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# The Living Mirror:

The Representation of Doubling Identities  
in the British and Polish Women's Literature  
(1846 – 1938)

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I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work.

## Abstract

The present thesis offers a comparative analysis of the theme of feminine doubling, which has not yet been taken into academic consideration. It examines the strategies of construction of relationships bonding mother-figures, daughter-figures, and father-figures in the various texts selected for inclusion in this dissertation from British and Polish literature. The key argument is that the tie between feminine doubles can be positive. A mother-figure (or the first wife) is capable of sharing her experiences with her daughter-figure (or the second wife). The second pivot of this exploration is the figure of a sexual mother.

The dissertation comprises three parts. The aim of the first section of the thesis is to provide an introduction to the broad cultural context of the mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Polish literature. The second, pivotal part is an exploration of the themes of feminine doubling and feminine sexuality as manifested in the Polish texts, including Narcyza Żmichowska's *The Heathen*, Maria Konopnicka's "Miss Florentine", Maria Komornicka's "On Father and his Daughter" and Zofia Nałkowska's "Green Shore". It also consists of an interrogation of the shifts occurring in the plot of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*: these shifts concern the protagonists and the nature of their relationships with the sexual mother-figures. The present analysis stems from the conviction that a comparative reinterpretation of the two novels has been largely overlooked so far. The aim of the thesis is to apply various theoretical approaches that enable the reader to bring together the Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis and *écriture féminine*. The broad psychoanalytical context, including the works of the forgotten Freudian scholar Sabina Spielrein, provides a basis for the comparison. It also enables a profound, intertextual, and inspiring analysis.

The thesis is meant to provide a much-needed new reading of Polish women's literature in a comparative structure, so that these texts may be afforded their appropriate position within the British and Polish critique. The innovative features of the research include its comparative character, and the implementation of various psychoanalytical approaches to the Polish works. Additionally, the thesis focuses on literary analysis. It incorporates the findings of various scholars interested in issues associated with "femininity": it emphasises the importance of gender and feminist issues to the literary (re)interpretation of women's texts.

The present investigation is not conclusive and should be viewed as a stepping stone for further comparative exploration of Polish novels penned by women.

Before you were born, I existed. And even when I am not here anymore, I am inside you, as you were inside me. Before your father saw you, my womb had felt your presence.

MARIA KOMORNICKA

A living mirror, thus, am I (to) your resemblance as you are mine. We are both singular and plural, one and ones, provided that nothing tarnishes the mirrors that fuse in the purity of their exchange.

LUCE IRIGARAY

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Finally, I wish to thank my mother for her unwavering encouragement and long-standing friendship.

# Introduction

## 1 Outline of the Dissertation

The present thesis closely and comparatively examines Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, Narcyza Żmichowska's *The Heathen*, Maria Konopnicka's "Miss Florentine", Maria Komornicka's "On Father and his Daughter" and Zofia Nałkowska's "Green Shore" in the context of psychoanalysis. At the heart of this interrogation is the problem of feminine doubling, which has not yet been taken into academic consideration in this way.

It might reasonably be asked why I have selected these six texts, since there are other works penned by women and dealing with the subject of doubling. The main reason for choosing *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* was that these well-known and widely interpreted texts constitute a referable case study for the Polish works allowing the introduction of the works to an English-speaking reader. In selecting Polish texts for inclusion in this dissertation, I took into account their previous reception. I selected unconventional works, which were forgotten, omitted by critics and readers throughout the years, typecast as uninteresting and conventional, or misinterpreted and included in the canon. It was my intention to provide a much-needed modern rereading of Polish women's texts discussed in this thesis, so that they may be afforded their appropriate position within British and Polish criticism. Although *The Heathen* belongs to the literary canon, the subversive and original qualities of the novel were overlooked. The readers and the critics have forgotten "Miss Florentine" and "Green Shore", although Konopnicka and Nałkowska are well-known, generally respected authors. The case for Komornicka's "On Father and his Daughter" is that the text is vastly marginalised, although its author recently became a subject of intense (feminist) critique. The goal of this re-interpretation and re-evaluation is to demonstrate the innovativeness, unconventionality, complexity and/or literary value of these texts, and to introduce them to British and Polish criticism. It seemed necessary for me to say that these Polish texts deserve recognition by English-speaking readers and British secondary criticism. I also wanted to emphasise the unexamined correspondence between "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore".

The second reason for selecting such a textual corpus was connected with the presupposition underlying this thesis formulated in the following way: contrary to the negative relationship connecting masculine doppelgangers, the bond between feminine doppelgangers hides the potential of being positive and rewarding. I interpret the texts selected for inclusion in this thesis in order to retrace when and how the sexual mother-

figures become capable of sharing their experiences with their “younger” counterparts; when and how they assists their daughter-figures to embrace their sexualities, the (feminine) language and the Symbolic realm, and to acquire subjectivity.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, although the textual corpus begins with the mid-nineteenth century and ends with the beginning of the twentieth century, my presentation is not chronological. Instead, the material is structured around the enmeshing of subjects and thematic patterns.

The material falls into a three-part structure. The Introduction opens with a presentation of psychoanalytic and gender-oriented theories, which are going to be implemented rigorously in Part Two devoted to the close reading of the selected texts. Secondly, it includes a concise survey of canonical masculine doppelgangers and of the logic of masculine doubling. The section sheds light on the negative, destructive, even murderous alter egos in Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson”, Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “The Double”, Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in order to contrast them with the positive feminine doubling present in the texts chosen for discussion in this thesis.

The present investigation of the selected texts proceeds on two levels – the broad cultural, social and historical background of the texts, and the close reading of fiction penned by women in a comparative context. The first part begins with an Introduction devoted to the British cultural and historical background aimed to briefly introduce Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca*, and to locate the argument about women writers in a comparative context. As the well-known British tradition does not call for such an explication, this part provides a much more extended presentation of the Polish background presently almost completely unknown to the English-speaking reader. It predominantly aims to introduce the Polish writers and their texts. The section throws light on the relevant biographical facts connected with the authors, the social and historical issues (such as emancipation), the character of the nineteenth-century epochs (Romanticism, Positivism and Young Poland), the place of the selected works within/outside the literary canon, and the prevailing interpretative tendencies. Such broad introduction of the Polish cultural background is necessary for the further close reading of the texts chosen for inclusion in this thesis.

The second, pivotal part is a comparative interrogation focusing around the common issues of feminine doubling, the ambiguous nature of the relation of mothers and daughters, and of fathers and daughters, the acquisition of feminine sexuality and

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<sup>1</sup> The Symbolic with the capital “S” is used to indicate the Lacanian concept and the symbolic with the small “s” is used for the general meaning.

subjectivity, the ambiguity of gender, the significance of beauty, the connection between creativity and madness, as well as the common themes and metaphors of education, confinement, abandonment, Eros and Thanatos, feminine vampirism, hair, snake, fire, flowers, and moon, among others in the British and Polish works selected for inclusion in this thesis. The aim of Part II is to interrogate the above issues, themes and metaphors in isolation from the autobiographical, cultural, social and historical contexts, and to close-read them, in order to pay particular attention to the works themselves.

A comparative study allows for a fruitful introduction of the little known Polish works that deserve more attention *vis-à-vis* the well-known British works. Furthermore, it enables us to trace common ideas, themes, motifs, values, and shifts present in the texts and between the texts, despite the fact that they belong to two different traditions. With its comparative nature, the present thesis attempts to surpass the cultural, national and linguistic boundaries with the view to bringing to the attention many innovative aspects of Polish women's writing and the pioneering approaches of Polish women authors to the construction of their identity as modern subjects.

The examination stems from the conviction that *Rebecca* is a reinterpretation of *Jane Eyre*: its nameless protagonist is the rewritten version of Jane, Rebecca is the embodiment of Bertha Mason, Maxim de Winter is the counterpart of Edward Rochester. The following interpretation focuses on the issues usually marginalised by critics: the shifts between the two novels and the mother-daughter-father relationships portrayed in them. It aims to demonstrate that the two protagonists manifest contrary attitudes towards their mother-figures: while Jane Eyre establishes continuity with Bertha Mason, she “listens” to her, saves her from total annihilation, and uses her guidelines, the nameless protagonist of *Rebecca* repeatedly abandons her mother-figure and, finally, triumphs over her death. In their attitude towards their mother-figures and father-figures, the Polish heroines repeat the behaviour of Jane Eyre, or the anonymous narrator of *Rebecca*. Again, the thesis traces the shifts between the Polish texts, *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, in relation to the theme of positive feminine doubling.

The present analysis of the Polish women's literature considers various ways in which critics have approached the questions of femininity, feminine subjectivity, sexuality and creativity. The research is deeply indebted to scholars who have attempted to investigate the literary strategies of Polish women writers in a new, modern way. Although, the works selected for this dissertation have been omitted, misinterpreted and typecast on a large scale, there are some inspiring, groundbreaking analyses. Most importantly, I draw on Ursula Phillips's highly stimulating interpretations of *The Heathen* and her yet to be published translation of the book. Secondly, the enlightening *Alienated Women* where Grażyna Borkowska confronts the literary strategies of Narcyza

Żmichowska and other writers. I am also greatly indebted to Lena Magnone's insight on "Miss Florentine" and Krystyna Kralkowska-Gątkowska's analyses of "On Father and his Daughter".

A list of the major innovative features of the current thesis includes its comparative British-Polish character, the investigation of the Polish texts from the viewpoint of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis, the introduction of the theories of Spielrein, the comparison of "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore". All these aspects of my research contribute to a broader understanding of women's writing in Europe and highlight many specific characteristics of Polish women's writing.

## 2 Psychoanalytic Inspiration

The use of a combined approach, which takes into account a variety of psychoanalytic and gender-oriented theories, and confronts Polish works with well-known and broadly interpreted English texts, is a productive way of interpreting unfamiliar Polish texts. Psychoanalysis is the major methodological inspiration for the present study because, firstly, this thesis focuses on motifs and themes fundamental for psychoanalysis, and, secondly, psychoanalytic theory serves as the basis for comparison of works from various cultures, literary periods, languages and genres.

The present dissertation draws on Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis and the French feminist uses of it associated with *écriture féminine* – the theories of Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous which argue with the Freudo-Lacanian perspective. To my knowledge, this is the first critical work to analyse literature using the ideas of the forgotten Russian psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein. The thesis seeks to introduce Spielrein's theories to the English-speaking reader and British literary criticism.

The following work focuses on the mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships, the figures of mother and father, and the realms associated with them, the pre-Oedipal stage or the Imaginary, and the Oedipal stage or the Symbolic, respectively. In his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" Freud presents only a male perspective. According to his description, a little girl is a little boy, and the sexuality of girls is of a masculine character.<sup>2</sup> In the undifferentiated pre-Oedipal stage a child and a mother remain in a dyadic unity. In this stage of development a child believes itself to be a part of the mother. There is no lack, no unconscious and no sexual difference. The pre-Oedipal, *phallic* mother encompassing femininity and masculinity, is the first love

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<sup>2</sup> The clitoris, the "little penis" is the principal erotogenic zone.

object, and a prototypical object of sexual desire. A child initially perceives its father as rival. I would like to suggest that the mother is the first wife of every man, because he is the re-embodiment of his biological father, the father of the primal horde and the phallus. Therefore, a wife is always the second woman. Let us also consider Freud's "Three Essays", which illustrate the connection between the mother and child:

It was the child's first and most vital activity, his sucking at his mother's breast, or at substitutes for it, that must have familiarized him with the pleasure. The child's lips, in our view, behave like an erotogenic zone, and no doubt stimulation by the warm flow of milk is the cause of the pleasurable sensation. The satisfaction of the erotogenic zone is associated, in the first instance, with the satisfaction of the need for nourishment. To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later. [A] child sucking at his mother's breast has become the prototype of every relation of love. The finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it. [T]he person in charge of him [child], who, after all, is as a rule his mother, herself regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object (263, 288 and 288-289).

