of Anais Nin for Otto Rank,” *Anais Nin: Literary Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Nalbantian (New York: Macmillian Press, 1997), 98.

⁴ Anais Nin, *Winter of Artifice* (Sky Blue Press, 2007), 148. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

It is Sunday. The band is playing. I could be walking in the snow with the band playing. That is happiness. When I had happiness I did not recognize it, or feel it. It was too simple. I did not know I had it. I only know it when I am sitting here strapped to this armchair and listening to confessions and obsessions. My body is cramped. I want to do the things they do. At most I am allowed to watch. I am condemned to see through a perpetual keyhole every intimate scene of their life. But I am left out. Sometimes I want to be taken in. I want to be desired, possessed, tortured too. (130)

By humanizing the analyst in this manner, Nin gives him all a human is: desire for love, but traumatized by it; sincere but weak; finally able to talk but losing the ability to unconditionally listen. The Voice is at last given a voice of his own, but with this he takes the place of a character and a patient, losing the privilege and authority of an analyst.

As mentioned, *Winter of Artifice* consists of three parts, three plotlines that all focus on unhealthy and often destructive relationships for the female characters of the novel. On the surface, the liaison of Djuna and Hans (a character based on Henry Miller) in the first novelette *Djuna* is one where in many aspects she is the nurturer, a mother-like figure, selflessly supporting him financially and emotionally. The novelette's main dilemma is Djuna's pondering on whether Johanna (alter ego of Miller's wife June), Hans's estranged wife, is actually her love rival, and to what extent she influences Hans's writing. The distinctions between life and writing seem to disappear for Djuna, just like they are irrelevant for Nin: what ends up torturing Djuna is not Johanna the woman (who she falls in love with upon meeting), but Johanna's presence in Hans's novels:

And now Hans was erecting pyramids of notes. Johanna had shed her hair on his pages, her perfume, her torn dresses, her shadow as she dressed, her tears, her nail lacquer, her painted eyelashes, her broken bracelets. The notes were stained and brimming with her presence.

A volume of Proust was open on the desk. It was marked with Johanna's name, with references to Johanna's lies, Johanna's friends. The last page on the typewriter was a description of Johanna's jealousies, the scenes she created, the brusque reconciliations. *Johanna. Johanna. [...] My joy crumbled. He loves no one but her.* (33)

For Djuna, Johanna's trace in the writing is highly erotic and sexual. In this aspect, Johanna is viewed through both the male and female eyes. Her visual power is obvious to both Hans and Djuna: her voice, hurriedness, manner of speaking, restlessness and sensuality – they

both are enchanted and possessed with her imperfect beauty. *Lying* is the male terminology for what Johanna is doing, Hans's perspective and understanding: "[s]he sat down and she confessed her whole life to me. And what she confessed was all untrue," (1) he tells Djuna in his initial description of his wife. She is full of secrets and this torments Hans, who is not able to interpret her – it is why she becomes the source of continuous inspiration for his books, almost as if he needed the talking cure to be able to heal himself from the blow her indecipherability strikes to his ego and authority. It is for that reason that he triumphs at the end of the novel, upon discovering Djuna and Johanna in each other's arms. At one point, he asks Djuna: "[n]ow tell me, why do you think Johanna so often repeated that I would never know the greatest secret of her life, even when I was absolutely sure of her love for the other woman?"(33) By witnessing Djuna and Johanna surrender to each other in the end, Hans reaches his catharsis. It is Johanna's nature that he needs to discover, and by confirming one of his theories about her, he finally overpowers the Johanna in his life, as he overpowers in his writing the doubled Johanna of his novels.

While presenting the woman as a mysterious being, Nin is pointing to something she also expresses in her short story "Sabina". The eponymous protagonist and her lover have a relationship that reflects Hans and Johanna's when it comes to discovering the truth and nature of a woman: "[w]hile Jay was so concerned to know whether Sabina had other lovers, whether she loved women, or took drugs, he overlooked the true mystery: *why were such secrets necessary?*"⁵ Hans asks Djuna the same about Johanna: why did she lie so much? Djuna offers a few possibilities, proving she understands Johanna as a woman, but also showing Nin's own involvement into the creation of her protagonist, a creation that follows the principles of her art. Djuna's answer splits Johanna's essence into two parts - the one of a

⁵ Nin, Anais Nin, "Sabina," *Chicago Review*, Vol. 42, No. ¾, *Fifty Years: A Retrospective Issue*, Chicago Review (1996): 61, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40783746> 25 Nov. 2017.

woman in love and the one of an artist, responsible for the embellishment and improving of the experience of life:

[She lied so much] for many reasons. Because she loved you and could not bear to hurt you. Or because she loved herself and could not bear to spoil her own image of herself. Or because she feared not to be loved as she was. Or because she wanted to improve on life, because she had read too many books and they went to her head. [...] Or because you wrote certain things about her and she wanted to live up to them. (26)

Nin has expressed the creation of her fiction in similar terms. In her interview with Freeman, she explains that in her novels “there was a myth, and I wanted that myth to raise the standard of our life a little bit, just above the ground, just a little bit above the daily facts and the things that oppress us and the heavy daily contingencies.”⁶ Once again, we see an example of the doubling of the author herself and/or her opinions in the fiction; in the case of Nin this doubling is openly presented to the reader, she is explicitly stating that this interface of life into her art is not only a literary technique, but it is the foundation of her fiction.

What is more, Djuna knows the solution to Johanna’s riddle. They are two faces of one coin – reflections, if not doubles, of each other. Djuna and Johanna – the two names sound similar, and Djuna seems to possess this knowledge immediately from the beginning of her affair with Hans. She treats this knowledge as a secret he will never know, and it is also a secret that empowers her in her troubled relationship:

The only thing I do not tell Hans is that I too am a Johanna. I have infinite possibilities for delicate perversions. [...] Evil is life; I want to live out the evil in me. I want to surrender to Johanna. I want the life she led, desecration, humiliation, poisons, savagery. The demon in me is like the demon in Johanna. [...] In Johanna I love the darkness, and the abyss. (21)

What we see are thus two principles of light and darkness, of the nurturing and life-bringing energy of Djuna opposed to Johanna’s destructive one. Through this bond they share, Nin creates a tribute to Rank’s duality of the author in her fiction; Djuna merges with Johanna to form the completed figure of the artist: “[i]f I were to unmask you, Johanna, I should only be

⁶ Freeman, 31.

revealing myself. You are the face of my unmasked self. [...] We see the face beneath the mask, you mine, I yours, because it is the same face.”(56) This face is also Nin’s face, for Djuna is her alter ego, through which Nin concludes: ‘lying’ (as Hans would call it), or mixing fiction into fact, is part of the creative process that gives birth to literature. By whipping oneself into stylistic forms, words, images or colors, by creating a persona for every occasion, by creating a mask for every person – that is how the ideal is created, and the outlet for these calamitous forces of creation, these rebellious elements, is verbal art: “I am going to love my own books better than I love Hans,”(38) Djuna, and through her Nin herself, proclaims, placing herself in a position of control over Hans (and, perhaps, Rank or Miller) and her own emotions.

Yet the reason Djuna is attracted to Hans in the first place is that she feels the need to complete her fragmented identity, her core ego. Once again, the relationship resembles one of a therapist and patient. When loving Hans fails, due to the violence and opposition of the relationship, Djuna turns to Johanna to find that second self that would complete her, and through this she finally has her needs fulfilled, her therapeutic literary endeavors enable her to heal by accepting the darkness of herself, represented by Johanna. In this way, Nin defines her taboo of incest: the love for Johanna is the love for one’s self and a craving for fulfillment and completion of that fragmented self. As a character, Djuna from *Winter of Artifice* fits Kristeva’s notion of the fluid, decentered and multiple subject, similarly to the Djuna character in Nin’s short story “House of Incest”; through their merging and physical love, they both can be seen as bisexual as per Cixous’s definition of the presence of both sexes in one’s self. The origin of this love comes from the same place Nin claims her novels originate in – the unconscious, which in her fiction is epitomized through symbolism. Nin thus connects the novelist to the psychologist. She admits not having good knowledge of the collective symbol, attributing this to her general unfamiliarity with mythology, but she

stresses the personal image and its significance, like the image of the ship in her fiction.⁷ And that is what “House of Incest” essentially is: a collection, a collage of personal imagery that delves deep into the protagonist’s consciousness. Djuna in “House of Incest” describes her birth as it happens: the fluid and watery world symbolizing the maternal protection of the uterus; the abrupt plunge into the world, a shipwreck; meeting the figure of the monstrous god-like predator mother Sabina (at the same time representing the other half of Djuna) and the sexualized fusion with this mother. This is what incest symbolizes; finding otherness in self and selfhood in others, and accepting this double existence that makes an ego complete:

I see two women in me freakishly bound together, like circus twins. I see them tearing away from each other. I can hear the tearing, the anger and love, passion and pity. When the act of dislocation suddenly ceases —or when I cease to be aware of the sound— then the silence is more terrible because there is nothing but insanity around me, the insanity of things pulling, pulling within oneself, the roots tearing at each other to grow separately, the strain made to achieve unity.⁸

Djuna visually absorbs Johanna (or Sabina in “House of Incest”) in a sexual and physical manner, objectifying the woman and her body. All that is observed by Hans’s eyes, through the male gaze. Djuna is, thus, not only the other face of Johanna; there is a fragment of Hans in her as well, stressing Cixous’s bisexuality once again. We end up with a character that is not only light and darkness, but additionally both the female and male principle; each counterpart of her loves the opposite and the same gender, yet any part she may love, she always ends up loving herself in others.

The relationship between Hans and Djuna is turbulent, not only due to the arrival of Johanna, but also due to how they embody opposite principles. Nin’s vocabulary is loaded with the presence of war, in addition to stressing Hans’s violent nature and his tendencies to destruction. Physically and materially, Hans is dependent on Djuna; emotionally, he devours her, as seen in some of her passages:

⁷ Freeman, 281.

⁸ Anais Nin, *House of Incest* (Olympia Press: 2004), 7.

War. War was to be expected. Inevitable. Hans was war. (36)

His gigantic devouring spirit, in quest of substance, in quest of inspiration, in quest of exoticism. [...] He had the appetite of the age of the giants. [...] I am being fucked by a cannibal. It is all that is human that he devours,. He eats me as if my love for him were something he wanted to possess inside his body, at the very core of his body, like fuel. [...] He is not concerned to know whether I live or breathe within the dark cavern of his whale-like being within the whale-belly of his ego. (39)

In their relationship they seem to be far from equal: at some point Djuna realizes Hans's egoism towards her, how he is reckless with her money, how he is inconsiderate of her feelings, how he sometime uses her for his writing. It is as a reaction to these things, that Djuna starts her inner rebellion against him. Her defiance is emotional and literary; to win over Hans the lover she needs to become more like Johanna, the 'deceiving, lying woman', indecipherable and overpowering man. Perhaps this is the reason Djuna discovers her 'other' face – it is not only a completion of the self, it is also affirmation of that self as a woman.

Nin has presented her feminist ideas in her "Notes on Feminism," where she states that her contribution through the *Diaries* was not political, but psychological, where she explores the different confinements of women. In addition, she expresses the need for women to focus on themselves rather than focusing on being the opposite to man:

I am merely placing the emphasis on a confrontation of ourselves because it is a source of strength. Do not confuse my shifting of responsibility as blame. I am not blaming woman. I say that if we take the responsibility for our situation we can feel less helpless than when we put the blame on society or man. (25)

The woman needs to first focus on an individual solution to her personal crisis, before she can act to influence her surroundings, that is, create a microcosm that can be used as a basis for building the macrocosm of society. Her individual solution grows organically, adding to the collective synthesis that is only sustainable through emotional and mental liberation, without undirected blind anger of the collective masses. This is the vision for the "new woman" Nin imagines: retaining a more human relationship to human beings, uncorrupted by the impersonality of the male obsession with power, which she sees to be the origin of

injustice and war.(26) Nin calls it a solution to practical problems by psychological liberation. She believes in transcending the obstacles that create constraints, the need for the return to the non-represses childhood of the individual in general: “[T]he real tyrants are guilt, taboos, educational inheritance, these are our enemies. And we can grapple with them. The real enemy is what we were taught, not always by man, but often by our mothers and grandmothers.”⁹

Nin concludes her short essay by proposing her plan of action to the feminist movement:

It is less important to attack male writers than to discover and read women writers, to attack male-dominated films than to make films by women. If the passivity of woman is going to erupt like a volcano or an earthquake, it will not accomplish anything but disaster. This passivity can be converted to creative will. If it expresses itself in war then it is an imitation of man's methods. (28)

This is, perhaps, one possible explanation for Djuna’s journey and development in *Winter of Artifice*. She responds to Hans’s wars by peacefulness; even when she feels undervalued by him, she confronts his egoism with an intensification of her affections; his hunger and appetite for Djuna’s ideas, moods and inspiration evoke the same hunger in her, restoring her taste for life and love. Djuna is the prototypical feminist for Nin, and she evolves from a woman who submits to a man, through a woman who imitates a man, to a woman standing victorious before both Hans and Johanna, basking in the light of her admitted imperfections and desires.

Influenced by psychoanalysis and consciously engaging with the feminist question, Nin’s novelettes are self-conscious since they are aware of their status as an artistic creation. They are not implicit with their metafiction, as numerous examples from *Winter of Artifice* show.

When Djuna is explaining Johanna’s ‘lies’ to Hans, she thinks the following to herself:

“When I was asked where I came from I could only answer: books!”(26) There is a double

⁹ Anais Nin, “Notes on Feminism,” *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 13, No. ½., *Woman: An Issue*, The Massachusetts Review, Inc. (Winter - Spring,1972), 27, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088197> 1 Dec. 2017.

meaning behind this proclamation, where one is left to wonder whether this is Djuna stating her being inspired by literature to create her personalities or if she is aware of herself being a character in a book. Possibly, Djuna is also aware of being an author of a book: “I am sure that both I and Johanna invent personages”(33) could sound like a confession of a woman that manipulates by deception, but also a statement confirming her creative and authoritative power over others, which in this case would belong to Nin as the author of the novel as well. The most metaphysical moment comes from the debate between Djuna and Hans with their Parisian artist friends, where Djuna contemplates the duality of the author, besides her duality as a woman:

[The artist] is born with a mania to complete himself, to create himself beyond the womb. His reality is sometimes questionable. [...] He is so multiple and detached, fluid and amorphous, that his self is constantly falling apart into fragments and is only recomposed by a book, by his work. With his imagination he can flow into all the moulds, multiply and divide himself, and yet whatever he does, he will always be *two*.
(35)

The figure of Nin as an author must be taken into consideration, since she seems to be explicitly pointing to the fact that she is always *two*, she always doubles as an author, as well as a character. What she is describing is her own journey and how her completion depends on the book of which she is a part of, or she is to write. Her reality is questionable, as is the reality of the self-conscious fiction as such. The fiction mimics the self that, paradoxically, surges in its egoism and thrives to fulfillment, but the more it moves towards a fulfillment, the more it realizes there is no one unified self. The multiple self is, hence, emphasized as a prototype of the artistic personality of the 20th century.

V. Ann Quin – *Berg*

Unlike H.D. and Nin, Ann Quin does not explicitly state an autobiographical connection to her fiction. That said, it is almost impossible not to notice some similarities between her personal experience and that of her protagonist Berg in the eponymous novel. Like Berg, Quin was abandoned by her father at a young age; raised in the seaside city of Birmingham by her abusive single mother, Quin's childhood was somewhat traumatic – though not Catholic, she was sent to a convent for education, a place she described as “[a] ritualistic culture that gave me a conscience. A death wish and a sense of sin. Also a great lust to find out, experience, what true evil was.”¹ A death wish and a sense of sin seem to overshadow Berg's quasi-quest in the novel: he arrives in a sea-side town to kill his father, while at the same time fighting the wish to kill himself. To finish up the doubled family portrait, Berg's mother Edith shows some abusive tendencies, obviously enjoying her son's feeling of guilt for not being his father, in addition to the slight sadism of shaving him with a blunt blade, knowing she will cause bleeding: “The martyred airs, the coughing, sometimes all night long, over the weekends; a special shave, blunt blades, her pleasure in putting on the dabs of cotton wool.”² Quin's further life is marked by her unsuccessful attempt at becoming an actress, random secretarial jobs and the publication of her first novel *Berg* in 1964. In the course of the years, beginning shortly before *Berg*'s publication and ending with her supposed suicide by drowning in 1973, Quin suffered multiple mental breakdowns, during some of which she was hospitalized, on occasion even losing her ability to speak. To parallel that, Berg's character appears to be an actor on the stage of his own mind (perhaps reflecting Quin's unfulfilled dramatic aspirations), while his thoughts and actions have a certain degree of

¹ Brian Evenson and Joanna Howard, “Ann Quin”, *Review of Contemporary Fiction* (23:2) (2003): 50, ProQuest, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:abell:R01677479:0.

² Ann Quin, *Berg* (London: Grafton, 1989), 7. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

irrationality in them. In his article on her style and representation of consciousness, Phillip Stevick mentions that one of Quin's therapists asked for copies of her novels to be used as diagnostic tools in helping her to reorganize her badly damaged life. Stevick concludes that "[Quin's] novels do give a record of a mind that is, at once, artful, distanced, dispassioned and raw, immediate, its tensions unresolved."³ Berg doubles Quin in her novel, re-living her experiences and serving as a medium for translating these experiences through language. This representation of consciousness and experience, though, is everything but traditional; Freud's talking cure is ineffective, as in Quin's narrative there is no linearity and no order restructured from the chaos of the mind.

According to Stevick, Berg is "made to seem a special case – neurotic, obsessive and unstable. [...] Quin, in effect, answers the objection that Berg's mind is anomalous and marginal, therefore of only limited interest as an arena of consciousness."⁴ Berg is central to the novel since all the different voices and characters are filtered through him: he is the focalizer of their speech and actions, but also of his own memories. Through Berg, we hear the voices of both his father and his mistress Judith from the present, but also his mother's voice from the past. This focalization creates the effect of Berg having one big internal dialogue with himself, an effect supported by the formal aspects of the text – no direct speech quoted, little punctuation, confused and confusing syntax, significant decrease in verb usage, etc.:

How absurd all this is, of course it wasn't him when – well when – but how can you be sure? You haven't looked in the sober light of day – a case of mistaken identity perhaps, the hour, the place, how can I precisely recall when the past is an arid landscape filled with a vegetating imagination; that secularization of the ideal. (80)

³ Phillip Stevick, "Voices in the Head: Style and Consciousness in the Fiction of Ann Quin," *Breaking the Sequence: Women's Experimental Fiction*, ed. Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 239.

⁴ Stevick, 234.

It is unclear how much of this story is actually happening as opposed to being imagined in his mind; considering Berg is likely to be schizophrenic, the probability of the latter is much higher. Berg, thus, is not a reliable narrator. Moreover, he is not alone in his narration: except for the passages in the first person, there seems to be one more voice that observes and records Berg's actions externally, in a third person narration. Both Berg and this other voice act as camera eyes, recording the inner and outer world; the presence of the second voice also creates an object out of Berg as the subject of the story. In this way, Quin reflects in language what Berg is aware of in the novel: there are forces he cannot influence, authorial or godly ones, that drive the narrative and predetermine its course, together with the fate of the characters. The narrative camera eye is doubled as the microscopic eye (I?) of Berg: he is obsessed with observing people, be it in the dancehall opposite his window, or through the keyhole of his father's room. He remembers watching his parents' intercourse in the woods and "[t]hrough the keyhole afterwards, in the long dark hours, when [he] dared not look anymore – the sap that creeps from wood on fire," (29) while masturbating.; he feels utter disappointment when he is unable to poke a hole in the partition dividing the two rooms and look through it. By the end of the novel, Berg's voyeurism turns against him, as he fully becomes the object observed: once he has taken the place of his father in the narrative, a peculiar stranger resembling his father moves into Berg's previous room, obviously interested in the lives of his neighbors.