During its maturation, a subject discovers that its mother (and all women) lack a penis, gives up the emotional bond with the mother and creates an internalized paternal agency – the super-ego.<sup>3</sup> "The Oedipus complex for Freud marks the origin of civilisation, religion, morals and art. It is only through the repression and sublimation of our incestuous desire for our mothers that civilisation and culture can develop" (Homer 57).

In his later texts, which stress the importance of the pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother: "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes", "Female Sexuality" and "Femininity", Freud also emphasises the significance of the bond with a mother for a girl and her future development. He uses the (in)famous comparison of this discovery to the discovery of Minoan-Mycenaean civilisation behind the Greek. In the girl's version of the Oedipus complex, developed in these three essays, in order to grow up properly and resolve the complex, a girl has to discontinue her relationship with her mother (she holds her responsible for her deficiency – the lack of penis) and take her father as an object, but she also needs to become a passive object of his love.<sup>4</sup> The father serves as a prototypical model for her future object choices. In his

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<sup>3</sup> For Freud's development of the problem of penis and phallus, see also "The Infantile Genital Organization".

<sup>4</sup> See also "The Infantile Genital Organization".

“Three Essays” Freud asserts that a girl often falls in love for the first time with a much older man in a position of authority, because he re-animates the image of her father.

In his return to Freud, Jacques Lacan developed the notion of three orders: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. These are linked with stages in the development of a child, but are also structures significant throughout its entire life. In the Real, a child fully identifies with the mother (the Other). In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I” and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* Lacan explained that the Imaginary is inaugurated by the Mirror Stage when a child recognizes its image in the mirror (figurative or metaphorical).<sup>5</sup> The child differentiates itself from the mother (m/other) and its surroundings, and identifies with its coherent mirror image. The mother’s gaze is the first object of its desire. However, the child realises that the mother turns her gaze away from it, towards the father – the representative of the big Other. Moreover, the latter permanently separates the child from the mother and her body. He forbids further incestuous access to the mother. The child is forced to repress its desire for the dyadic unity with the mother and for the Imaginary.

Lacan rewrote the Oedipus complex as a Symbolic structure. In his account, the Oedipal crisis is fundamental for the acquisition of identity. It represents the transition to culture, language, law and society associated with the father. The child abandons the mother’s pre-cultural and pre-verbal sphere and acquires the notion of self. The unconscious emerges as a result of the repression of desire (for the mother). “[T]he speaking subject only comes into existence because of the repression of the desire for the lost mother. [...] [T]he speaking subject is lack” (Moi, “Sexual/Textual Politics” 99-100, original emphasis). While the Real and the Imaginary are pre-linguistic, in the Symbolic realm the child becomes a subject in language. In Lacan’s terms, the Imaginary and the Mirror Stage are problematic, while the Symbolic is positive, and accredited with the law-giving functions. In the present dissertation the Symbolic has dubious effects. The entrance to the Symbolic order may pose a threat to female subjectivity; immobilize and silence a protagonist.

In the Symbolic, when sexual difference emerges, the differentiation between femininity and masculinity is based on (in)visibility of the penis. According to the Lacanian poststructuralist rereading of Freud, the penis is a bodily organ and the phallus is a signifier of sexual difference. As stated in “The Signification of the Phallus”, it symbolises the penis in the Imaginary and the Symbolic. “The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire”

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<sup>5</sup> See also “Some Reflections on the Ego”.

(Lacan, *Écrits* 318). In the order of the Symbolic, the *phallic* mother transforms into the *castrated*, defective mother, as she lacks the “visible” genital organs.<sup>6</sup>

In “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”, “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis” and “Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father Seminar” Lacan takes up Freud’s concept of the dead Father and proposes a paternal metaphor, a signifier, the-Name-of-the-Father. It refers not to the Real, or the Imaginary father, but to the Symbolic father. The homophony of *le nom du père* (the name of the father) and *le non du père* (the no of the father) indicates the legislative and prohibitive function of the Symbolic father: “It is the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law” (Lacan, *Écrits* 74, original emphasis). The-Name-of-the-Father interrupts the dyadic mother-child relationship, introduces the law (the prohibition of the incestuous relationship with the mother), and sexual difference. The paternal metaphor replaces the forbidden desire for the mother with the law of the father. “The Oedipus myth is based on the premise that it is the father, as the agent of prohibition, who denies us access to enjoyment (i.e., incest, the sexual relationship with the mother)” (Žižek 23). Finally, the Symbolic father positions the child within the Symbolic realm, subject to the law and language.

Lacan goes beyond Freud and attempts to interrogate the issue of feminine sexuality. According to his diagram of sexual difference presented during Seminar XX (published in “A Love Letter”), only a masculine subject can acquire the position of a speaking subject. Although women enter the Symbolic, they remain mere objects of male desire – *objet petit a*. Only by taking up the position of a masculine subject, can they speak and create. As a result, they express themselves solely in a masculine manner. Hence, they are unable to say anything about their desires. In Lacan’s theory, a feminine subject cannot constitute a speaking subject. The psychoanalyst argues for an inscription “~~the~~ woman” to emphasise her incompleteness and non-subjectivity:

*The* woman can only be written with *The* crossed through. There is no such thing as *The* woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing as *The* woman since of her essence [...] – of her essence, she is not all. [...] This *the* is a signifier characterised by being the only signifier which cannot signify anything, but which merely constitutes

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<sup>6</sup> To protect himself from the castration anxiety, a male child imagines that instead of lacking sexual organs his mother has a phallus. This image of a phallic mother symbolizes the threat of castration. The castrated mother symbolizes lack. See Freud, “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” and “On the Sexual Theories of Children”.

the status of *the* woman as being not all. Which forbids our speaking of *The* woman (“God and the *Jouissance*” 144, original emphasis).

Since the publication of Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* in 1976, which argues for the absence of the mother-daughter relationship in numerous scientific fields, such as psychoanalysis, sociology and art, a great amount of literary criticism has been done on the issue of motherhood. The most notable scholars and writers interested in the subject include: Nancy Chodorow, Hélène Cixous, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Jane Flax, Nancy Friday, Nor Hall, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Jean Baker Miller.<sup>7</sup> Most of the above scholars were inspired by the theories of Freud, Jung and Lacan. They attempted to explore the feminist potential of psychoanalysis. Generally speaking, for the feminist critics of “the second wave”, who brought the image of the mother into the psychoanalytic perspective, the latter is the central figure in child development and mythology. The critics who responded to Rich’s observations seek to revalorise the relationship with the mother and reactivate the term “motherhood”. They all emphasise the continuity between the mother and the daughter.

I decided to concentrate on the theories of Irigaray and Cixous of the new French feminism for several reasons. Firstly, according to *écriture féminine*, Phallogocentric Western-European culture, founded on the connection between the phallus, logos, and masculinity, associates femininity with deficiency, and negativity. There is no place for a feminine discourse within Symbolic language. Instead, there is the logic of the same, which represents femininity as a mere negative mirror reflection of masculinity (visible/not visible, present/absent). Therefore, the fundamental postulate of *écriture féminine* is to express positive femininity, feminine sexuality, subjectivity and creativity. Secondly, it shows that psychoanalysis is valuable for (re)reading literature. Thirdly, the “post-Lacanian debate on femininity” is not a coherent school, but a set of ideas, which suits my purpose of comparative interpretation of the British and Polish texts. Finally, I was tempted by the fact that the writings of Irigaray and Cixous have a creative flair and point to the notion of the fluid identity of women writers. My intent is not to provide a comprehensive introduction of the works of these French psychoanalysts. Rather, I

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<sup>7</sup> Concerning the discussion of motherhood, see Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*; Cixous, “Sorties” and “The Laugh of the Medusa”; Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*; Flax, “The Conflict between Nurturance and Autonomy”; Friday, *My Mother/My Self*; Hall, *The Moon and the Virgin*; Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other” and “The Bodily Encounter with the Mother”; Kristeva, *Black Sun*; Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women*. The above listed texts by Cixous and Irigaray are concerned with the specific problem of motherhood, however the issue is present in every one of their works, one way or another.

invoke selected themes associated with the subject of this thesis – mother-daughter relationship, feminine sexuality, and acquisition of feminine subjectivity, among others.

I begin with the marginalization of women. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud inserts a very interesting footnote on the issue of the dominance of sight above other senses. He writes about the substitution of the sexual stimulus of scent by the gaze. For him the alteration of the human posture from all fours to standing, where the genitals become visible, endows sight with significance. In *Speculum of the Other Woman* Irigaray connects the dominance of sight with the Freud-Lacanian preference for the phallus as the key signifier. The masculine fear of castration, as well as feminine penis envy, and most importantly, the concept of woman as “lack”, are all associated with seeing/not seeing the male genitals. Sight is the crucial determinant of the symbolic Phallogocentric culture and a marginalising tool for women: a woman is “[o]ff-stage, off-side, beyond representation, beyond self-hood” (Irigaray, “Speculum” 22). This implies only one desire and only one – masculine – subject. In response to Freud and Western philosophical discourse, Irigaray proposes a language capable of expressing feminine desire: the intangible *le parler-femme*, “speaking (as) woman”, or “womanspeak”.<sup>8</sup> According to Joanna Bator, “[*le parler-femme* is an attempt to express what has not yet been expressed with the language of the feminine sphere of imagination, in correspondence with the morphology of the woman’s body” (212). Irigaray postulates substitution of the predominant tendency to illustrate femininity as lack with a metaphor of two lips repeatedly touching themselves. *Le parler-femme* is connected with the female genitals (the lips), touch and fluidity.

Hélène Cixous advocates the necessity to proclaim a new feminine subject, liberated from the representation of woman as lack and the myth of the castration-threatening Medusa. In her attempt to deconstruct the Western tradition which culminates in Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis, she postulates the “new”, “other” bisexuality, which allows a subject to shift between feminine and masculine subjective positions. Against the binary logic of presence and absence and the opposition male/female, Cixous sets the “multiple, heterogeneous *différance*” (Moi, “Sexual/Textual Politics” 105) existing on the level of *jouissance*, and associated with Jacques Derrida’s concept of *différance* (as opposed to the French word *différence*).

In “The Laugh of the Medusa”, “Castration or Decapitation?” and “Sorties” Cixous locates feminine language outside the Symbolic realm and the order of the phallus. According to her, women are able to establish their identity and subjectivity

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<sup>8</sup> *Le Parler-femme* has been translated in *This Sex Which Is Not One* as “speaking (as) woman”. However in some books, such as Toril Moi’s *Sexual/Textual Politics* it has been translated into English as “womanspeak”.

without entering the Symbolic, and to express themselves while being situated on the margins of the official culture. Creation is not associated with the paternal Symbolic language but the pre-verbal, semi-conscious and instinctual.

Irigaray's *Le parler-femme* is associated with the postulate to re-establish the relationship with the mother. She argues that in the Phallogocentric culture women are brutally forced to abandon their mothers, and to form relationships with fathers:

The relationship with the mother is a mad desire because it is the <dark continent> *par excellence*. It remains in the shadows of our culture; it is its night and its hell. [...] Desire for her [the mother], her desire, that is what is forbidden by the law of the father, of all fathers.

The social order, our culture, psychoanalysis itself, want it this way: the mother must remain forbidden, excluded. The father forbids the bodily encounter [*corps-à-corps*] with the mother.

[B]y denying the mother her generative power and by wanting to be the sole creator, the Father, according to our culture, superimposes upon the archaic world of the flesh a universe of language and symbols which cannot take root in it except as in the form of that which makes a hole in the bellies of women and in the site of their identity ("The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" 35-36, 39 and 41).

Irigaray rewrites Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and his (re)construction of the myth of the "primal father" and the horde. While Freud pointed out that parricide is the principal crime of humanity, Irigaray stresses that the purging of the mother preceded it. The child's bond with the mother predates its relationship with the father. Body instead of Symbolic language, mother instead of father. The phallus took the place previously occupied by the navel. Irigaray perceives the cutting of the umbilical cord, symbolizing separation from the mother, as the primal castration. It predates Freud's secondary castration (the fear of losing the phallus, and penis envy).