The act of observing is directly connected to the act of representation – Quin's syntax and style create a strong dramatic effect in *Berg*. Beginning with the first sentence, there is a feeling of watching the action unroll before our eyes: "A man called Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father." This introduction in third person is followed by a description of Berg, also in the third person, then switching to first person narration by Berg himself:

[...] a body rolls upon a creaking bed: fish without fins, flat-headed, white-scaled, bound by a corridor room – dimensions rarely touched by the sun – Alistair Berg, hair-restorer, curled webbed toes, strung between heard and clock, nibbles in the half-light, and laughter from the dance hall opposite. Shall I go there again, select another one? (1)

Berg is a hero in his own story – he is aware that he has a specific role he needs to play, and that his life, as such, is predetermined in advance by forces he calls ‘gods’, but also by his childhood and family situation. Despite the lack of direct speech and formal dramatic elements, the novel is reminiscent of a classical Greek tragedy: there is the tragic hero, the somewhat traumatic relationship with the parents and a certain godly forces that decide about the destiny of the characters. When he meets his father in the middle of the night, Berg thinks how lucky he was for the opportunity to meet and kill him: “the gods must have been with me.” (37) He is aware of this fatalism and part of his quasi-quest is liberation from these uncontrollable forces: “The tragic sense of destiny is inherent in every man; but I defy fate, I alone am responsible for every action, every scene.” (28) The root of oppression that for Berg comes from the ‘gods’ can be found in Quin’s own experience with radical Catholicism during her childhood. At one point in the novel, a voice (which we assume to be Berg talking to himself) states:

Had the convolution he was now in merely been transferred – destined to rotate the same way? [...] Yet how much easier it would be to carry out orders from a hierarchy. Opposite a poster where the lettering had been broken up into spittle on the board CHRIST DIED FOR YOUR SINS. Isn’t it enough to save myself? (57)

Rather than Berg though, this voice is more likely to belong to Quin herself; she has a strong presence in the writing and though she is not stating it explicitly, there are many metafictional elements (besides her presence) that intensify the self-consciousness of *Berg*. There are numerous allusions to writers, such as Dickens and Horace, and it is debatable as to whether they can be ascribed to originating in Berg’s limited consciousness that appears to be rather preoccupied with unconscious drives; they point in Quin’s direction instead. She also reminds us of the characters’ textuality in the novel: “Soon he noticed a shadow – an ink stain – spread across the pavement,” (94) says the narrator, when Berg sees someone resembling his

supposedly dead father on the street. The ink stain alludes to the tattoos on Berg's father's back, yet it is also what he textually amounts to: words written in ink on the page. Quin points to the fictiveness of the novel and characters on other occasions: carrying the dead body of his father rolled in a carpet, Berg feels one hand flapping out while he runs, so he shoves it back into the carpet noting "the rubbery texture of the flesh – ah well the old man had never been a flesh and blood character really." (97) Even Berg himself is aware of being fiction: "I decided to change my character, therefore shouldn't I be acting the new role?" (101) It is unclear how he perceives the audience observing him: is he only acting on the stage of his own mind, where the audience listening are the 'gods', or is he aware of the fictiveness of that whole world as well? Quin's fiction is full of such ambiguities, and what she points to is the instability of a signifier, which cannot unanimously be assigned to a signified; human consciousness functions similarly, and any way of representing it as a linear, cohesive stream does not reflect reality. Her fiction is "[t]hread[ing] experience through imaginative material, acting out fictitious part, or choosing a stale-mate for a compromise."(8)

The second part of Berg's quest is his search for identity – how does a displaced figure such as him find his place? Liberation from the gods/God is one of the means for securing this identity: "If I simply say 'I am', or 'I love', these are hardly enough, not even the most indulgent of all actions 'I shall kill' can make me declare 'I am', therefore God is." (27) Yet securing his identity for Berg is connected with a destruction of his double – his own father. The Bergs are not only doubled in name: according to the limited information we receive about them, they both share the same life principles and have the same attitudes to the women in their lives. For both, the figure of mother and lover is ambiguous; both father and son feel the urge to escape these women: Berg the father has left Edith, just as he leaves Judith. Greb feels immense relief to leave his mother when he goes to look for his father, and despite his

erotic desire for Judith, he thinks of leaving her numerous times when they are finally together:

No it wasn't worth it. No? Not even for the warmth, for the comfort of her arms at night, knowing if he went out that he could come back, someone to welcome him, know at last he belonged to one person he would be responsible for? No, no, certainly not, she would only eat you whole, drain everything out of you in a week. Why had the old man left? Precisely because he couldn't stand any more of her, for that very reason wasn't it, hadn't he once said women were more or less consistent parasites? (125)

Greb desperately wants intimacy and a connection to other human beings, yet he is incapable of loving others – just like his father, who loves a budgerigar more than he loves his own son. There is also an element of irony in viewing women as parasites, for both father and son are fully materially dependent on these women, constantly asking them for monetary support and returning to them in times of need. Edith and Judith seem to be doubles of each other, and are interchangeable for Berg and his father – the boundary between mother and lover is thin. This doubling gives incestuous connotation to the relationships between mothers and sons in the novel, ultimately alluding to the oedipal myth that Berg is trying hard to escape.

Quin appears to use Freud's notion of the oedipal complex to build her family model, yet she does so with a twist. While the classical theme of 'a desire for the death of the father, in order to reunite with the mother' – be it Edith or Judith – is dominating the plot of *Berg*, the expression of sexuality does not fit the Freudian model: Berg seems to desire the father, instead of the mother, who he denounces. While he is able to feel desire for women, this heterogeneous sexuality is for him undoubtedly connected with death: "Had [Judith and his father] gone out, or were they dead – copulating too fast, too much?" (9) At a point in the novel, his drunken father makes sexual advances towards Berg, whom he presumes to be Judith. Berg doesn't seem to reject this; his mind is occupied with imagining how Judith and Edith had reacted to it, but he has no thoughts of horror or disgust. In comparison, there is Berg's euphoric reaction to the possibility of changing himself into Judith's clothes and

disguising himself as a woman: “That’s it, the very thing, why hadn’t he thought of it before, though at the beginning a question of a real non-identity had not been such a problem.” (116)

The denouncement of the mother leads to Berg’s repressed homosexuality, and perhaps explains the reason for the schizophrenic, hysterical narrative of *Berg*, a narrative that according to Freud is exclusively female. Hence, Quin’s *Berg* serves a double purpose: it accepts Freud’s interpretation that the individual’s sexuality is rooted in the family relationships, but it blurs the difference between its development in boys and girls.

By repressing his homosexual desires, Berg denies his identity, and this irrevocably leads to the desire for death, annihilation of the self. The suicidal drive is very strong in Berg, he constantly fights the urge to ‘rocket’ into the universe and get rid of his body, the shell: “How easy it would be to finally slide over, allowing the rest to absolve itself. But remember society owes you nothing, therefore, doing yourself in isn’t the answer, no reward for the resentment, and how would I know if it had proved freedom?” (8) He almost manages to cut his wrists, but is miraculously saved by Judith knocking on his door. The setting intensifies his despair: he is surrounded by the sea, which physically allows him no escape from the little town. It paradoxically allows him no escape from life either, since when thrown into the sea, he miraculously survives. In spite of the fear of ‘sliding over’, Berg cannot resist the suicidal drive, since he cannot accept his own double, his second (homo)sexual identity.

Even when he tries to murder his father the double, who is it that he actually attempts to kill?

The murder attempt is nothing but a suicide attempt: one Berg dies, the other remains, *non omnis moriar*,(59) becomes remains – a dead body living in a disenchanted age.

The characters in *Berg* seem to have an additional symbolic existence in a parallel world: they are all expressed through certain animals. Mentions of wet fur and Sebastian the cat point to Judith’s feline qualities. As such, she devours the Bergs: Berg the father is associated with his budgerigar, which Judith manages to blind in a fit of revenge – as per the Oedipus

myth, the blinding is associated with castration, in this case by the mother figure, which reverts the original myth. Berg the son is a fishy creature, white body without fins, curled webbed toes; the sea does not manage to kill him and he is amorphous, which alludes to his bisexuality. In the food chain of the novel, he is at the bottom, devoured by both Judith and his father. When he is pursued for his homosexual tendencies by his father and a group of men in the end, he compares their shouting to the cries of gulls, while he himself “dived further [into the sea], deeper, gaining invisible depths; falling into more than silence, or space or sleep, non-human, not breathing, lungs part of response, reflex-controlled,” (153) thus a fish to be picked on by the sea-birds. By devolving humans to animals, Quin points to the instinctual and more primitive drives that are present in human nature and are part of the forces that shape human life. Yet, while a return to this animalistic state is regressive, it also signifies existence much closer to nature and, as such, free of social restrictions, the cyclical nature of which Berg is very aware of:

Besides hadn't he always taken others, himself, for granted, to be creatures of habit, chained to environment, hereditary complaints and complexes. Had the convulsion he was not in merely been transferred – destined to rotate the same way? (57)

Peculiar to Quin's narrative are passages where returning to his childhood memories, Berg goes back to a specific dream-like setting in nature, where he felt like a king and a great warrior, ruling this remembered or imagined world of his:

[P]atterns of sunlight, shadows, shapes of stones, hills that moved through the dark, when you were filled with a world that was strictly your own. Lying starkers in a wood, under damp, soft warm leaves with their delicious feminine smell. Oh yes, you were singing green in a golden age, dancing by the water's edge, under a mosaic sky. (46)

This imagined idealistic world is strongly juxtaposed to the sterile and timeless setting of *Berg*, which also reflects the sterility of the society Quin lived in. Once again, through Berg's individual disturbed mind, she expresses a universal condition of a repressed society, where any liberation of desires is impossible. Such a society is full of contradictions that do not make sense:

[E]yes, nose, ears corroded with smoke, condensed heating, the smell of fish and chips, into the multiplying noise of a town bent on reminding that this is a super-civilized hygienic century, tomorrow you may die, but today you live and make merry on instant blood pumped through processed robots that make daily headlines trivial. (31)

For Berg, the paradox seems to be that even in such a contradictory age, suicide, the “one-way ticket to a no-man’s land” (11) is still not accepted. Unable to fulfil his sexual desires either, Berg is forever locked in a circle where there is no evolution to a higher human state, nor is he allowed to fully devolve and return to the purer animal state of existence. The only movement he (and all the Bergs to come) will have is cyclical repetition, doubling and mirror-imaging of their predecessors, whose destiny will once again be predetermined. Language is also helpless; it is not able to find a way out of the circle, since it fails in bringing order and functioning as the talking cure – instead it becomes a medium for the schizophrenic’s multiplicity of voices.

VI. Brigid Brophy – *In Transit*

On the question of using real people as a model for the characters in her novels, Brigid

Brophy has stated:

I think it's probably true to say that, with one exception, I have never written anything based on a real person, though obviously little pieces of real experience get used. But I have certainly never attempted to put – and I don't think I have ever even inadvertently succeeded in putting – a real person into a book.¹

Despite not dealing with doubling of this kind, Brophy still manages to insert into her fiction topics that are of personal importance to her, such as the fight for human rights, concerns about the state of art (especially music and architecture), feminist opinions and critique of various social institutions. She even goes a step further. In her metafictional novel *In Transit*, Brophy explicitly inserts herself into the fiction by becoming a character. By fictionalizing herself, she constructs a double in the novel, whose function is twofold. Firstly, she uses it to address the readers and explain to them how she weaves her fictional tapestry, in order not to baffle or put them off; it is a practical move on her part, as she has concluded that when readers misunderstand or do not understand her novels, it hurts her more than them, since they would then not buy her books.² The second function of the double is to create an effect of alienation in the reader, which, paradoxically, seems to go against the first one. A few times in *In Transit*, Brophy directly addresses the reader through 'open letters', inserts that she calls 'interludes', where she explains the technique of fiction and invites the reader to inspect the machinery of her narration:

An alienation effect may be a fiction within fiction, purporting to thrust the spectator back into the real world outside the frame but in practice drawing him deeper into the fictitious perspective. [...] Perhaps these interludes are holes I have torn in my canvas through which you can see the veritable wall on which my picture hangs. Or perhaps I have simulated on my canvas both torn canvas and the wall you see through to. Do not,

¹ Leslie Dock, "An Interview with Brigid Brophy," *Contemporary Literature* Vol. 17, No. 2. UWP, (1976): 153, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1207662>, 23 Dec. 2017.

² Dock, 169.

however, please, assume I am making a monkey of you. [...] That, in the entirely ludicrous fix I have described myself finding myself in, can refer only to myself.³

This alienation is not distancing the reader from the fiction; it is distancing the reader from the traditional rules fiction has to obey, such as Aristotelian logic, but also linguistic rules regarding language, syntax and semantics. Despite being openly directive, Brophy states she does not wish to play god in her fiction; what she wishes for is the reader's "sympathy for [her] as a narrator as well as for [her] as a character – if, indeed, the two are separable." (64) Similarly to how the audience was an actual participant in the Greek antique tragedies, Brophy addresses the readers as if they were an audience and pulls them into the narration. We observe Pat the protagonist in various situations in the airport and during the TV show she⁴ participates in; Pat is also very conscious of the constant gazes, of the need to hide her thoughts, which, ironically, the audience can still hear through the narrator. Could this audience also be the desired interlocutor Pat is addressing? If that is the case, it means that, as readers, we have also become characters in the novel. With this Brophy questions the reader-writer dichotomy, to the degree of being unsure which one of them is, actually, fiction. She is a character in her novel, thus fictional for the reader, but at the same time the reader is "the fictitious – the, indeed, entirely notional – character" (71) for her. She does not even know what sex we are, Brophy concludes.

In Transit mimics more elements of a Greek antique drama, another example being Brophy's punning on Greek character names to actually be Irish:

And though we are all Greek heroes, we Irish – O'Dysseus (whom Joyce distinguished under the vocative You-Lysses), O'edipus, and most cogently of all, with not a syllable displaced, O'Rion – yet for me it is always, through the particularity of the circumstances, O'Restes who speaks most natively with my voice. (56)

³ Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, (London: Macdonald and Company Ltd, 1969), 70. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

⁴ For the sake of simplicity and comfort of reading, I will address Pat as she. That does not mean that her gender is, indeed, female.

In the post-scriptum to the first interlude, Brophy also stresses her voice speaking with an Irish accent, which once again strengthens the effect of alienation caused by her appearance and the aural aspect of *In Transit*, hence, Brophy's personal connection to the novel. Herself being Irish, she alludes to the legend of Saint Patrick and Irish Catholicism, but also historically and literary figures and organizations, such as Sinn Fein, Horatio Nelson, Oscar Wilde and, especially James Joyce. Joyce has a very strong influence on Brophy's style – it almost appears as if *In Transit* is a mini-tribute to Joyce:

Pardon me ma'am, your mollibloomers are shewin'. [...] We lost Thermopylae, the double pom-pom Bloom.

Should I snatch it and announce to all In Transit my tribute to my great Triestine compalien the comedi-chameleon, the old pun gent himself? I could loose on the lounge his obituary: I am the voyce of one crying in the wilderness, reJoyce with me. [...] Buck Mulligan would come out to play on words today. (36)

Hence, except for being self-conscious, *In Transit* also belongs to the category of historiographic metafiction, through these allusions. Joyce's inspiration is visible in the way Brophy's language works and expresses differences in meaning through puns. Brophy explains this to the reader in the second open letter: the word 'ludibrium' she is punning with is Latin for "a mockery, derision, wantonness." (70) And that is exactly what the whole novel seems to be: a game, an imitation, a parody.

If *In Transit* is a "disintegration of rulebooks"⁵, as Brophy has stated, the rulebook most disintegrated is the linguistic one – hence linguistic leprosy and language breakdown. On the semantic and morphological level, we observe countless puns throughout *In Transit*: Brophy plays with homophones/homonyms, words differing in one letter and coinages. Homophones are of special importance, since they are aural doubles. The homophone "eye – I" (16), for example, connects visual appearance with identity. Pat is quite distressed when, upon discovering that she has forgotten her gender, realizes that she is unable to tell it based on

⁵ Dock, 166.

how she looks and what she is wearing, yet, she does not fail to wistfully observe that the rest of the travelers surely have no problem identifying her as either male or female. On the topic of the ambiguity of modern clothes, Pat concludes: “Society has no right, I had thought, to treat you differently according to whether you are a man or a woman, and so society has no right to require you to wear a livery that will help it to classify you at sight.” (78) It has never occurred to her, though, that one day someone might need to deduce their sex based on clothes. ‘Sex’ itself is a polyvalent term: during her gender debate, Pat observes that soon, after the required field ‘Sex’ in a questionnaire, instead of ‘male’ or ‘female’, one will fill in “Sex: yes, thrice weekly.” (74) The loss of the meaning of ‘sex’ as ‘gender’ corresponds to Pat’s loss of gender; it is also parodying equality between men and women taken to the extreme.

The triad ‘nanny-bunny-punny’ repeatedly occurs in different combinations, alluding to how the text is a game and the protagonist an infantile persona in need of games and care. “The interlocutor whom child-I used to trail to bed was a punny,” (13) Pat states, explicitly connecting the bunny (as a childhood companion and imaginary interlocutor for children, a prototype of a nanny) to the interlocutor of her own text, who is led through the narrative by the puns. In addition, Pat is also aware that the narrative is meant for her own entertainment, like a story told to a child by its nanny: “narrative [...] is imaged according to bodily functions [like metabolism – one does not see it happening], an old habit of [infants’] [...] whose childhood is preoccupied with them” (13)). This would mean Pat is aware of the self-consciousness of the fiction; despite this, she still decides to continue playing the game with the narrator. When looking at some thrillers for sale in the airport, Pat thinks about how and why they attract the readers’ attention: “How did [the creator] lure me into his book to begin with? By promise of puzzle, by a rebus, a ship in a bottle. He played, corrupter, on my infantile sexual curiosity.” (44) She also defines her home (which, for her, is the space of the

novel), her “capital Home [punning with Rome] was founded by Romulus and Rebus.” (13)

The space of the novel as a home is described through coinages, which correspond to its

fictional status: to describe the cosmopolitanism of the airport, Brophy coins the term

“Airportism”, that is to become the 20th century “Enlight’n’airment.” (26)

Morphologically, Brophy also disintegrates the noun category of gender and number,

especially when it comes to personal pronouns. Pat addresses her interlocutor by asking:

“how can I address you, interlocutor, when the only language I so much as half command is one in which ‘you’ does not even reveal [...] how many there are of you and of what sex?”

(41) Brophy here alludes on the ambiguity of English, as opposed to the romance languages,

on the matter of sex. ‘I’ is just as ambiguous as ‘you’, and she uses that ambiguity to write

the first two sections in the first-person narration; had she objectified the narrator, the reader

would certainly identify with him and she wants the reader to stay being an interlocutor to the

protagonist. When it comes to number, the ideal is found in Greek, the language of antiquity

with its “syntax of love”:

Greek, whose nouns need not be in either the singular or plural, but may be in-between, the numerically hermaphroditic condition, the dual. [...] The dual is for things that don’t duel, that go in pairs not antagonistically but side by side – hands, eyes, feet. [...] But Greek, sweet honey Greek woos by that dual, thinkable only in things thought of as a pair. [...] Will you share my dual? Come pair with me, and we shall be inseparably paradigmmed in the syntax of love. (43)

If the ideal state (for both language and love) is duality, it then means that ‘I’ should contain

both genders. Yet, this state does not seem to be acceptable according to the rulebooks of

English, or social norms. What, then, happens once such an ‘I’ is forced to choose a gender?

Pat O’Rooley’s struggle with her/his sex is pivotal to the narrative, and it appears to be

triggered by the breakdown of language and the insignificant accident of spilling coffee on the

‘title’ field in her passport. In the following chapters, Pat is conducting a series of

examinations and tests to discover her gender, from observation of her physique and

sexuality, to using formal Aristotelian logic. None of the methods seem to work and Pat stays, until the end, both a male and female. Brophy shows this by switching to third-person narration, and then either shifting from one gender to the other, or by bi-focalizing, where two narrative lines are offered, depending on whether Pat becomes Patrick and/or Patricia.

Brophy's explanation to this most enigmatic and confusing element of *In Transit* is as follows:

First, a simple Freudian recognition of the basic bisexuality of everybody. Second, a conscious desire to counteract the mythology of literary criticism at the moment, which so often cries that only women can write about women, and only men can write about men. [...] I have a feeling that this is not only a mistaken approach to sex, but also a mistaken mythology of basic mental differences between the sexes, which I don't accept exists. I feel that that mythology is a denial of imagination, which I think one has to counter.⁶

It is impossible not to observe Pat's struggles through the prism of Freud's theory of sexuality, since *In Transit* is a story of looking for the lost member, Pat's lost (or stolen) male sexual organ. Its subtitle, as Brophy shares in the end, should be *The Autobiography of Sappho's Penis*. Sappho, the famous Greek (bisexual) poet from the isle of Lesbos, *has no penis*, which means the autobiography does not exist – quite logically, since *In Transit* itself is fiction. Yet, at the base of the novel Brophy creates a castration story, and as such, the protagonist is unsure of her/his gender. Castration in the case of Pat, though, is not that straightforward, for her relationship to her parents is unclear. Firstly, there is the problem of having two sets of parents, both of whom she has lost in two plane accidents:

If I were a God, I would be Dionysus, who was twice born. Or am I not, rather, a successful double Oedipus – an Oedipus who orphaned himself twice? Whenever Freud writes of the double onset of human sexuality, once in infancy and again at puberty, like double-entry book-keeping, I think of myself de-parented at three and again at thirteen. (38)

Secondly, it is unclear whether she suffers from the Oedipus or the opposite Electra complex.