The initially theoretical "Bodily Encounter" evolves into revolutionary chanting. Irigaray exhorts women to restore and re-establish the connection with their mothers, beyond the Freudo-Lacanian dialectic of *phallic* and *castrated* mother:

[W]e must not once more kill the mother who was sacrificed to the origins of our culture. We must give her new life, new life to that mother, to our mother within us and between us. We must refuse to let her desire be annihilated by the law of the father. We must give her the right to pleasure, to *jouissance*, to passion, restore her right to speech, and sometimes to cries and anger. We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences

that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her body, ours, and that of our daughters (“Bodily Encounter” 43). According to her, maternal love is necessary to reach fulfilment in the future romantic relationships with men. A mother teaches her daughter how to love and how to be loved. Without this knowledge the latter is unable to form successful sexual relationships.

However, Irigaray also stresses the ambivalence of the mother-daughter relationship, where the mother is simultaneously the first love-object and a rival. While “Bodily Encounter” emphasises emotional closeness, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other” warns against “coldness”, distance, rejection and the unproductiveness of the *entrematernage*: “And the one doesn’t stir without the other. But we do not move together. When the one of us comes into the world, the other goes underground. When the one carries life, the other dies (“And the One Doesn’t Stir” 67). Finally, the suffocating vision of the mother-daughter relationship is presented in connection to the act of nourishment:

You’ve prepared something to eat. You bring it to me. You feed me/yourself. But you feed me/yourself too much, as if you wanted to fill me up completely with your offering. You put yourself in my mouth, and I suffocate. [...] Once more you’re assimilated into nourishment. We’ve again disappeared into this act of eating each other. Hardly do I glimpse you and walk toward you, when you metamorphose into a baby nurse. Again you want to fill my mouth, my belly, to make yourself into a plenitude for mouth and belly. To let nothing pass between us but blood, milk, honey, and meat. [...] Will there never be love between us other than this filling up of holes? (61-62).

Cixous’s marginalised feminine language is also connected with the Imaginary, the mother, corporality and feminine *jouissance*. In her text “The Laugh of the Medusa”, dubbed the manifesto of *écriture féminine*, she places an emphasis on the voice of the mother, her body (especially breasts), milk, foetal waters. The voice of the mother, belonging to the pre-Oedipal stage, is heard before the acquisition of Symbolic language: “Voice: milk that could go on forever. Found again. The lost mother/bitter-lost. Eternity: is voice mixed with milk” (“Sorties” 93). For Cixous, feminine creativity is “writing in white ink” (“Medusa” 881), with the mother’s milk. She postulates the intangible “writing through the body”, in connection with the female bodily fluids – blood, tears and milk, and encourages women (and herself) to write.

Write your self. Your body must be heard.

Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse.

I write woman: woman must write woman (“Medusa” 880, 886 and 877). Woman must write her body, must make up the unimpeded tongue that bursts partitions, classes, and rhetorics, orders and codes, must inundate, run through, go beyond the discourse with its last reserves, including the one of laughing off the word “silence” that has to be said, the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops dead before the word “impossible” and writes it as “end” (“Sorties” 378).

In “The Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous reinterprets Freud’s understanding of Medusa’s head as threatening female sexuality stigmatized by penis envy and lack. According to him, decapitation symbolises castration, the snakes in her hair – phalluses, the power to change into stone – erection.<sup>9</sup> Cixous advocates that female sexuality is neither offensive, nor threatening: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (885). On the contrary, unwanted and, in Freudo-Lacanian terms underestimated female sexuality is a creative force. Cixous associates the sexual perspective with the textual experience: the laugh of Medusa represents a female voice located outside the Freudian dialectic of castration and lack.

In the following dissertation I also draw on the theories of Sabina Spielrein. This forgotten Russian theorist introduced to psychoanalysis the subject of Eros and Thanatos, and the association between love and death. She formulated the concept based on her private experiences, and on her work with hysterics and schizophrenics. In 1911, shortly after becoming a member of the prestigious Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Spielrein presented fragments of her work on love and destruction during one of the famous Wednesday meetings.<sup>10</sup> The speech triggered a heated debate, but was severely criticised by other members of the circle. It did not fit with their contemporary understanding of Eros and Thanatos. Her controversial “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being” from 1912 was the first text to address the issue of the destructive

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<sup>9</sup> For Freud’s discussion concerning Medusa, see his “Medusa’s Head” and “Infantile Genital Organization”.

<sup>10</sup> She was the only female member of the Society, the second in history – after Margarete Hilferding.

drive. The starting point of her text is the question: why the reproductive instinct is triggered by negative as well as positive emotions? Spielrein offers her examination in three areas: biological speculations, individual psychological observations and the mythological-scientific field (the Bible, Wagner's operas). According to her, the reproductive instinct consists of two conflicting fundamental forces, inseparably connected with each other: the instinct of "coming into being" and the destructive drive. Destruction is a feature of the sex drive, as sexual intercourse leads to the dissolution of a separate self. Spielrein describes the destructive component of the reproductive instinct and the process of merging with the object in the following way:

The instinct for preservation of the species, a reproductive drive, expresses itself psychologically in the tendency to dissolve and assimilate (transformation of the I to the We). [...] "Where love reigns, the ego, the ominous despot, dies." When one is in love, the blending of the ego in the beloved is the strongest affirmation of self, a new ego existence in the person of the beloved. [...] No change can take place without destruction of the former condition ("Destruction" 172).<sup>11</sup>

Freud ignored and depreciated Spielrein's observations on the subject of destruction. In his letters to Jung, he addressed the Russian psychoanalyst in a condescending manner. However, Freud became vastly interested in the death drive in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* from 1920, and later addressed the issue in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and *The Ego and the Id*. He inserted a symbolic and rather patronizing remark about Spielrein's pioneering discoveries in the footnote of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "considerable portion of these speculations have been anticipated by Sabina Spielrein (1912) in an instructive and interesting paper which, however, is unfortunately not entirely clear to me" (55). For Freud, the death instinct is an inclination towards death, destruction, aggression, entropy, and a primal, non-organic state. It expresses the urge for self-destruction, and the annihilation of sexual energy as contrasted with the life instinct – an attraction towards self-preservation. Therefore, Freud approached the problem of the death drive in an entirely different way from Spielrein:

It seems [...], that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or to put it another way, the expression of inertia inherent in organic life ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 36).

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Spielrein's theory of the sex drive, see: Davar; Kerr; Marshall Balsam; Ovcharenko.

Spielrein's work also greatly inspired Jung. He openly admired the originality and brilliance of the text in his letters to Spielrein. However, in his correspondence with Freud, he concomitantly pointed out triviality, lack of erudition and the personal undertone of "Destruction". Spielrein even suspected Jung of plagiarism:

I must admit that I greatly fear that my friend [Jung], who planned to mention my idea in his article in July, saying that I have rights to priority, may simply borrow the whole development of the idea. [...] How could I esteem a person who lied, who stole my ideas, who was not my friend but a petty, scheming rival? ("Diary" 35).

Jung added a comment on Spielrein's contribution to the matter of the death instinct to the revised edition of his *Symbols of Transformation* in 1952.

The texts selected for inclusion in this thesis were penned by women, and it was my intention to provide a reevaluation of the Polish works that have fallen into oblivion or misinterpretation. Moreover, the present study uses recent debates in feminist criticism; it draws on the inspiring theories of Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Ellen Moers and Maria Janion, among others. However, the thesis is only partially of a feminist nature – "feminist" understood as a political practice devoted to the battle against the patriarchal culture and all forms of sexism, as it is predominantly interested in the concern for gender in literature. Furthermore, as opposed to Gilbert's and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, this thesis distinguishes between "feminine" and "femininity" versus "female" and "femaleness", where "femininity" is understood as a cultural and social construct, and "femaleness" as a biological category. In opposition to the patriarchal tradition, which has established a set of typically "feminine" features, such as quietness, modesty, purity, selflessness, etc., it suggests a very broad definition of "femininity" as a cultural position of marginality – following Julia Kristeva and her *Revolution in Poetic Language*. In this sense, the present dissertation is of a "feminine" nature – "writing which seems to be marginalized (repressed, silenced) by the ruling social/linguistic order [and] does not [...] entail any specific *political* position, [...] although it does not exclude it either" (Moi, "Feminist, Female, Feminine" 132, original emphasis).<sup>12</sup>

Showalter's "gynocritics" – a female-centred theory concerned with the woman as writer – and the framework created by her for the investigation of women's literary strategies has been established for some time and has dominated American feminist

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of these categories, see Moi's "Feminist, Female, Feminine", as well as de Beauvoir, Coward and Millett.

criticism. The scholar presents the history of women's writing, while posing socio-historical and anthropological questions about the relationship between the literary (male) mainstream, and the muted (female) (sub)culture. She is interested in the history of a subculture, or a marginalised culture, and in minority criticism. In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), her landmark text, Showalter first identifies three phases in the historical development of British women's literature: the Feminine, the Feminist and the Female (redefined by Moi in "Feminist, Female, Feminine"). The title of the book is a reference to a passage from John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women". At the beginning of her book Showalter addresses Mill's assertion that the male literary tradition is a great obstacle for women writers. He wrote: "If women lived in a different country from men, and had never read any of their writings, they would have had *a literature of their own*. As it is, they have not created one, because they found a highly advanced literature already created" (83, my emphasis).<sup>13</sup>

In her later texts, such as "Toward a Feminist Poetics", "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" and *Inventing Herself*, Showalter develops her view on the history of women's writing and on "gynocritics". She searches for a coherent tradition based on the rewritten history of women's literature and a new literary canon.

The following analysis is meant to complement Showalter's framework. While the scope of its interest is also the manifestation of women's experiences in literature, it focuses on various aspects of the identity of women writers and their creativity. This research maps a different direction, since it incorporates various psychoanalytic theories (including the works of the forgotten Freudian scholar Sabina Spielrein), the findings of various scholars interested in issues associated with "femininity", and is a predominantly literary (re)interpretation. The present focus also enables scholars to see the canon studies approach as problematic.

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<sup>13</sup> The title was chosen by the publisher, while Showalter proposed a different one – "The Female Tradition in the English Novel". She explains the implications of the new title in "Twenty Years On: *A Literature of Their Own* Revised", p. 401. She also emphasises that it did not refer to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, as was suggested by several critics, including Toril Moi and her *Sexual/Textual Politics*.

### 3 A Masculine Double

And if you gaze for long into an abyss,  
the abyss gazes also into you.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The purpose of the section you are about to read is to demonstrate that a masculine double represents a negative force associated with the self-destruction of the ego. Although the notion of the doppelgänger (Germ. *Doppelgänger*, “double-goer”) has roots in ancient mythology, it is the beginning of the nineteenth century that is filled with fundamental works presenting doubles.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature the doppelgänger becomes, in the words of Freud, “the uncanny harbinger of death” (“Uncanny” 234), or, as investigated by Otto Rank, an “unequivocal rival” and a “messenger of death” (“The Double” 86).<sup>15</sup>

The focus of this thesis is on the most prominent examples of literary masculine doubles: William Wilson, Golyadkin, Mr. Hyde and the portrait of Dorian Gray. It will briefly present the selected works and focus on the moments in texts demonstrating the construction of the doppelgänger as uncanny, threatening and murderous, and the negativity of the relationship bonding the protagonist and his doppelgänger. The following analysis of masculine doppelgängers indicates their engagement in the “good versus evil” dichotomy. The common strands of masculine doubling include: negativity, violence, destruction, death, and narcissism.

In Poe’s short story “William Wilson” the double bears an unusual resemblance to the protagonist. The two men were born on the same day, they have the same “identity of name” (102), “the same age”, “the same height” (103), the same body shape, they dress similarly, walk similarly, speak with the same voice (despite the fact that the double speaks in a whisper). Moreover, they “enter[...] the school upon the same day” (102) and they leave on the same day. Afterwards, the namesake always magically knows the protagonist’s whereabouts. He also knows how he is dressed, what tricks he is using to cheat his victims (cards in his sleeves), and what his future plans are (to seduce the beautiful wife of Di Broglio).