Allusions to being a double Oedipus point in the direction of Pat being a man – killing the

⁶ Dock, 159.

father for the love of the mother. However, she also sees herself as being closest to Orestes, the Greek legend hero who killed his mother, after she killed his beloved father. This double death of the parents creates an uncanny effect for Pat, who describes her childhood as deprived and traumatic.

Pat's gender confusion is also a result of her bisexuality: when reading pornography, she feels as both the object and observer. Bisexuality is particularly potent in children:

To be impaled on a which-of-two-walks dilemma must be a very highly indecent metaphor of children's bisexuality, for there must be very few children living in a house so placed that it doesn't, when you go out of the door, offer you a choice of which way to turn – just as most children have two parents. (15)

Pat's understanding of the narrative as a game and entertainment by the punny/nanny signifies that Pat has, actually, stayed a child in the body of a grown up person. 'Infant' is not so different that a 'fant', its adult version. Psychologically, she is still looking for herself/himself, since by losing both parents she/he has not been able to create healthy connections to either sex, and to people in general, as shown by the difficulty she has in communicating with others in her surroundings. This surrounding has its rules: it is certainly unacceptable that one should be both a female and a male, both "an X and a not-X."⁷ Once pushed into a choice, the 'I's only way out is suicide: sex (as in gender) becomes a murder weapon. In her open letter to the reader (in which she gradually takes over Brophy's voice) before announcing her suicide note, Pat exclaims:

Suicidalness is a social emotion. It is you I am afraid of disgusting with my smeary self. [...] It is for your sake I am seeking to arrange my suicide, batting about almost frantically in my race against excretion (my dear time's waste matter) to locate the predestined masc. or fem. murdered who shall destroy, by gobbling up, this I. (83)

This is the first suicide, which happens as a result of the breakdown of morphology and gender. At the end of the novel, Brophy gives a choice to the reader to determine Pat's gender luring us into a 'do it yourself kit' of open-ended fiction, while reminding us that she has

⁷ Dock, 166.

promised not to play god. Regardless of which ending we chose, both Patrick and Patricia end in death by suicide: “And out of that egg, ego too am re-hatched. It no longer matters a damn of course whether ‘I’ is masc. or fem. or whether ‘you’ is sing. or plur.” (227) They end up being reborn, in Brophy and in the reader. ‘Heroi-cyclic’ *In Transit* continues to represent the cyclical shifting and oscillation of both genders in every person, and supports Brophy’s belief in the mental interchangeability of the sexes.⁸

Linguistic leprosy also affects syntax, another rulebook that Brophy disintegrates. Except for the Western sentence structure (subject-verb-object), the disintegration happens across languages as well. We learn that Pat is fluent in English, French, Greek and Latin, yet none of them comes to her rescue when she loses her ability to communicate and use language in the airport. Moreover, they seem to complicate her life even more. Thinking about which language to address the bartender in, Pat hears him replying ‘nine’ or ‘nein’ to the previous customer, yet, she is once again helpless, since she has not heard the question. The first sentence of the novel is in two languages, one merging into the other and showing Pat’s inability to complete it in the same language : “Ce qui m’étonnait c’était qu’it was my French that disintegrated first.” (11) She keeps trying to make sense of her reality and cure it by doubling, tripling and mixing languages: looking out on “la piste/die Startbahn/the apron” where it is forbidden “to smoke/rauchen/fumer.” (13) Yet, why is it that it is French that disintegrates first, if it is not Pat’s native language? What, indeed, is native for Pat? She leaves Ireland at a young age for England and despite trying to learn Gaelic, she never masters the difficult vowels. She is aware of being without root, derooted and derouted: “You can send shamrocks over the sea but they will not grow outside Ireland. I have no – I haven’t quite a – native language. But in the airport no one is native. We are all transients.” (29) She views her identity through idioms, through language, and as such confirms its ambiguity:

⁸ Dock, 159.

I was an early transplant from one national idiom to another.⁹

I felt a compulsion to demand of the interlocutor, which I did with grand good humour, why idiom insisted placing me in the high spirits when the high spirits, whether you conceived of them physiologically or demonically, were so patiently in me. (19)

It is language that shapes her, therefore the inability to learn and master Gaelic (which would be her native tongue) perhaps signifies that Irishness is the loss of idiom. Brophy refuses to doubt the existence of identity, and while one may not know *what* he/she is, they are always aware of *who* they are: “Identity [...] is unloseable. That which feels the loss, that which searches and doubts – that is your identity.” (44) What does the Irish idiom become for Pat? It is characterized by internationalism, orphanhood and dilapidating Catholicism. The presence of many Irish men and women in the airport is quite uncanny, yet, it is to be expected, since she concludes that the Irish are the one truly international people. When she ceases to be Irish by leaving Ireland at three, she does not become anything else – thus, she adopts internationalism as an ideology. The airport’s transit zone idiom becomes a suitable native language. The loss of her parents also shapes her native idiom – it somehow appears that being an orphan (O’rphan) contributes to the internationalism and it may be the reason for Pat’s frequent flying trips – to offer her parents an opportunity for revenge. Orphanhood has destroyed so much of her personality but she was, in a sense, more indestructible as a child than in her adulthood; once she had recovered from the blow of death, she was no longer Irish. Lastly, Catholicism can hardly be a part of the Irish idiom any more: in such a modern century as the 20th, main constructions are airports – they are a cradle for the internationals, for the transient (infantile) inhabitants of the century. There is no space or need for the functionless cathedrals (metonym for Catholicism):

Tread softly because you tread on the dead. Shuffle lest God is within earshot.
WHISPERS: Where might he be? Is that lamp vestally renewed above that altar? Is that his Real Presence? Is the flame tended by a Real Person who has to go to the lavatory, nanny? (21)

⁹ In Transit 216.

As a result of this language leprosy, the idiom as a reflection of the degree of nativity of a person is disintegrated; hence the only nationality left for Pat to be is *punish*.

Brophy constructs *In Transit* as a pastiche. Frederic Jameson defines the term as

an imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language [...], without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared with which what is being imitated is rather comic.¹⁰

Brophy's intertextuality points in the direction of Joyce, Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, antique literature etc., and while she does not explicitly plagiarize them, she glues together pieces that allude to their works. She also combines and imitates different genres:

autobiography, epistolary novel, drama, pornography, thriller, opera, and television show.

This mixture is not, however, pure fiction, since Brophy confesses she is somewhat of a masochist in practicing both creative writing and criticism for the creator.¹¹ The present creates and shapes the creator's personality that then excretes a narrative in the past. History is in the "shit tense" (14), since it was left behind, yet, fiction has an even lesser hold, since it happens in the never-never tense. By writing metafiction, Brophy anchors the 'never' tense of fiction to the 'present' tense of the creator. The act of creation and criticism is elaborated through syntax. Similarly, Brophy ridicules the genre of thriller / detective story, and pornography:

One must of course emend wordy to worthy, meanwhile querying whether the high incidence of misprints in pornography and thrillers results from (i) printing in a foreign country or (ii) the fact that when the story is exploded it's exploded, with the result that no one can bear to read it through twice. (101)

For a few pages, Pat becomes detective O'Rooley, a character that follows all stereotypes of the thriller genre. Except for being a metacharacter aware of his fictional existence, detective O'Rooley poses the cardinal thriller question of the century – 'Who is Guilty?':

¹⁰ Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," *The Critical Tradition*, Ed. David H. Richter (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 1958.

¹¹ Dock, 156.

Pat (Slim) O’Rooley: dead-beat dick; weeper peeper; down-at-heel; no-account; never-amount, small-time, all but buddy-can-you-spare-a-dime, virtually peg-leg leg man living on the edge of having his license revoked and carrying a pocketful of currency even a ninth-rate barkeeper didn’t want. Why did he have to be this way? [...] Who asked him to play hero, anyway? [...] Why him, anyway? Why did he have to be the only guy left who cared who’s guilty? Why was his the only sense of justice left in this world? (153)

Pat doubles and triples in the book through different characters and in different situations.

Similarly, Brophy shows us pages from a pornography book she translates as *The Story of Oc’s Tongue*, where the heroine is quite an obvious masochist that is taught the ways of the ‘tongue’, parodying Marquise de Sade’s innocent heroines, sadistically tormented against their will. Brophy gives us another heroine – Oc’s double, the Scottish-Irish student Och, who through a case of linguistic misunderstanding becomes a modern-day Virgin Mary (once again alluding to the loss of religious belief). When it comes to the form of *In Transit*, Brophy chooses a symphony, attempting to write in four movements; the chapters are named according to different music tempos and movements (allegro, andante, scherzo, fugue, codetta), resembling an operatic piece, where the different voices of characters intertwine. ‘Fugue’, as a chapter name, is punning on the mental condition of the loss of one’s identity, dissociation from familiar setting and hysteria, which corresponds to the blend of genres and personages that happen in the chapter. Opera becomes the perfect metaphor for the narrative as a combination of creative writing and criticism (“I am as shut-up in my own self-seeking sensations as if I were doing invisible masturbation. And yet my enjoyment is a social act. Such is the twin genius of art.”(55)), but the operatic form also acts as a unifying force, enunciating some hope that there still may be some order in the universe and that formal logic still reflects necessary universal truths.

Dissolution of style and genre in language is paralleled with the dissolution of art and style, as well as some social ideologies and rules. A focal image is the airport itself: the only place where 20th century design is happy with its own style, compared to a fishtank filled with air, an airpocket. This artificiality filled with the mechanic voice of the public address is a symbol

of cosmopolitanism and internationalism, the century's idiom and a condition for being Irish. It reflects the 20th-century need for functionality above all, hence, its function is to ensure its inhabitants (or transients as Pat calls them) to feel as if they are taken care of: "An airport is a free-range womb." (20) This womb (a mother? a nanny?) is a temporary state: when it comes to permanent residence, "[w]e have nowhere to reside. And yet we arrive and depart through airy palaces. Airport alone vindicates our century,"(22) a century where so little of life happens in natural surroundings. Through the image of the airport, Brophy signals the style (or rather lack of style) and architecture of the 20th century, which for her is on the verge of losing its ability to create aesthetically. Pat feels incredibly good for missing her plane and remaining in the transit zone; it has all the sustenance for her and, above all, it is the one place she feels at ease in (airport becomes both a nanny and a native place for her). Being In Transit (capitalization by Brophy is another metafictional element, she reminds the characters that the transit zone equals the fictional space of the novel) means living in the present, being a part of a century that is also in transit: "Catch [the true pure feel of the twentieth century] at airport. Sense yourself at airport, at home; be, for once, in your own period." (23)

Airports are cleaner and smarter than everyday life, yet, not posh, so they do allow for the entry of the 'proletariat' and Pat's 'comrades' – 'Light and Air'. These comrades should help in the creation of a style to live in: "Down with nationalism. Forward to sieclism. [...] Our internationalism, my comrades, is no sentimentality. Indeed it is a cynicism – but cynicism raised to an ideal." (27) Thus, Pat inspires the rise of a revolution in the airport. A parody the French revolution, instead of a national rebellion, it becomes an international rebellion, led by people who realized how arbitrary it is to assume, that the nation they were born in is superior. Their manifesto is: "'WHY THIS RATHER THAN THAT?' EQUALS 'WHY THAT, NONE AT ALL,'" (27) once again confirming the loss of nationality in the international century. This internationalism propagates that there is only one human family,

everyone is Brothers and Sisters to each other. Pat would seem to have finally gained a family. This revolution, however, becomes an apocalyptic *devolution*; there is devaluation of art, represented by the architecture student Baroco's suicide by decapitation:

At this conclusion, Baroco despaired. Conceiving that the only medium in which an artist of integrity might both lawfully practice and experiment without compromising his conscience was himself, he took it into his head that the only vocation society had left in to him to fulfil was that of the self-destructive artist. (206)

We witness the degradation of music, the result of the revolution is noise: "the din which filled *In Transit* [referring to the novel again] was caused not by the majority but by a minority among the revolutionaries." (185) The noise disables any formation of opinion about the music, no space for critical thinking on any topic. In a similar manner, communication through the last possible and most natural medium – language – fails as well. The airport closed-circuit television transmits the messages: GRAMMAR IS FOR GRANDMAS. SINTAX. THERE IS NO REASON. (194) The meaning of the revolution is discussed between Och and Professor Don Donovan (another Irish name), expert on John Donne, when they see the somewhat apocalyptic message: IN FUTURE NO HISTORY. The professor proclaims:

‘I take it to mean that people have at last revolted against being governed by systems that have no justification except the authority of age. I take it we are at last going to replace authority by reason and remake everything, from syntax to incometax, simply on the system that is most reasonable.’

‘Are you sure that’s what it means?’ Och asked. [...] ‘It *could* mean that in the future there will be no more history because there will be no more people. [...] What I’d rather the revolution would liberate is imagination.’ (193)

The two opposing views reflect the main paradox of the novel. Disruption of the authority of language, social norms or art, challenges the universal truths they stand for, and emphasizes their innate ambiguity. On the other hand, this disruption does not bring more order and prosperity to society as such; art for Brophy has a certain social role – what kind of society would its absence shape? The final result of the revolution is grim: one of the revolutionaries

mass-murders hundreds of passengers by coordinating two planes to crash into each other. While the TV screens transmit the message of 'WE ARE ALL ONE FAMILY' and 'HUMANS ARE ALL THOROUGHLY NICE PEOPLE', the transit zone residents and revolutionaries flood the accident location and take the organs of the dead passengers to be used for transplantation.

Brophy magnifies Pat's personal gender disintegration into a disintegration of society and, perhaps, even the notion of humanity. Ontogenesis and phylogenesis are once again connected, yet, they are applicable to one more character in the novel – language:

“ALIENATING INTERLUDE. The management trusts the clientele has by now observed that at least one of the hero(in)es immolated throughout these pages is language,”(214)

Brophy notifies the reader. The phases of Pat' gradual disintegration correspond to the breakdown of linguistic levels of language. Sexuality and gender are dependent on morphology; national identity, which is disintegration of a country/race, is reflected through syntax (idiom, dialect, language); society and art are destroyed by the disintegration of style and genre. Throughout all levels of both language and personality, we are faced with the challenge of their ambiguity and arbitrariness. Brophy emphasizes that by connecting language with personality we “intellectually structure our world,”¹² hence, writing metafiction expresses best her own idiom that always is, undoubtedly, 'punish'.

¹² Dock, 166.

VII. Kathy Acker – *Kathy Goes to Haiti, My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Empire of the Senseless*

That we encounter a certain type of doubling in Acker's fiction seems obvious just by looking at her repertoire of novels and titles. Beginning with the *Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula By the Black Tarantula* in 1973, *Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec by Henri Toulouse Lautrec* in 1978, *My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini* (published in *Literal Madness* in 1987) and lastly *Kathy Goes To Haiti (Literal Madness, 1978)*, Acker shows a trend for presenting novels that confuse, while clarify at the same time they are going to be fiction where the supposed author is also the protagonist/narrator/speaker. *Kathy Goes to Haiti* goes a step beyond, where Acker uses her own double, at least in name, around which to create a retelling of a journey to Haiti that is, as most of Acker's early novels when it comes to it, apparently without any purpose. The novel begins with Acker's portrait (self-portrait?) of Kathy, who is "middle-class, though she has no money, American white girl, twenty-nine years of age, no lovers and no prospects of money, who doesn't believe in anyone or anything."¹ Readily available throughout the short novel is information on how out of place she is on the island, and we are given no explicit information as to what the reason for her travel would be. She goes down to Haiti one summer, has a few affairs, gets disappointed in love, spends her money, observes the locals, participates in a voodoo ritual and is eventually dazed, which is where the novel ends as well. The main focus in *Haiti* is political and existential alienation. The disastrous affair of Kathy and Roger Mystere is as bad as relationships between blacks and whites in America can get, one of dependence and need for acceptance, with the roles of the two parties interchanged. She seems to be suffering for not being the only woman in Roger's life, yet in the end she just completely forgets about her

¹ Kathy Acker, *Literal Madness: Kathy Goes to Haiti* (New York: Groove Press, 1988), 5. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

lover when she leaves for Haiti's capital to wander among the slums. She is alien in Haiti, desperately happy to meet Roger's American wife just because she is white and American, regardless of how simple or 'stupid' she might be. Kathy has no place in that world, but she seems to be out of place in her native New York as well. The place she is looking for is not solely physical, but also emotional, and it stays unrealized until the end. She also possesses a certain innocence and pureness of being, despite the dirty random sex and relationships she gets into, and despite being good-for nothing: "I can't do anything. I can write, but that's nothing. I used to be a professional dancer," (KGH, 129) she says when she is offered a job. Her purity comes from understanding why people act the way they do and, in a sense, from forgiving them: "There aren't evil people. People do what they have to cause they're stuck, and poor and miserable and they've been hurt too much" (KGH, 130), she tells one of the Haitian boys who has become her 'friend'. The novel is a paradox – we have an outsider in a society where communication fails and no sense of belonging develops regardless of the time Kathy spends there. Yet on a more human level she understands the attitudes of people towards her and despite not belonging there, Acker leaves off the novel with Kathy still on Haiti, for both her and the Haitians are alienated outcasts with no better place for them. This quest for finding a place reaches its zenith in *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), where Acker fully attempts the creation of a myth and a place where existence without nihilism is possible, and so is freedom.

'Kathy', in the context of *Haiti*, does not stand for the author, despite some autobiographical reference throughout Acker's novels. She admits experimenting with autobiographical narrative in her fiction, putting it next to content that overtly could not be autobiographical. As she mentions in her "A Few Notes on my Books", this has enabled her to learn two things: first, fiction is "true" or real when it makes; second, if there is a "self", then it is the world.

By placing “true” next to a “false” autobiography everything becomes real² – in this sense, she is more of an autoplagiarist³. Plagiarism as a literary phenomenon has become a necessity, a conscious practice of subverting traditional discourse, as well as a device of breaking down authorship, reflecting and celebrating Barthes’ death of the author. Acker supports the idea of the reader as a writer: “I make up nothing. I am a reader and I take notes”⁴, she says in “A Few Notes”, a reluctantly written text illuminating mostly *Empire of the Senseless* but also allowing us to hear Acker’s voice (for lack of a better term) and distinguish it in her fiction more clearly. She elaborates that the ideology of creativity is connected to the commodification of literature and books; in reality there is no individual creativity, because “nobody really owns nothing.”⁵ Acker is open about it in her fiction as well, placing the idea right before the reader: “I can talk by plagiarizing other people’s words that is real language and then... then I make something”⁶, Acker states in *My Death My Life*. This making of something is experimental and new, even though paradoxically old already. Plagiarism is also a kind of literary doubling, in the case of Acker it is a reinvention of a version of an existing character or plot. There are many literary characters Acker ‘borrows’ for *My Death My Life* for example, from Shakespeare, the Brontes and Dickens. All of them come to life in a different time and place in Acker’s world, so their motives and circumstances have to be updated accordingly to reach their full potential in the fiction. One of the first doubles we meet is Hamlet, whose appearance is interesting, as he is presented as an artist trying to thrive in the art world of New York City, drawing an almost direct

² Kathy Acker, “A Few Notes on Two of My Books,” *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 9:3 (1989), 33.

³ Martina Sciolino, “Kathy Acker and the Postmodern Subject of Feminism,” *College English*, Vol. 52, No. 4, *Women and Writing* (National Council of Teachers of English, 1990): 440, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/377661>, 12 Feb. 2017.

⁴ Acker, “A Few Notes on Two of My Books,” 36.

⁵ Acker, “A Few Notes on Two of My Books,” 33.