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<sup>14</sup> Concerning the link between doubling, myths and legends, see Rank; Živković.

<sup>15</sup> “The German word <*unheimlich*> is obviously the opposite of <*heimlich*> [<homely>], <*heimisch*> [<native>] – the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is <uncanny> is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar” (Freud, “Uncanny” 219, original emphasis).

Because the text is filled with ambiguous moments and the protagonist is vulnerable to dreams and magic, and indulging in drugs, the story is open to various readings. The most popular interpretation is based on the assumption that the doppelganger impersonates Wilson's conscience. He appears just when the protagonist is about to do something evil and interrupts him. There is a strong suggestion in the text that the double is a hallucination (in the inclinations of the narrator and the description of the school as "a dream-like and spirit-soothing place" (97) and "a palace of enchantment" (99)). The evidently moralistic tone of the story suggests that the whisper of the double is the voice of the superego, or the repressive father-figure. The name, suggested to the protagonist by his doppelganger is often interpreted as Will-I-am Will's son. The behaviour of the doppelganger resembles a reaction of a father reprimanding his refractory son as he often enters the room and says: "William Wilson!" (108).

The connection bonding Wilson with his doppelganger is unambiguously negative. The protagonist describes the extremely unpleasant feelings and emotions elicited by the doppelganger: "Scorn, horror, detestation, indignant winds, infamy, outcast of all outcasts most abandoned, for ever dead, unspeakable misery, unpardonable crime, turpitude, evil, death, shadow, the slave, wilderness; Am I not now dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions?" (96-97). Their relationship is based on fear and constant destructive rivalry over power. The narrator describes the bond as follows:

I *feared* him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself, a proof of his true superiority; since not *to be overcome* cost me a *perpetual struggle*.

The sentiment of *deep awe* with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson, added to *a feeling of even terror*, with which certain other traits in his nature and assumptions inspired me, had operated, hitherto, to impress me with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant *submission* to his arbitrary will (101 and 115, my emphasis).

Although the double is righteous, lawful and benign, he is most importantly an antagonist, an offensive persecutor, and a murderous villain. The guidance of the double causes the protagonist to dwell in increasing profligacy, and to gradually devote his life to vice, carousals, debauchery and gambling. Furthermore, his oppression results in misery and, finally, in the death of the protagonist.

Poe establishes the following logic of the double: the death of the doppelganger is

simultaneous with the death of the person. Upon deciding to kill his namesake, William Wilson unintentionally commits suicide. “The impulse to rid oneself of the uncanny opponent in a violent manner belongs [...] to the essential features of the motif; and when one yields to this impulse [...] it becomes clear that the life of the double is linked quite closely to that of the individual self” (Rank 16-17).

The idea of doubling in Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “The Double: A Petersburg Poem” (1846) is based on the exact identity of appearance of the two Golyadkins:

[T]his was another Mr. Golyadkin, quite different, yet at the same time, exactly like the first - the same height, the same figure, the same clothes, the same baldness; in fact, nothing, absolutely nothing, was lacking to complete the likeness, so that if one were to set them side by side, nobody, absolutely nobody, could have undertaken to distinguish which was the real Mr. Golyadkin and which was the new one, which was the original and which was the copy (78).

Does the double really exist, or is he just a hallucination? And if he exists, does he really resemble the protagonist? Only Golyadkin and Anton Antonovitch comment on the similarity of their appearance, while others seem not to notice it. However, Antonovitch is not a credible source of information, as he is old and may not see well. Possibly there is some correspondence but the two Golyadkins are not identical? The resemblance between the protagonist and his double, observed during their first meeting on the street is superficial. It can be explained by the circumstances of the cold winter night: warm clothing and a quick walk. Moreover, the protagonist himself is not a credible observer. As suggested by David Gasperetti, Golyadkin is gullible, nearsighted (literally and figuratively), blind, “one image after another insists that [he] sees reality less than clearly” (229). On the other hand, the situation preceding the meeting indicates that the doppelganger is a product of a mentally disturbed mind. Rank suggests that Dostoyevsky depicts a paranoid state: “The novel describes the onset of mental illness in a person who is not aware of it, since he is unable to recognize the symptoms in himself, and who paranoiacally views all his painful experiences as the pursuits of his enemies” (27). I would argue that Golyadkin himself creates his doppelganger in his attempt to overcome his pathological shyness (as advised by the doctor). Or maybe, as suggested by Konstantin Mochulsky, also “[the protagonist] is a creature of the putrid damp fog of Petersburg, a phantom living in a phantasmal city” (48).

The doppelganger is the “evil twin” of the protagonist: although they look the same, their personalities are contrasted. Yakov Petrovitch Golyadkin is a “petty [official]

desperately striving to maintain some appearance of respectability in spite of poverty, social incompetence, and deep feelings of inferiority” (Kohlberg 349). He is quiet, lonely, modest and very common. Golyadkin junior (the doppelganger) is “venturesome, hypocritical, sycophantic, and ambitious” (Rank 30), always surrounded by friends, with whom he laughs, jokes, and chats. As opposed to the protagonist, he gains immediate deference at work, is selected for special assignments, and invited to official meetings.

The fact that Golyadkin junior’s intervention in the protagonist’s life is fearsome, threatening and destructive is clear from the beginning of the story. Golyadkin gradually recognizes the wicked nature of his doppelganger. Shortly before their first meeting, as he wanders through the streets at night, he looks “as though he wanted to hide from *himself*, as though he were trying to run away from *himself*!” (61, my emphasis). Subsequently, when a stranger appears before him, “for some unknown reason Mr. Golyadkin was troubled”, “scared”, “flurried”, “afraid”, he “smil[ed] mistrustfully”, “tremble[d] all over”, “an icy shiver ran down his back”, he was “petrified, as though struck by lightning”, he “cried out with amazement and horror; his legs gave way under him”, he was “so amazed that he stood still, cried out, tried to say something, and rushed to overtake the stranger” (64-66). The doppelganger is described as “some other evil”, “some unpleasantness” (68), “terror”, “shame”, “nightmare” (77).

The emergence of Golyadkin junior consequently leads to the annihilation of his namesake. In the course of the story, the ruthless rival gradually replaces the protagonist. The latter loses respect at the office, the sympathy of his colleagues, Vahramyev’s friendship, his servant, the possibility to engage in a romantic relationship with Clara, his job and possibly even freedom. At the end of the story, Golyadkin is thrown away from his former employer’s house, the house of Clara, by his doppelganger, and taken away by the doctor. The double remains – accepted, liked, respected – in Golyadkin’s job and in the house of the employer.

In the case of Stevenson’s story, initially Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are polar opposites. Jekyll is tall and handsome – Hyde is dwarfish and ugly. Jekyll is good, respectable, honest – Hyde impersonates the repressed wickedness in Jekyll.

Mr. Hyde’s evil nature is reflected in his appearance, manner of speaking, movement. He is surrounded by a negative, disturbing, uncanny aura. In his presence people become pale, their pulse slows, they feel horror. He is described in the following manner:

There is something *wrong* with his appearance; something *displeasing*, something downright *detestable*. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be *deformed* somewhere.

Mr Hyde [...] gave an impression of *deformity* without any nameable malformation, he had a *displeasing* smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of *murderous* mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somehow broken voice, all these were points against him; but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown *disgust*, *loathing* and *fear* with which Mr Utterson regarded him. [T]here was something *abnormal* and *misbegotten* in the very essence of the creature [...] – something *seizing*, surprising and *revolting*".

Edward Hyde, alone, in the ranks of mankind, was *pure evil* (7, 11-12, 39 and 45, my emphasis).

Furthermore, he is compared to a savage, to a troglodyte, to Satan.

The crimes committed by Hyde develop with time. His first mischief – colliding into a little girl – seems not so serious, although Enfield describes the incident as “hellish” (4). Afterwards, the double begins to gravitate towards “undignified”, “monstrous” (46) pleasures. Finally, he commits violent murders, or exerts a powerful, deathly influence on other people (for example, Lanyon).

The story is a struggle between the protagonist and his doppelganger. In the course of the events Hyde gradually overpowers Jekyll. Initially, he is smaller and younger than the protagonist, as the good side of Jekyll is more developed. However, he progressively grows stronger, taller, healthier and more active, as Jekyll becomes weaker and ill (he is pale, deathly sick, feverish). Under Hyde’s influence, Jekyll deserts his former life and his friends, and chooses absolute seclusion and silence instead. His home turns into a prison and he becomes a hostage of his second self. This situation is evident in the scene, in which he sees his friends while peering through the open window. As soon as he expresses the pleasure of meeting them, his facial expression changes completely and the window shuts abruptly: “The smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair” (26).

When he realises that Hyde is beginning to overwhelm him, Jekyll attempts to conquer his second self by abandoning the drug. However, the process of becoming his doppelganger resembles a drug addiction. When the protagonist returns to taking the drug, the following situation occurs: “[His] devil had long been caged, he came out roaring. [...] Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in [him] and raged” (49). Afterwards he has a second chance to annihilate the double and destroys the recipe. However, he has already altered too much under Hyde’s influence. Jekyll transforms into Hyde without

the drug. He is proud, bold; he does take the blame for the crimes committed as his second self. Moreover, he emphasises his goodness and his involvement in charity work.

Finally, Jekyll manages to defeat his other self, but, in accordance with the logic of the double, he also annihilates himself. Moreover, he dies “as” Hyde – his body is deformed, twisted, sorely twitching.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there is a profound identification between Dorian Gray and the painting. It is life-sized and painted from life. As soon as the portrait is ready, it becomes “the real Dorian” (52). Basil says to the protagonist: “Well, as soon as *you* are dry, *you* shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with *yourself*” (49, my emphasis). Dorian’s extraordinary beauty and everlasting youth distinguish him from the face on the canvas. While he remains young and beautiful (these features imply his innocence and purity – in the fin-de-siècle world of Oscar Wilde beauty is the equivalent of morals), the gradual metamorphosis of the portrait reflects his degradation.

The doppelgänger represents the evil side of the protagonist and his conscience. It “is the face of [his] soul” (247). Dorian installs it in the dark, musty attic, hides it from the public, symbolically internalises it.

Again, there is a question whether the painting does change, or whether only the protagonist perceives it as altered. Tyson follows the second option:

[T]he disturbing changes Dorian sees in the portrait originate not in the painting itself, but in his own mind, as increasing social estrangement and conflicting attitudes of self-love and self-revulsion induce recognizable signs of mental disorder, including paranoia, pathological self-love, erratic and violent behaviours, dissociative identity (multiple personality), and the phenomenon clinically termed *autoscopia*.

Wilde [...] implant[s] in a number of ways an ongoing suspicion that the effects of the transformation are largely, perhaps entirely, a product of Dorian’s own deluded mind. The author is careful to ensure, in the first place, that in the whole course of the narrative no one but Dorian and, briefly, Basil actually sees the painting in its altered form (3 and 12).

However, Basil sees the painting in semi-darkness, in the dim light of a candle. He offers a rational explanation: “No! the thing is impossible. The room is damp, mildew has got into the canvas. The paints I used had some wretched mineral poison in them. I tell you this thing is impossible” (Wilde 246). “Basil’s reasoning seems more than likely. Indeed some twenty years earlier the artist pointed out the painting’s need for a second protective coat of varnish, that he has since had no chance to apply” (Tyson 13).

Dorian is initially lured by Lord Henry and his doctrine of new Hedonism – the proclamation of life, individualism and art. The protagonist becomes preoccupied with himself and his appearance. He begins to follow the advice to yield to every temptation. However, “[t]hat curiosity about life [...] seemed to increase with gratification. The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them” (203). Dorian corrupts, and demoralises men and women, abuses alcohol and opium, maintains relations with suspicious peoples.