⁶ Kathy Acker, *Literal Madness: My Life My Death by Pier Paolo Pasolini* (New York: Groove Press, 1988), 289. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

biographical line to Acker. He stays, however, just as disturbed, intellectual and ambitious as in Shakespeare, his preoccupations just slightly altered:

If it's not money that matters, it's the idea. Oh, the world! [...] Rich men don't have money, they have power. I hate the rich. [...] No one reads me now so I'd better write for posterity though the world's ending. Like a good artist, I'm going to marry Ophelia for her money! [...] I'm going to make dead people. I'm going to write a play. (MDML, 195)

Acker agrees with Shakespeare, as far as Hamlet's madness and ability to see 'the truth'. The post-modern Hamlet's truth, however, is much less noble, quite cynical and hypocritical. Yet his most powerful and meaningful deed or success as an artist is his appearance in Acker's novel. Hamlet's presence is, as Hutcheon would put it "parodic in his intertextual relation to the traditions and conventions [...]. Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies." (11) Acker thus also uses doubling through plagiarism as a tool for parody, challenging literary and social authorities in addition to 'killing' the author and demolishing the institution of authorship.

Another point Hamlet makes very clear in *My Death My Life* is that he is self-conscious about his status as a character and a play, which is just one of the many experiments Acker creates - other figures in *My Death My Life* also have existences of their own, they notify the author what will happen next or they name themselves. As an example of the naming, in the sub-chapter titled "Violence", there is a dramatic scene in a prison, where the character Prisoner 1 is technically nameless until her Bedmate mentions her name is Cindy. (MDML, 259) From then on, the character is presented as Cindy, which up until that point seems to have been known to nobody at all, including Acker herself. Contrary to this, other characters are also quite generally named: Father, Girlfriend, Man, Nurse, Whore... Be that as it may, none of them belongs to Acker; it is almost as if she feels she has no right to name them - hence "Nominalism", the middle chapter between "My Death" and "My Life", where all of these

common nouns/names appear. If nominalism denies the existence of all these universal characters and the rest of them are doubles of already existing ones, what is it that we are left with? What is it that Acker has managed to create? Perhaps only the character “I” poses a mystery, together with any mention of something in the text that would show a relationship of possessiveness to it. This character, as will be shown further on, has a purpose of its own.

There is one other clear message in *My Death My Life* that Acker is sending, both by saying it in theory and applying it in practice, and that is *language breakdown*. She starts at the micro level, in syntax itself and reaches as far at textual and semantical breakdown. There is one section concerning this topic that stands out prominently in “My Life,” where Acker simply manages to insert her general manifesto for freedom of a sort:

Language is making me sick. Unless I destroy the relations between language and their signifieds that is, their control. [...] What is the value of this life which is painful if it's not what I make or do in the world? Assumption of this question: I am the subject of the making and doing. I make (my) values or meanings. *I do* means *I mean*. Given this syntax and grammar, functionality is the only possible value: I'm a Puritan; I write; I don't love. *I*. But what if *I* isn't the subject, but the object? If the subject-object dichotomy is here an inappropriate model? [...] I don't mean. I am meant. That is ridiculous. There is no meaning. Is meaning a post-capitalist invention? (MDML, 300)

Hence, language is a disease, means of control both artistic and social. Acker does not separate the two spheres, as she has made clear – she is not creating, merely representing her perspective. If reality has no meaning, nor does writing and it seems the reality Acker was a part of did not make sense anymore. When even “I”, the individual becomes objectified, what is the value not only of “this life” in the passage above, but of all human life? *I* becomes objectified, a commodity whose production is controlled. Her writing (and her reality in turn), rebel against this control of both language and meaning. It is clear that “[t]he only thing [she wants] is all-out war” (MDML, 233), an original act of violence, which will in itself be another text. Violence and war likewise preoccupy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*, where

the focus is to a great extent on political and psychological circumstances, but where also she finally completes 'Kathy' as the ultimate double, the *subject turned object*.

'Kathy' is a construct. It partially consists of Acker's voice through Abhor and partially of Abhor herself, as she is also a construct (part robot part black). This double's main attribute is its objectivity, its materiality; it is very much reminiscent of a mechanical construction. It is a body (an object) in the fiction, existing on the textual level, built by collaging. This body, however, is conditioned by its relationship to the mind. In her *Notes*, Acker says that one cannot live in a world that is a lie, since the body is language and language doesn't lie. The body is real and if one lives in hell then one is hell.⁷ By living in the hell of *Empire*, 'Kathy' thus becomes hell in itself, also reflecting the inner dichotomy of the mirrored hellish mind. Later in *Empire*, Acker stresses additionally that "[m]entality is the mirror of physicality. The body is a mirror of the mind. A mirror image is not exactly the same as what is mirrored."⁸ What is then hidden in the mind belonging to the constructed double? Is there one single mind belonging to it? Here, a turn from the object to the subject is needed and one can once again turn to Acker's fiction to find the direct answers to these questions. *Empire* again: "Lots of eyes were watching me. [...] [T]he I who desired and the eye who perceived had nothing to do with each other and at the same time existed in the same body – mine; I was not possible. I, in fact, was more than diseased. [...] I, whoever I was, was going to be a construct." (ES, 33) The mind, it appears, is also a construct of fragments, a collage of voices and subjects, all mingling to form the coherent (but not cohesive) world of *Empire of the Senseless*. In her article on Acker's post-modern subject, Martina Sciolino calls this construct a "character as a work-in-progress" and sees it as a moving force for the narrative:

⁷ Acker, "A Few Notes on Two of My Books," 36.

⁸ Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless* (New York: Groove Press, 1988), 65. All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

A narrative moves because a character is a work-in-progress: engaged in a ceaseless process of negotiating selfhood through relations to the world, to time, to other characters. Thus, the difference that constitutes identity is contingent – interrelational and contextual. In a word, that difference is moving, as moving as the subject who desires.⁹

This seems to work in accordance with Acker's fiction, for as already mentioned, there seems to be no rational cause or reason for anything her characters do, yet one gets the feeling they are constantly on a quest. Finishing this construct, this work-in-progress might be the ultimate goal, a creation of a self through creation of a new myth. Instead of this ultimate goal, Acker however, seems to be more interested in an engagement with the journey - where are her characters to look for these selves and why is it that they fail? According to her fiction, the reasons are restrictions: social, political, capitalist, sexist and psychological.

That Acker's characters are very much trapped in a restricted world is especially clear from the setting. *Empire's* Paris is not the city of light, even though it remains the city of revolution. The voices and bodies living there are echoes of identities, often vague, indistinguishable from each other: pirates, terrorists, sailors, old men – nominalism once again. They are all located at one place in the novel and even though they are mobile inside that little world, like Abhor and Thivai, they are dominated by higher principles and forces at play. There are always two opposing strands in *Empire* – the one of domination and the one of resistance. In her article on voice in Acker's fiction, Katherine Hume reasserts the preoccupation with control in many of her novels and elaborates on these tensions further on:

This dominance dynamic with its attendant plangency of protest and resistance does not simply exemplify the need in fiction for opposing forces to generate action. Acker does not use plots so generating conventional narrative action is not the point of this dynamic. The less powerful figure keeps feeling controlled, or fights being controlled, or gives in to the dominator or dominatrix. While love occasionally offers her characters fleeting happiness, it often proves compromised by complicity with this controlling force and the only thoroughgoing happiness comes from achieving

⁹ Sciolino, 443.

freedom from the pressures [in other words – repressions] exerted by other people and institutions.¹⁰

The oppressing forces are the American consumerism, modernism, chauvinism, patriarchy, the CIA, the American Medical Association, Reagan's presidency and many other forms of corrupted institutions or traditions, but also stereotypes of different kinds, all significantly relevant to the American society of the latter half of the 20th century. She fights them by the opposing forces: terrorists, pirates, prisoners, prostitutes - all the outcasts of society who are grouped together and scattered all over the novel at full display, standing for social layers not usually visible or noticeable in the more public spheres of American life. Showing them so vividly and endorsing them with such importance creates a disturbing effect, as they are in a position where their deeds and words cannot be ignored anymore, they become focal.

Another feature of Acker's writing is also to interweave shocking and unconventional ideas into the text. She engages with the Arab world, a taboo in American culture at that time, by making Algerians into leaders of a successful revolution, naming a chapter "In Honour of the Arabs," writing paragraphs and passages in (similarly nonsensical and broken) Arabic, etc.

Also, oftentimes the females in her fiction are either very anti-feminist or subjected to misogyny. "There are 3 types of females: dead, dumb and evil", Thivai says, which is an example where clear-cut interpretation or definition of his stance on the matter is impossible, as the institution of gender is destabilized in him. This makes Acker's feminism more of a balancing force, equalizing in the sense that gender does not matter when it comes to human pain and suffering; her feminism is all present yet more mature in a sense, as Acker seems to be deconstructing it from the inside, representing it and destroying it at the same time, making it a paradox in itself.

¹⁰ Kathryn Hume, "Voice in Kathy Acker's Fiction," *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (University of Wisconsin Press, 2001):490, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1208993> 12 Feb.2017.

Acker incorporates bursts of lyricism into the narrative that are unexpected and represent a pure form of resistance: feeling, it would seem, is much less understandable than reason, thus much less controllable. Modernity is contrasted with Romanticism, which surprisingly is a key word for *Empire* (also a name of a chapter); but if Romanticism was a reaction to the age of reason and Enlightenment, what does it react to in Acker's postmodernist novel? Hume defines this romantic presence as problematizing Acker's fiction, because it departs from the poststructuralist norms by reinstating the humanist values of defending the individual self and the significance of human life. Additionally, she identifies four cardinal types of romantic individualism (as according to Howard Mumford Jones): the revolutionary, the sufferer, the rebel, and the liberated woman, and rightly notes all of these are present or manifest themselves in Acker's personae,¹¹ mostly in the constructed double that directs the narrative. It can also be observed, that it is due to the certain aggressive aspect to those romantic selves that the narrative is not static. Some romantic selves are distinguishing Abhor as the more dynamic force; Thivai, on the other hand, represents an echo of this progressive drive. He does not contrast her directly – he is rather a being trying to work his way out of the senseless world, while not realizing that he cannot get out before he resolves his internal paradoxes concerning love (“I hated [Abhor's] guts cause I loved her and I didn't love anyone” (ES, 193)), gender (“The male half of me'll rape the female half of me, which, I know isn't very nice, but what can you do in a society which doesn't recognize human need?” (ES, 176)) or sexuality, to name just a few (“Because, for me, desire and pain are the same.” (ES, 32)). He is, in a much distorted manner, a romantic anti-hero, a postmodern Byronic figure. Acker further elaborates on this masochistic sexuality by simultaneously connecting it to tattooing and making it a very female notion (which might also explain Thivai's gender bender tendencies), as in an interview with Andrea Juno:

¹¹ Hume, 507.