In the course of the story, the connection between the protagonist and the portrait grows stronger. Dorian discovers that he cannot stand long-lasting separation from the picture. When he commits his most profound crime and brutally murders Basil, the decision seems to be instinctive, and dictated by the painting:

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly *an uncontrollable feeling* of hatred for Basil Hallward *came over him*, as though it had been *suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips*. The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything (248, my emphasis).

The novel ends in accordance with the logic of the double established by Poe. The destruction of the doppelganger is simultaneous with the death of the original. When the painting is ruined, the protagonist becomes “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage” (349). As Dorian stabs the painting with a knife, he dies with a knife in his heart.

In the texts analysed, masculine doppelgangers are violent, savage, deformed, strangely unpleasant, nightmarish, hellish, even satanic rivals. Their emergence elicits extreme, unambiguously negative feelings and emotions, such as loathing, disgust, and most importantly paralysing fear, awe, and terror. The alter egos brutally persecute the protagonists, seduce them with evil, and lead them to misery, self-destruction, death and annihilation. They demoralize, incite them to commit crimes, and encourage or force their counterparts to turn towards wickedness, immoral practices and murders. They victimize the protagonists who become powerless and helplessly “addicted” to their “evil twins”. Masculine doubles convey estrangement, shame, self-effacement, submission, madness.

Feminine doppelgangers are not evil antagonists, or murderous rivals. They do not represent a superego, a dirty conscience, or a negative side, but the repressed feelings, desires and needs of the protagonists. Feminine doubles (mother-figures or figure of the first wives) do not threaten the integrity of the protagonists, like masculine alter egos.

On the contrary, they are capable of sharing their knowledge with their counterparts, and of providing guidance; and significantly participate in the process of acquisition of subjectivity.

Nevertheless, the nature of the feminine alter egos may be ambiguous: they may also be seductive and deceitful. They promise more than they can offer, and tempt the protagonists to follow them into the realm of partial freedom – which is however very different from the domains of wickedness, crimes and murders. In the case of feminine doubling, a relationship with a doppelganger may also lead to the annihilation of the alter ego (caused by the latter or the protagonist). However, contrary to the logic of masculine doubling, the death of a feminine doppelganger does not lead to the death of the protagonist. Furthermore, it sometimes results in positive change and liberation.

The topic of feminine doubling might be found in various narratives, including folk tales, legends, myths, etc. that are part of a recognized European tradition. To conclude this Introduction, I would like to briefly present the two versions of the fairy-tale about the Sleeping Beauty, as an example demonstrating the significance of the subject of the two wives/mother and daughter to the formation of women's selfhood. The widespread variant of the story – Charles Perrault's "The Beauty Asleep in the Wood" (1697) retold by the Brothers Grimm as "Brier Rose" (1812), by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889) and by Walt Disney's animated film *The Sleeping Beauty* (1959) – had stifled an older variant of the fairy-tale, Giambattista Basile's "Sun, Moon and Talia" (1634). In contrast to Perrault's nameless protagonist, Basile's Talia is not a statuesque beauty, as passive, as possible – overcome by the deathly sleep in a silent, motionless castle.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, in his version, the Ogress, who resents the Princess, and attempts to murder her and her children, is not Prince John's *mother*, but *his first wife* whom he attempts to substitute with the second – young and innocent – wife. Basile's version of the fairytale illustrates the themes of doubling and substitution which recur in the interpretations which follow. As will be seen below, the image of the first wife/mother has become much more developed in European women's writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which shifted away from the reductionist model of fairy tales towards a more nuanced interpretation of feminine doubles.

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<sup>16</sup> The Brothers Grimm restored the name as Brier Rose. Pyotr Tchaikovsky called the Princess, Aurora, borrowing the name from the daughter. Disney adopted this version.

## **PART I**

The chapter which follows has been devoted to the introduction of authors, whose texts have been selected for inclusion in this thesis: Charlotte Brontë, Daphne du Maurier, Narcyza Żmichowska, Maria Konopnicka, Zofia Nałkowska and Maria Komornicka. It begins with a brief introduction of the British context, focused on the account of the differences with the Polish background. The following presentation of the Polish epochs of Romanticism, Positivism, and Young Poland pinpoints the reception of the Polish writers by their contemporaries, their (lack of) recognition today, and the conventional readings of their texts. The introduction of biographical, cultural, historical, social and emancipatory contexts is essential for the understanding of my unconventional rereading of these texts. It also seems necessary for me to emphasise the uniqueness of these works within the literary tradition.

# Chapter I: British Literature: A Survey of the Main Trends

The beginning of British Romanticism is symbolically set in 1785 – the publication of William Wordsworth's and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is often held as the beginning of the epoch. The era ends with the accession of king George IV in 1820, or for some it ends in 1830. In these years its Polish counterpart is just emerging: the start of Polish Romanticism is conventionally set in 1822. The lost January Uprising from 1863 marks the end of the period and the beginning of the new era of Positivism. At the same time, Mid-Victorian England is flourishing.

The character of Romanticism varies depending on country. In Poland it is a nationalistic phenomenon, in Germany idealistic. In Britain, the beginning of the movement is connected with the start of the French Revolution (1789), and it is deeply rooted in the event. It was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the rationalization of culture, as well as a revolt against the norms of the Enlightenment (a characteristic popular across various countries). It was a very turbulent time for British society. During the period England transformed from an agricultural society to a modern industrial nation. A literary revolution accompanied the social and political revolution, proclaiming the revival of literature. Cultural influences included James Macpherson's Ossian cycle published in 1762, the German *Sturm und Drang* movement, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and the idealist philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling – all of which served as a great inspiration also to Adam Mickiewicz.

Although British Romanticism is very diverse in style and achievements, it has a common "spirit of the age". In his manifesto – the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* – Wordsworth created a coherent literary theory. Romantic individualism is radical; based on the German post-Kantian philosophy of the "ego". As the human mind created the universe, literature is not supposed to mirror life, but to constitute an impulsive, natural, individual expression of the author's feelings and emotions. Poetry emphasises spontaneity, freedom, intuitiveness and the unconsciousness of the creative act. It opposes the heart and the head, and has a cult of sensibility. The poet is a bard – a chosen one, a poet-prophet, a genius. The protagonists are outcasts separated from the society.

The major Romantic form is the lyric poem written in the first person. The most prominent British poets include: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Robert Southey (dubbed "the Lake School" or "Lake Poets"), Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, John Keats ("the Cockney School"), George Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley ("the Satanic School"). Poets experiment

with language, versification, design, employing a variety of forms and mapping new directions:

Blake's symbolic lyrics and visionary <prophetic> poems; Coleridge's haunting ballad-narrative of sin and retribution, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; Wordsworth's epiclike spiritual autobiography, *The Prelude*; Shelley's cosmic symbolic drama, *Prometheus Unbound*; Keats's great sequence of Odes on the irreconcilable conflict in basic human desires; Byron's ironic survey of all European civilization, *Don Juan* (Abrams, "Norton Anthology" 11).

Although all the greatest poets of the period are inspired by William Shakespeare, and write plays, drama is an unpopular genre. However, Shakespearean influences are prominent in the dramatic works of many Polish Romantic writers, such as Mickiewicz, Jan Maksymilian Fredro, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Euzebiusz Słowacki, and most importantly Juliusz Słowacki in *Balladyna*, *Horsztyński* and *Kordian*.<sup>1</sup>

The primary Romantic subject – the landscapes – is connected with the metaphysical concept of nature versus the scientific philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In "nature poetry" nature corresponds with the spiritual world. It describes untamed, wild, pure nature, mother nature and mother earth. It is connected with the supernatural – mystery, magic, mesmerism, demonology, the occult, exoticism, and unusual modes of experience – visions, dreams, opium hallucinations. Romantic poetry is deeply inspired by folklore, and focused on common, everyday, rustic life.

British Romanticism also developed a Gothic novel inaugurated by Horace Walpole in 1764 with the publication of *The Castle Of Otranto*. Matthew Gregory Lewis and Ann Radcliffe shaped two variants of Gothic fiction. Lewis borrowed the macabre, naturalism and irrationality from German folklore, and commingled them with classical Gothic elements. His infamous work, *The Monk*, of 1796 is saturated with descriptions of cruelty, suffering, death, degradation of the body and violent eroticism. In Monk-Lewis's, as he was quickly dubbed, type of a Gothic novel the fantastic and preternatural are real; sometimes more real than reality itself.

Ann Radcliffe is the author of the second, sentimental variant of Gothic fiction. As stated by Moers, she was "the most popular and best-paid English novelist of the eighteenth century" ("Female Gothic" 78). Two of her six novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), were hailed as masterpieces of the genre. Walter Scott compared the reading of her works to a drug addiction. Contrary to Lewis,

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Shakespearean influences in Poland, see Cirocki.

Radcliffe treats Gothic as a literary stylisation, or convention. In the atmosphere of the violent Middle Ages and in Gothic architecture she perceives beauty, and admires a picturesque landscape. She substitutes naturalistic descriptions of horror for allusion, suggestion and understatement. At the end of the story every miraculous phenomenon or mystery is rationally explained, every fantastic creature, ghost or spirit turns out to be human (albeit a murderer or bandit). The reader makes the following discovery: “the miraculous and the wonderful is produced by the consciousness of the heroes, it is a delusion of their feverish imagination awakened by dreams and worries” (Sinko 427). Her Gothic novels repeat a scheme consisting of three elements: the forceful separation of lovers, numerous adventures and peripeteia, and reunion. The lover is insignificant – the pivot of the story is the victimised, lion-hearted heroine. She is beautiful, young, good, innocent, honest, and persistently persecuted by evil, murderous men. Radcliffe’s protagonist is frequently abducted, forced into marriage, dispossessed and imprisoned in ruined castles. She courageously makes numerous unsuccessful attempts to escape through the underground labyrinths and dark corridors, discovering secret hiding places, and solving uncanny mysteries. Despite countless misfortunes, Radcliffe’s heroine always finally overcomes her troubles and victoriously emerges from musty dungeons without a hair out of place. Since its establishment in the 1790s, Radcliffe’s model of the Gothic novel written by women has been imitated many times.

British Romanticism had two major novelists: Walter Scott and Jane Austen. Scott and his romances connecting history, fiction, and improvisation, was an important inspiration for Polish Romanticism. However, Austen’s novels treating the love problems of women did not find its continuation in Polish fiction of the period.

British, German (especially Goethe’s *Faust* and his poem “The Erl-king”) and Russian Gothicism inspired Polish Romantics. They incorporated Gothic elements into their works, but there were no entirely Gothic novels.<sup>2</sup> Three Polish women novelists of the nineteenth century were inspired by the scheme established by Radcliffe: Anna Mostowska, Maria Wirtemberska and Łucja Rautenstrauchowa.

In the two volumes of her short stories, Mostowska follows Radcliffe’s recipe for a sentimental Gothic novel concluded with a rational explanation. Her most interesting work is *Strach w zamczku* (*Fear in the Little Castle*). Wirtemberska’s *Malvina or the Heart’s Intuition* exhibits great similarity to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Firstly, the protagonist Malvina, an enthusiast of romances, resembles the British heroines; secondly, it is a story about two lovers parted by fate and social convention; and thirdly,

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<sup>2</sup> Gothic elements are present in Mickiewicz’s frenzy ballads, Krasiński’s debut *Powieści gotyckie* (*Gothic Stories*), and in the works of Ukrainian Romanticism: in Antoni Malczewski’s *Maria* and in Seweryn Goszczyński’s *Zamek Kaniowski* (*Kaniowski Castle*) and *Król zamczyska* (*King of the Castle*).

there is an explanatory happy ending. Similarly to Radcliffe's novel, the text terminates with a double wedding. The third and most interesting Polish women writer of the Romantic era to incorporate Gothic elements into her works was Rautenstrauchowa. *Ragana, czyli Płochosć (Ragana, or Bashfulness)* is structured along the lines of Radcliffe's novels. It talks about honest, innocent women, whose lives are subjected to fate, curses, unfulfilled promises and their own faulty choices. However, Rautenstrauchowa preferred the theme of unhappy, unfulfilled love. Instead of a happy ending, she chose death and further suffering. Themes and motifs present in Rautenstrauchowa's novels correspond with Radcliffe's sentimentality, however, she comes close to M. G. Lewis and his *Monk* in her approach towards envisaging horror, fate and people's motivations. In her texts violence, cruelty, misfortune and suffering are real, actions have irreversible consequences, and wounds bring death. She does not picture ruined castles, cloisters, crypts, wild forests, caves and tombs as beautiful, but as dangerous and threatening. Her second novel, *Przeznaczenie (Destiny)* more visibly tends towards Lewis's variant of Gothic fiction.

Gothic elements, such as castles, uncanny incidents and creatures of ambivalent ontological status also appear in Żmichowska's *The Heathen*, Komornicka's "On Father and his Daughter", and Nałkowska's "Green Shore".

In 1974 Ellen Moers established a new (sub)genre of Female Gothic. The concept originated from a simple assumption that the numerous works written by women in the Gothic style deserve a separate genre. Hence, the definition included in her essay "The Female Gothic" was essentialist: "What I mean by Female Gothic is easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (77). As stated by Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace, in the 1990s the new genre shifted to the mainstream and became one of the predominant issues for the feminist literary tradition. Hence, the critics stressed the necessity to rephrase, redefine or complete the hitherto existing definition. "Today, over twenty-five years later, the terms being offered – <women's Gothic>, <feminine Gothic>, <lesbian Gothic>, even <Gothic feminism> – appear to suggest that Moers's definition is too much an umbrella term" (1).

Although the term Female Gothic does not appear in Polish literary criticism, the correspondence between the Gothic genre and femininity has been established. Ewa Kraskowska represents a similar approach to Moers: "Women, as readers of plot, love to be frightened and they themselves have the talent of creating the atmosphere of dread. This conclusion can be deduced when observing the history of Gothic in art, in which writing ladies [...] have a significant input" ("Kilka uwag" 245).

The connection between femininity and the Gothic – where “femininity” is defined by a specific set of structures, motifs and themes, not the author’s gender – is interesting, complex and yet unexplored. The two conventions share literary themes, motifs and structures, such as the prison-like house/castle, the labyrinth, and the mirror. In the feminine tradition, the house is an ambivalent sphere. On the one hand, it is primarily a feminine area, a safe shelter, a domain of peace and love. However, simultaneously it represents incarceration in domestic duties, separation from the public, social and professional spheres of life, limitation of artistic creativity. Hence, the house in works, which use the feminine convention often, resembles a threatening Gothic castle, with its disorientating, knotty labyrinths and undefined, volatile structure.<sup>3</sup>

*Jane Eyre* is a novel filled with gothic elements. Most events take place in frightening, uncanny manors, consecutively in Gateshead Hall, Lowood and Thornfield. Rochester resembles a Gothic “villain”. Most importantly, Bertha Mason is an embodiment of “a madwoman in the attic”. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar re-established the category of “a madwoman in the attic” in order to emphasise the popular nineteenth-century literary theme of an incarcerated madwoman. In their monumental *The Madwoman in the Attic* they present the history of women’s writing as a dialogue with a patriarchal tradition. Nicolas Malebranche calls the imagination the *folle du logis*, the madwoman of the house, the madwoman in the attic. In his analysis of Malebranchian doctrine of the imagination Alain Grosrichard states the following: “Malebranche implies that there is no <enlightened> despotism and that in every domain of society the master of the house (*maître du logis*) is always also the madman of the house – the imagination (*folle du logis*). [...] [T]he ever-present dangers of the imagination (*folle du logis*) exist only because a woman is always more or less a madwoman (*folle au logis*)” (126 and 139).

In a sense, the Victorian age is a continuation of the Romantic era. “The energy of Romantic literature persists, but it is channelled into a stricter concern for disciplined forms” (Abrams, “Norton Anthology” 900).<sup>4</sup> The outset of the new epoch is connected with the inauguration of the first Liverpool and Manchester Railway (1825), and the first Reform Bill (1832). The Act represents the beginning of a new era, as it ended the monopoly of the conservative landowners and the Tory party, by extending the right to

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<sup>3</sup> The interesting issue of associations between Gothic and femininity is not the subject of this thesis. I discussed it in my dissertation entitled *Sojusz gotycyzmu i kobiecości (Alliance of Gothic and Femininity)*.

<sup>4</sup> Polish Positivism is also a continuation of Romanticism, see the section “Polish Positivism: A Set of Restrictions”, pp. 72-73 below.

vote to the middle class (all males owning property of £10 or more in annual rent). Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897) and her death (1901) mark the end of the period. Chronologically, the Victorian age is simultaneous with the most of Polish Romanticism, the era of Positivism and the commencement of Young Poland.

A painful industrial transformation and the emergence of a modern urban economy resulting in the rapid development of London and the colonies characterize the outset of the Victorian age. This "Time of Troubles" is stigmatized by acute social and economic problems: poverty, unemployment, depression, and violent riots. However, the Mid-Victorian period is a time of prosperity marked by the pride in technological progress. It is also a time of intense conflict between religion and science. The late Victorian era is defined by the sense of security and tranquillity. The last decade of the nineteenth century is a time of *fin-de-siècle* melancholy and decadence, and the beginning of the modernist movement in literature.

In Victorian times the novel becomes the dominant form of literature. The widely recognized masterpieces belong to Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson, Lewis Carroll, and Elizabeth Gaskell, among others. The great realistic novel observes the social and individual problems of the protagonists. It is concerned with daily life – family issues, marriages, relationships between neighbours and work colleagues, etc. The most prominent subject in both prose and poetry is love. The puritan code of the Victorian age – sexual puritanism and prudishness – had vastly influenced literature. It also had an underside of extravagant pornography.

In the Victorian age the "Woman Question" – a term invented by the period denoting the issues of sexual inequality and the traditional roles of women – was as frequently discussed, as industrialism and Darwinian evolution. Although voting rights for British and Polish women were established in the same year – 1918, in Great Britain the issue had been contentious for longer.<sup>5</sup> While Mary Wollstonecraft was publishing her pioneering work on feminist philosophy, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Poland was experiencing the second Partition and remained indifferent to women's issues. From 1840 onward there were petitions to parliament about suffrage. In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the first woman's rights convention, where a Declaration of Rights and Sentiments was drafted based on the US Declaration of independence. On the other hand, Queen Victoria, an antifeminist, shared a common belief in the intellectual inferiority of women and called women's suffrage "a mad folly" (Abrams, "Norton Anthology" 1595).

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<sup>5</sup> To be precise, in 1918 voting rights covered only over 30-year-old women. The rest had to wait another ten years for their right to vote.

Although Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Florence Nightingale fought for better education and employment possibilities for women, in the 1830s and 1840s officially British women did not think about education. As observed by Walter Besant in “The Queen’s Reign”, they subjected themselves to patriarchal society’s expectations, such as:

To be childishly ignorant; to carry shrinking modesty so far as to find the point of a shoe projecting beyond the folds of a frock indelicate; to confess that serious subjects were beyond a woman’s grasp; never even to pretend to form an independent judgment; to know nothing of Art, History, Science, Literature, Politics, Sociology, Manners (qtd. in Abrams, “Norton Anthology” 1610).

This vision of femininity was popularised in the USA and Great Britain by the best-selling poem “The Angel in the House”, in which Coventry Patmore described his first wife and created a feminine image of women’s nature defined by purity, selflessness and domesticity. Since Virginia Woolf’s famous critique in “Professions for Women”, the title of the text serves as a representation of Victorian expectations regarding women. However, as observed by Walter Besant, the Victorian attitude towards education gradually changed. The first British college for women was established in London in 1847. By the end of the Victorian era women could study at twelve universities and colleges for a degree, and at Cambridge and Oxford without a degree.

To return to Showalter’s assertion of the three stages in the development of British women’s literature, the Victorian age embraces the Feminine stage spanning the 1840s onward until the death of George Eliot in 1880. According to Showalter, the writers of the period – the Brontës, Eliot, Nightingale, Gaskell, Browning, and Jane Austen – internalized the dominant standards and the male tradition. The Feminist stage (1880-1920), overlapping the conclusion of the Victorian epoch and the outset of the new period of Modernism is marked by a protest against these prevailing values.

Traditional readings of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) place the novel in two major contexts – autobiography and history of literature. The first indicates that characters in the book resemble the author’s family members. For example, Brontë worked as a governess, and her father had a cataract on his eye and become temporarily blind.

The historical reading situates the novel between the romantic heritage – including its gothic elements – and the Victorian future. According to it, *Jane Eyre* is a classic romance novel, taking the form of a *Bildungsroman*. It is a story about growing up, the spiritual, moral, psychological and social development of a protagonist. The

romantic side of the story focuses on the emotions and feelings of the main character. Jane Eyre searches for the true, reciprocal love represented by a fulfilled marriage. She enters a relationship with a typical father-figure:

These instances of older-man/younger-woman relationships begin to appear everywhere in the Victorian period, evidenced in literary productions as diverse as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1871–72), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–62). They appear to reinforce the subservient role of the female as child, as student, as victim, and the dominant role of the male as father, as teacher, and as aggressor (Godfrey 860).

In the end Jane finds “true love”, and becomes a wife and a mother.

Bertha Mason is an unambiguously negative character, an evil obstacle on the protagonist's way to happiness with Rochester. She is a monstrously violent and cruel creature, resembling a savage animal. She was mad before she became Rochester's wife. The circumstances of their marriage are an ethical explanation for his actions towards Bertha. Her insanity had been purposely hidden from the innocent and naïve Rochester. He had been deceived and mistreated by her. This traditional interpretation of Bertha Mason gives her husband the right to lock her up in the attic and search for happiness with another woman.

According to one of the established readings of *Jane Eyre*, the text is a prefiguration of the Victorian realist novel, with its harsh social depiction of material circumstances. It describes Jane's search for identity and economic independence in a world, which did not expect such ambitions from women. Jane's social position is ambiguous. She finds herself in the situation of a poor orphan, well-read and well-mannered. Despite her education and culture, she can still be only a governess – a servant for the wealthier higher class. This interpretation leads to criticism of social discrimination based on class. It also places Jane in conflict with the male characters and patriarchal culture. The three main male characters – Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John Rivers – try to subordinate her and prevent her from expressing her own thoughts and feelings. In the light of this interpretation, Brontë fights with Victorian stereotypes about women.

The social circumstances described above influenced the emergence of a new literary genre dubbed “governess novel” with the protagonist employed in this position. The most famous representatives were William Mackepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and

of course *Jane Eyre*.<sup>6</sup> The dignified profession of a governess can be opposed to prostitution, which due to bad working conditions and underemployment, thrived in nineteenth-century Britain. Esther Godfrey, the author of “Jane Eyre, from Governess to Girl Bride” interrogates the theme of the governess against the gender background:

Jane’s advancement from her position as teacher at Lowood to private governess signifies an important development in the text’s subversion of gender, since governesses served as a hole in the invisible wall between working-class and middle-class gender identities. As governess, Jane bridges the gap between the dangerous androgyny of working-class homogeneity and the fragile stability of middle-class separate spheres. [...] [W]hen Jane comes to Thornfield, she brings an economic affiliation tied to working-class androgyny with her (857-858).

Twentieth-century British literature – comprising the period of Edwardian England (1901-1910) and the Gregorian period (1911-1936) is characterized by disillusionment with the Victorian ideals of realism and conservatism. The writers of the first phase of the epoch, for example Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* and Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians*, take the lead in picturing their predecessors as prudish and old-fashioned. The major Modernist literary influences include: Romanticism, the French bohemian life style, pre-Freudian and Freudian psychoanalysis, artistic impressionism and cubism, and the concept of “art for art’s sake” (*l’art pour l’art*) adopted from Victor Cousin’s lecture on aesthetics *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien (Truth, Beauty and Goodness)*.<sup>7</sup> Young Poland or Polish Modernism, symbolically set in 1890 and ending with the first World War is predominantly characterized by the return to the Romantic tradition (Neo-Romanticism) and decadence connected with the ideal of “art for art’s sake”. It is a highly eclectic period covering various literary, artistic and philosophical trends, usually drawn from European Modernism: symbolism, naturalism, impressionism, pessimism, and intuitionism, among others.