Well, we [women] were taught to channel anger, rage, feelings of insecurity – to channel what would-be "negative" energy *masochistically*. We were taught not to do it *directly* – not to go out and hit someone, for example – but to do it so we'd hurt ourselves. And that's a typical feminine ploy to deal with power... in a way it's because you *don't* have power, but you're *looking* for power.... I think this is a bit how art is created. Julia Kristeva has written a book, *Powers of Horror*, about this: art doesn't come from a gesture that resembles one man going to hit another man; art comes from a gesture of power turned against itself. She calls it "ejection": when you take that emotion and turn it *in* on itself – which is what tattooing does, or what women do.¹²

Acker's feminism turns against all patriarchal institutions. Her feminist fight equals the fight for freedom, against reason, against language, capitalism, politics etc. Important images for exploring are the tattoos – the roses mentioned throughout *Empire* stand for the heart, tattooed with black and red ink. These hearts are turned against themselves, just like the masochistic love-hate relationship of Abhor and Thivai, which the latter tries to explain to the former by the end of the novel: "Now there are three kinds of hearts. (1) *The double heart* in which each heart hurts the other heart. (2) *The single or lonely heart*. (3) The single heart which through the pain of loneliness has become a *rose*." (ES, 203) The double heart are both Thivai and Abhor, pierced with an arrow and with a scroll saying: EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS. The single lonely heart belongs to Thivai and is pierced by a knife, inscription saying IT'S BETTER TO DIE THAN YIELD TO SHIT. Abhor finds her heart at the very end, the dead heart, the pierced rose, with the caption DISCIPLINE AND ANARCHY. All of these hearts, these roses or tattoos – they participate in Acker's creation of a new possibility, as she explains in Notes: "the body, the actual flesh, almost wordless, romance, the beginning of a movement from no to yes, from nihilism to myth".¹³ Tattoos as bodily marks become symbols of the heart turned physical in *Empire of the Senseless* and following the same pattern, Acker is attempting the creation of a myth in order to be able to double the place from it afterwards. Literary doubling thus crosses the border of literature with writers such as

¹² Kathy Acker, "Interview with Andrea Juno," *Angry Women*, San Francisco: Re/Search, 1991, 179.

¹³ Acker, "A Few Notes on Two of My Books," 36.

Acker, who did not see their writing (or reading for that matter) as being distinguishable from their own selves.

Quite traditionally, *Empire* begins with a genesis of a family, a birth of a person and, simultaneously, the world, interconnected through “blood and change”, veiled in calm haziness immediately followed by a comparison to human nausea. (ES, 8) This genesis locates in space the speaking voice Abhor. To be more precise, however, *Empire* begins with an image that is even more telling – a skull with the inscription “My family fortune”, a misleading and ironic image, since the familial ties in *Empire of the Senseless* are everything but fortunate. There is a certain feeling of predestination, a dystopic breakage of the notion of family that the skull foreshadows, as throughout the novel we have incest, murder, suicide, lobotomy, all degrading and intertwined into family relationships. We thus have characters that are utterly lonely and left to themselves, tortured by memories/thoughts of rape and tyranny by the father or suicide of the mother. The family circumstances are crucial; Acker’s irony is evident when beginning the sub-chapter “In Honor of the Arabs”, Abhor says she “is not hinting at any possible link between the micro-despotism inherent in the American nuclear familial structure and the macro-political despotism of Nazi-Germany.” (ES, 45) Only a few lines before that, she is retelling the (imagined?) childhood of Dr. Schreber, who besides being a real-life German judge is also an author of his personal memoir of mental illness and a subject of one of Freud’s papers dealing with his autobiographical account.¹⁴ In Acker’s account of him, Schreber suffers severe traumas in his childhood, which make him “paranoid, schizophrenic, hallucinated, deluded, disassociated, autistic and ambivalent” (ES, 45) and in this way he ends up being a crucial part of the system profiting from human torture and the drug industry. Despite Acker’s claims against being a Freudian (“I usually wear men’s clothes. Why, I don’t know. I’m not a Freudian” (ES, 115)), *Empire* is deeply engaged

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, “The Case of Schreber,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1985).

with the two levels of mental repression: ontogenesis and phylogenesis. They seem to marginally react to or grow from a traumatic understanding of a fatherly figure of authority, which sometimes takes the shape of a boss, the government, CIA, the American Medical Association... any patriarchal institution or an apparatus that possesses certain authority. Acker discusses this in her "Notes": "[t]he first part [of *Empire*] is a description of the society defined by the oedipal taboo. [...] In "Alone", the second part of *Empire*, I tried to describe a society not defined by the oedipal taboo. That is, by phallic centrality and total domination on the political, economic, social and personal levels."¹⁵ The large-scale dictatorship, thus, begins on the micro level of the family, it equals the family and the individual, and is intensified by Acker's views of the individual being a oneness and multiplicity in the same time: "I then, or you, or he, or she, or even it, is five: body, spirit, living, dead and memory or god." (ES, 75) The constant returns of both Abhor and Thivai to these family memories and relationships can also be seen as an example of the talking cure, since whenever they remember their childhood experiences, they seem to realize something new as well. In the middle of the Algerian revolution in *Empire*, Abhor finds herself following an old man into his room. As in a dream, she then remembers, as if for the first time, the initial rape (attempt?) by her father, already mentioned in the first chapters of the novel, while additionally suddenly remembering or realizing is that she also sexually *desired* her adopted father. (ES, 67)

There are two other concepts important for the voices in *Empire of the Senseless*: dreams and the unconscious. Compared to memory, which Acker seems to deeply distrust, dreams are a driving force in *Empire*. They possess an almost romantic and utopian quality, as for the travelling sailors: "[they] set out on perilous journeys just so that they can see in actuality cities they have only imagined." (ES, 118) They are capable of illuminating reality, as in

¹⁵ Acker, "A Few Notes on Two of My Books," 35.

Abhor's experience upon visiting a clairvoyant crone: "I wanted her to tell me what to do. I must have been two people. I must have been thousands of people. I desired exactly that which I couldn't accept. "Gypsy, I want to know the source of dreams" (ES, 117) Empire in a sense can also represent the journey to this source, which is in the world of the repressed, the unconscious. Gradually, linguistic, social, political, sexual and all other repressions are released, creating the "part of our being (mentality, feeling, physicality) which is free of all control. [...] Since it's free of control, it is our only defense against institutionalized meaning." (ES, 134) Thus, another characteristic of 'Kathy' the constructed double, the textual body, is also its unconsciousness, possibly reflecting the overly-conscious mind.

VIII. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the doubling in the self-conscious fiction of five experimental women writers in the twentieth century: H.D., Anaïs Nin, Ann Quin, Brigid Brophy and Kathy Acker. They were chronologically grouped in three groups: the modernist H.D. and Nin, who were mostly influenced by psychoanalysis, and wrote fiction that was autobiographical in respect to their psychoanalytic treatment and relationships with their analysts. The second group consisted of Quin and Brophy, who, through experiments with gender and metafiction, are an explicit feminist critique of psychoanalysis and phallogocentricity. Lastly, Acker is representative of the third group of writers. Most experimental of them all, her fiction is a radical critique of late-twentieth century society and capitalism, both from a feminist and a socio-political perspective. These three groups correspond to the three generations of feminist writers: the first generation (H.D. and Nin) uses psychoanalysis as means of female empowerment. Influenced by it, they produce narratives that represent the talking cure and this strengthens their position as women writers. These narratives challenge the view of both their male analysts and contemporaries, who doubt the existence of a female artistic genius. For the second generation of feminist writers, such as Quin and Brophy, feminist criticism is a part of their creative process; they especially incorporate bisexuality and questions of gender, in order to destabilize it as a social institution. Kathy Acker, in the third generation, reshapes feminist criticism and directs it towards criticizing society on a larger scale, from a political and social perspective. For her, women are just one of the marginal social groups that she centralizes. She builds her rebellious society of anarchy by bringing attention to these racial, religious, sexual and social minorities.

Regarding the technique of doubling in the fiction, the following general statement can be made: encountering it emphasizes a specific part of the fiction that the author wants to bring to the reader's attention. The autobiographic novels of H.D. and Nin are explicit doubling of facts into fiction, a mixture of both. This doubling problematizes autobiography: what these writers tell us explicitly is that even biographical writing is a crafted construct by the author. The numerous differences in perspective that we have observed in both H.D. and Nin's novels affirm this; for example, they both write tributes to their analysts, while undermining their analysts' authority by showing their weaknesses. The doubling might create an uncanny effect, as with Freud's and Rank's doppelganger.

Quin's protagonist Berg feels that he is only a copy of his father, not entitled to an existence of his own. Desperately desiring control over his own life, Berg feels the only way towards freedom is the annihilation of his double, without realizing that this doubling of father and son has a cyclic nature that will continue in the future. The tragedy of the individual becomes the tragedy of the family. Through doubling in language, Brophy disintegrates rulebooks: Aristotelian logic, gender, nationality, logocentricity, etc. Doubling of gender in the protagonist Pat (m./f.) shows that our reality is not only reflected, but also shaped, by language. The doubling of Brophy herself in her novel is a metafictional element, increasing the awareness of the reader that what he/she is reading is fiction aware of its status as such.

Acker's constructed double becomes a tool for critique of society. Through this anarchic revolt of social minorities that are finally given a voice, she rebels against political authorities; anarchy is the only way towards liberation and egalitarianism, which is at the core of her utopian/dystopian vision. By plagiarizing, she points out that no fiction is original, no fiction can exist without referentiality or intertextuality; everything that is written has a cyclical existence, connecting the past with the present and the future. In a sense, doubling is what enables fiction to create a history and a tradition.

In the case of the five authors discussed, it enables them to affirm the female tradition and participate in the creation of one. It appears that Gilbert and Gubar's nineteenth-century "madwoman in the attic" no longer exists. She is neither confined, since twentieth century experimental women writers work on and succeed in her liberation, nor is she 'mad'. Her madness, her mania, is successfully concretized and recognized as what it has always been: a woman's literary creativity.

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