Post-War literature reflected social, economical and political developments, and participated in building up a world of new values. The construction of time, the new technique of “stream-of-consciousness” in the works of Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Marcel Proust, among others, was influenced by the theories of Freud and Carl Gustav Jung on consciousness, and unconsciousness.

In the twentieth century the social and economical position of women is changing. The married Woman’s Property Act from 1882 allows married women to

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the issue of nineteenth-century servants, see Cichomska.

<sup>7</sup> The lecture was given at the Sorbonne University of Paris in 1818.

own property, the number of admissions to universities was growing, the suffrage movement culminated in the right to vote. These favourable circumstances enable the Female stage of British women's literature to be "a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity (Showalter, "A Literature of Their Own" 13). However, according to Showalter, it is only as late as the 1960s that women writers manage to get in contact with their sexuality.<sup>8</sup>

In 1938 Daphne du Maurier wrote what was probably her most famous novel *Rebecca*. The majority of literary critics compared it with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and concentrated on the similarities between the two novels. Angela Carter even stated: "*Rebecca* shamelessly reduplicated the plot of *Jane Eyre*" ("Expletives" 163).

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, Showalter lists Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, A. S. Byatt, and Margaret Drabble.

# Chapter II: Polish Romanticism: Madness. Vampirism. Messianism

## 1 A Survey of the Main Trends

The following section focuses on the further, detailed interrogation of the epochs of Polish Romanticism, Positivism and Young Poland with reference to the authors and the texts chosen for inclusion in this thesis. It seems necessary for me to devote over half of part I of this thesis to the period of Romanticism, because of its significance for the subsequent epochs, its longevity (it lasted for over forty years), and its complexity. Romanticism is hailed as the crowning epoch of Polish literature. Firstly, it is valued for its innovativeness and excellence in the literary and artistic field. “Such an era would never come again” believes Alina Witkowska,

It ushered in a revolution in the literary language, imparting it with the maturity to express myriad existential and metaphysical experiences; it enriched the multiplicity of literary genres to include ones that had previously been wholly unknown, such as the novel in verse and the so-called open drama; it forayed into history and turned to face the challenges of the future. This was a national and universal literature, which fostered a spiritual portrait of the Polish “man of the age,” and at the same time reflected upon ideas fundamental to the existence of humanity, such as freedom and the antitheses of freedom to be found in history. Romanticism was also an epoch of literary geniuses, thanks to which poetry in particular attained the highest caliber (“Romanticism” 152).

Secondly, the ever-lasting popularity of the period was caused by the unique nature of the epoch, shaped by the historical, social and ideological circumstances of those times. The era was characterised by political and ideological turmoil. It is important to note that Romanticism was born in a nonexistent country erased from the maps by superpowers for a total number of 123 years; in a country continuously struggling for political independence and the preservation of its national identity. As a consequence of the three Partitions (1772, 1793, 1795), Polish territory was annexed by three imperial neighbours and divided into the Kingdom of Poland surrendered to Russian authority, Galicia which was joined with Austria, and a part belonging to Prussia.<sup>1</sup> The epoch was additionally predated by the Kościuszko Uprising (1794) and the Napoleonic campaigns (1803-1815); subsequently it experienced the November Uprising (1830-1831), the

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<sup>1</sup> To be precise, what disappeared in 1795 was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth while the name “Kingdom of Poland” was used since the Congress of Vienna in 1816.

Spring of Nations (1848) and finally the January Uprising (1863), which symbolically ended the period.

The beginning of Polish Romanticism is symbolically set in 1822, the year of the publication of *Ballads and Romances*, a collection of poems by Adam Mickiewicz.<sup>2</sup> A considerably large part of this chapter is devoted to this writer because he shaped Romantic ethics and aesthetics, and the canon, to which women writers had to relate. The author prefaced the book with an essay "O poezji romantycznej" ("On Romantic Poetry"), treating the origins and development of Romantic ideas. As his inspiration, Mickiewicz listed ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, Shakespeare and German philosophy, emphasising the ancient roots and agelessness of the Romantic tradition.<sup>3</sup> Mickiewicz's *Ballads and Romances* included the famous "The Romantic", a representative poem of the period.<sup>4</sup> In the opening motto the poet referred to the ancient concept of "the eye in the mind" popularised by Shakespeare: "Methinks, I see...

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<sup>2</sup> On Mickiewicz in English, see Davie; Gardner; Koropecyk; Weintraub, *The Poetry of Adam Mickiewicz*; Witkowska.

<sup>3</sup> Additionally, his concepts were most probably inspired by his teacher, Leon Borowski and Madame de Staël. Although the name of the latter and the titles of her works (*A Treatise of Ancient and Modern Literature, Germany* and *The Influence of Literature upon Society*) do not appear in Mickiewicz's texts, he was most likely aware of her theories on literature, especially of the idea of division between Northern and Southern literature (originally taken from Montesquieu).

<sup>4</sup> "The Romantic":

"Silly girl, listen!" / But she doesn't listen / While the village roofs glisten, / Bright in the sun. / "Silly girl, what do you do there, / As if there were someone to view there, / A face to gaze on and greet there, / A live / form warmly to meet there, / When there is no one, none, do you hear?" / But she doesn't hear. / Like a dead stone / She stands there alone, / Staring ahead of her, peering around / For something that has to be found / Till, suddenly spying it, / She touches it, clutches it, / Laughing and crying, / Is it you, my Johnny, / my true love, my dear? / I knew you would never forget me, / Even in death! Come with me, let me / Show you the way now! / Hold your breath, though, / And tiptoe lest stepmother hear! / What can she hear? They have made him / A grave, two years ago laid him / Away with the dead. / Save me, Mother of God! I'm afraid. / But why? Why should I flee you now? / What do I dread? / Not Johnny! My Johnny won't hurt me. / It is my Johnny! I see you now, / Your eyes, your white shirt. / But it's pale as linen you are, / Cold as winter you are! / Let my lips take the cold from you, / Kiss the chill of the mould from you. / Dearest love, let me die with you, / In the deep earth lie with you, / For this world is dark and dreary, / I am lonely and weary! / Alone among the unkind ones / Who mock at my vision, / My tears their derision, / Seeing nothing, the blind ones! / Dear God! A cock is crowing, / Whitely glimmers the dawn. / Johnny! Where are you going? / Don't leave me! I am forlorn! / So, caressing, talking aloud to her / Lover, she stumbles and falls, / And her cry of anguish calls / A pitying crowd to her. / "Cross yourselves! It is, surely, / Her Johnny come back from the grave: / While he lived, he loved her entirely. / May God his soul now save!" / Hearing what they are saying, / I, too, start praying. / "The girl is out of her senses!" / Shouts a man with a learned air, / "My eye and my lenses / Know there's nothing there. / Ghosts are a myth / Of ale-wife and blacksmith. / Clodhoppers! This is treason / Against King Reason!" / "Yet the girl loves," I reply diffidently, / "And the people believe reverently: / Faith and love are more discerning / Than lenses or learning. / You know the dead truths, not the living, / The world of things, not the world of loving. / Where does any miracle start? / Cold eye, look in your heart!" (trans. W. H. Auden, qtd. in Miłosz, "Polish Literature" 211-213).

Where? - In my mind's eye"<sup>5</sup> ("The Romantic" 37). With this reference, Mickiewicz underlined his allegiance to the European tradition.

Generally speaking, the West – Great Britain, France and Germany – served as important inspiration for the budding Polish Romanticism. Hence, it rejected the tradition of Enlightenment and its cosmopolitanism, and adopted the critique of industrialism, commerce, and urban society. Mickiewicz encompasses characteristic themes of British Romanticism. His early works manifest criticism of the classical past, admiration for untamed nature, rusticity, folklore and exoticism, and interest in alternative states of consciousness, such as mesmerism, the occult, the esoteric; and the cult of (feminine) sensitivity. His poetry is spontaneous and emphasises the individuality of the author/narrator perceived as bard, and prophet. Nevertheless, Mickiewicz did not invent Polish Romanticism, as it is usually suggested by historians of Polish literature, but implemented European ideas on Polish ground and supported them with elements of Polish, and Slavic tradition.

In his preface and in the ballad, Mickiewicz argued with Kazimierz Brodziński, and his aesthetic manifesto entitled "O klasyczości i romantyczności tudzież o duchu poezji polskiej" ("On Classicism and Romanticism, and on the Spirit of Polish Poetry", 1818). Brodziński, who was an important critic, poet and translator of Sentimentalism, and Pre-Romanticism, set out to promote Romanticism. However, Mickiewicz disapproved of the fact that he identified it with sentimentality and separated it from Classicism. He criticised the simplistic opposition between Classicism and Romanticism:

[T]he romantic genre has not been created recently, as some believe, but it emerged [...] out of a certain inclination of nations; intrinsically romantic works of art, in the full sense of this word, can be found among poets of the Middle Ages, and all later works dubbed romantic because of their essence or construction, form or style often belong to other, greatly differentiated types of poetry (50).

Brodziński argued: "Classicality requires a better taste, Romanticism – a better feeling. The first is acquired in the process of education, the second is embedded in our hearts" (18). Brodziński's essay inaugurated a historical battle "between the Romantics and the Classics". Mickiewicz's wise man was based on a mathematician, philosopher and astronomer Jan Śniadecki. This supporter of Classicism formulated the first response to Brodziński's manifesto and stated that Romanticism is harmful for literature, and education. In his "O pismach klasycznych i romantycznych" ("On Classical and

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<sup>5</sup> Conversation between Hamlet and Horatio (act 1, sc. 2).

Romantic Works”, 1919) he associated Romanticism with savage magic, witchcraft and phantoms. He believed it to be superstitious, barbaric and very dangerous.

“The Romantic” introduced a new ethic funded on emotions, folklore and the uncanny. Piotr Chmielowski summarised the main ideas of the ballad as follows: “Romanticism ordered reason about, especially common sense apprehended as a servant of simple people, unfamiliar with the verve of soul. Heart was its church, its tribunal, its final oracle in all aspects. If one did not unconditionally follow its drives, he was <a skeleton of a man, a stone>” (“Kobiety” 20). Additionally, what is significant for this thesis is that Romanticism glorified madness. It was not apprehended as “loss of consciousness, but on the contrary – as the final illumination” (Janion, “Polski korowód” 203). The ballad is a manifestation of the ongoing battle between reason and feeling; science and vision, prophesy, and dream. A dialogue between the elderly wit and a young country girl represents the conflict. The latter is hailed insane by the wit and the crowd, because she obsessively chases the ghost of her dead beloved. In “The Romantic” the narrator/poet chooses heart over reason, and supports the “insane” girl.

As determined by Showalter, “[t]he victimised madwoman became almost a cult figure for the [British] Romantics” (“Female Malady” 10). Mickiewicz’s *Karusia*<sup>6</sup> reminds me of two powerful Romantic figures:

The troubling, ambiguous nature of female insanity was expressed and perpetuated by the three major Romantic images of the madwoman: the suicidal Ophelia, the sentimental Crazy Jane, and the violent Lucia. All three established female sexuality and feminine nature as the source of the female malady, but each also stood for a different interpretation of woman’s madness and man’s relation to it (Showalter, “Female Malady” 10).

First, there are connotations between *Karusia* and Ophelia – the paradigmatic madwoman, a figure that became an obsession for the British Romantics. Various personified throughout the years, Ophelia was always predominantly “feminine”: dressed in white, surrounded by wild flowers, with her hair loose, chanting a song, dying in the water. However, *Karusia* is more obviously an embodiment of “the sentimental” Crazy Jane, created in 1793 by Matthew G. Lewis. Although the poem was not widely recognised, the figure of Crazy Jane (or Crazy Kate, Crazy Ann) strongly captured the Romantic imagination. Similarly to *Karusia*, Lewis’s protagonist becomes afflicted by madness when her beloved abandons her: “Henry fled! – with him, for ever,/ Fled the wits of Crazy Jane” (189). She is “a pitiful young girl who is betrayed by a faithless man” (Hara 57), “a docile and harmless madwoman, who devoted herself single-mindedly to

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<sup>6</sup> The English translation of the poem does not include the protagonist’s name.

commemorating her lost lover” (Showalter, “Female Malady” 13). Ole Munch-Pedersen emphasises her vulnerability and dependency on male affection. Mickiewicz’s Karusia is another harmless, vulnerable madwoman who lost her lover.

“The poet” is perceived in terms connected with the philosophy of Louis–Claude de Saint-Martin. Blessed by God with his talent, the “poet-prophet” was the spiritual leader of the nation, elevated above the ordinary crowd.<sup>7</sup> “Not only is there something divine in the poetic inspiration, not only is a higher truth being revealed by an inspired poet, but the true poet is literally a prophet; he is in communion with God, can see into the future, and work miracles” (Weintraub, “Problem of Improvisation” 125).

Naturally, the author, the narrator and the poet are men. Although feminine heroines appear throughout Polish Romantic work, masculine authors largely dominated the epoch. As determined by German Ritz, “[t]he Romantic I is a masculine I, and hence the authorship is of masculine character” (“Seks, *gender* i tekst” 273).

Subsequent to the emergence of his *Ballads and Romances*, Mickiewicz was hailed the national bard (*wieszcz narodowy*). Until today this poet, playwright and political activist is still regarded as one of the most prominent Polish writers, possibly the greatest Slavic poet (at rival with Alexander Pushkin).<sup>8</sup> He developed the ideas manifested in “The Romantic” in his monumental drama *Forefathers’ Eve*, written between 1823–1833. The original name of the work (*Dziady*) derives from an ancient Slavic feast celebrated on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October in order to commemorate the dead forefathers. This metaphysical poetic drama constituted a new influential Romantic genre.<sup>9</sup> It comprises four parts organised anachronically: II, IV, III, I (unfinished), it is fragmentary and has a modern open-ended structure. Witkowska accentuates its innovativeness and unconventionality:

Essentially the only cohesive element linking the almost autonomous parts of this drama is their title, *Forefathers’ Eve*. This was again something sensational, because it refers to a folk ritual of pagan origin, associated with All Soul’s Day. In part II of *Forefathers’ Eve*, this rite plays a decisive role, essentially setting forth the build and sense of the work. This is not an ethnographic oddity, but rather a ritual archetype that is as folk-based as it is universal, stretching back to the origins of human culture. This ritual

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<sup>7</sup> Józef Oleszkiewicz, a painter and a mystic, connected Mickiewicz and Saint-Martin. Enraptured by Mickiewicz’s improvisation talent manifested during unofficial meetings and parties, he saw him as “a poet-prophet”, and a spiritual leader of the Polish nation. On the subject of “the poet-prophet” and Mickiewicz’s improvisations, see Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok* and “The Problem of Improvisation”.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the complicated relationship between Mickiewicz and Pushkin, see Lednicki.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the play, see: Przybylski; Segel.

archetype plays out in a shed near a cemetery: the living commune with the spirits of the dead, metaphysics comes into play, the secrets of existence lay open, and out of this intermingling of reality and miracles a new form of Romantic drama is born (“Romanticism” 164).

The eruption of the 1830 Uprising concluded the first, complex and diversified stage of Polish Romanticism, initiated with *Ballads and Romances*. The armed rebellion started on 29 November 1830 (the November Night) in reaction to the unjust rule of the Russian Empire in the Polish Kingdom. The Uprising lasted until 21 October 1831 when it was eventually crushed by the superior Russian army. Failure was caused by lack of organisation, indifference of its participants and poor leadership. The negative consequences for the Polish Kingdom were vast – decisive limitation of autonomy, abolition of higher education, limitation of schooling, implementation of the Russian language in schools, termination of the Polish army. The Uprising was condemned by many, i.e. the Catholic Church, and is still considered controversial.<sup>10</sup> Polish Romantics altered their attitude towards the West after 1830. Embittered by the indifference and the passivity of the British and French governments to the November Uprising, they became hostile to the Western countries.<sup>11</sup>

The second phase of the epoch was stigmatised by numerous unsuccessful revolutionary movements and wars, imprisonments and deportations to Siberia. As a consequence of Russian repression, “the officers, the leaders of the revolution, the Government, the politicians, poets even, and scholars, left their country. They all emigrated to the West, hoping to return home before long in the armies of a European coalition which they firmly believed was soon to be formed against the despotism of the Tsar” (Lewak 356). The intellectual elite of Polish society, the most prominent writers of the period, such as Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki (the second bard of Polish Romanticism), Zygmunt Krasiński (the third bard) and Cyprian Kamil Norwid were forced to create in exile. Therefore, even though only nine thousand people had left the country, the process was dubbed the “Great Emigration” (*Wielka Emigracja*).

Under these circumstances, literature began to serve “the national cause”. Dominated by the issues of political freedom and independence, it aimed at reinforcing patriotism. “The tendency to idealize the past, if only because it was the past of a still independent country, became one of the most powerful factors in shaping the development of Polish literature in the first half of the nineteenth century” (Najder

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<sup>10</sup> For information on the Uprising in English, see Lewak.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Polish attitudes towards the West, see Garlicki; Jedlicki; Stefanowska, *Swojskość i cudzoziemszczyzna*.

653).<sup>12</sup> Fiction nurtured the collective imagination with myths of origin about the Polish nation, its dialects and customs. “Slavicness was for the Romantics something more than a set of political ideas concerning Poland and Russia. It also entailed a tribal myth that manifested the spiritual distinctness, the role and destiny of these peoples in the centre and east of Europe” (Witkowska, “Romanticism” 155-156).<sup>13</sup> Janion analyses the situation as follows:

[The Romantics] unambiguously identified *a literary revolution with a political revolution* and authoritatively enforced this view on other generations; they saw Romanticism as the preparation for the insurrection, and the November Night and its consequences, as the major, most appropriate pivot of the Romantic revolution (“Żyjąc tracimy życie” 98, original emphasis).

Moreover, the second phase of the epoch was dominated by literature associating patriotism with martyrology, torment and sacrifice. It depicted the protagonists as victims, gloriously sacrificing themselves for the greater, common good – independence, God, justice and truth. Literature was hailed by Tyrtæan poetry as “martial poetry of ruthless patriotic calling into action” (98). As determined by Borkowska, Czermińska and Phillips, the editors of *Pisarki polskie od średniowiecza do współczesności. Przewodnik* (*Polish Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present Day. Guide*), “[l]iterature, especially Adam Mickiewicz’s works, advised the model of behaviour founded on the ideal of final sacrifice of the individual for the national cause” (35).

Romantic martyrdom and patriotism shaped a new model of a self-sacrificing protagonist:

Even when romanticism was in full swing, its heroes were usually representative types, not unique individuals; social and political issues played a much more important role than problems of individual psychology. And even such psychological problems were usually looked at from the point of view of the heroes' broader, especially national, commitments (Najder 655).

According to Magdalena Micińska, nineteenth-century heroes fell into two supplementary categories. The first one was represented by a knight engaged in combat, the second – by a spiritual leader of the nation, a bard and a prophet. Witkowska points out that “[s]uch a hero could take on different forms and social roles, while all the time

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz’s historical novel *Jan z Tęczyna* (*Jan of Tęczyn*), Fryderyk Skarbek’s novel *Pan Starosta* (*Mr. Prefect*), Henryk Rzewuski’s historical novel *Listopad* (*November*).

<sup>13</sup> This myth originated from the thoughts of Johann Gottfried Herder and his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*.

remaining, in the depth of his being, the same emotional romantic with a sensitive conscience and a big heart.”

Such qualities made him suffer the Polish misery all the more fervently, to absorb the religion of patriotism and to grow up with a dream of exacting revenge, even at the expense of his own life. This protagonist might be a thinker, a conspirer, a rebel, a prisoner, or an exile, but he always sacrificed himself “for the cause,” meaning for the sake of his homeland’s freedom.

[...] From today’s perspective, this imparts these Romantic heroes with – if one might say so – traits of spiritual fundamentalism (“Romanticism” 159).

Such a knight, or a soldier without a flaw was an insurgent. In Romantic times, as well as in modern-day times, he was strongly mythologized. According to the common view, it is still an asset to have a revolutionary in a family. Jerzy Borejsza reminds us that “[f]or the Polish people, an insurgent is always a courageous martyr – suffering, mysterious, renunciative, defending a righteous cause, the most important cause” (244). The myth is based on a presumption that, without the insurrections and insurgents, Poland would not exist. Secondly, an insurgent fights to the death. The 1831 “Warszawianka” (“The Song of Warsaw”) written in support of the uprising, clearly stated: “Today is the day of victory or death!”<sup>14</sup> The third trait of his nature: an insurgent always loses his battle (all of Poland’s national revolutions – the Kościuszko Uprising, the January Uprising, the November Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising – were failures). A revolutionist is always outnumbered, unprepared, unarmed, or armed with “sabre, scythe, cross, horse” (Borejsza 247). Precisely this myth is confronted by Żmichowska in *The Heathen*.

He sacrifices himself and his family, he fights with bare hands, he is always ready to defend his motherland – in short: he behaves like a madman. An insurgent is a type of a Romantic hero called a “patriot-madman” (*patriota-wariat*) whose love for the country is exaggerated, destructive, even deathly. Janion notices that a “patriot-madman” “radically identifies <Poland> with <existence>, and this identification is the characteristic of Polish Romanticism. By aggrandising madness as a state of clairvoyance of truth [...] Romanticism glorified patriotic sacrifice expressed in obstinacy – up to self-perdition” (“Polski korowód” 198). Let us briefly have a look at the case of Konrad Wallenrod, fighting for his doomed country as a spy:

Konrad Wallenrod – a worshipper of the fundamental ideals of truth, love, righteousness and purity, sacrifices them to lie and revenge. Mickewicz’s poetic tale reveals the violent split between the ethos of a knight and the ethos of a conspirator, and depicts the process of disillusion: the knightly

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<sup>14</sup> “Dziś twój tryumf albo zgon!” (Delavigne 48).

ideal significantly collides with murderous deception; honour collides with betrayal (Janion, "Polski korowód" 210).

The tragic figure of Wallenrod developed into an imitable stereotype. In nineteenth and twentieth-century Polish literature various authors referred to *Konrad Wallenrod* (for example Słowacki, Ignacy Kraszewski, Adam Asynk). Poland experienced a phenomenon of *wallenrodyzm* – a behaviour modelled on the protagonist. As Stefan Chwin reminds us in his *Literatura i zdrada (Literature and Betrayal)*, *wallenrodyzm* concerns the situation of national and political subdual, and is an attempt to act in accordance with the principles of Machiavellianism described by Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince* and his other works: "The Italian thinker emphatically formulated the rule that in the situation of danger of the fatherland, all methods of defence and fight are acceptable" (22). *Wallenrodyzm* persists during the II World War, in post-War communist Poland, during the events of 1968, and in the last decades of the twentieth century.

This exaggerated, insane patriotism is associated with vampirism. This connection is interesting, as madness and vampirism are linked in the figures of Bertha Mason, Rebecca, and the mother of "Green Shore".<sup>15</sup> Janion points out that insurgents become primitive, vengeful, bloodthirsty vampires. In the third part of *Forefathers' Eve* the protagonist Konrad sings a vengeful song, "a song of Satan"<sup>16</sup> with the famous chorus: "Then vengeance, vengeance on the foe, / God upon our side or no!" (522).

The gesture of transgression of the Christian moral order created a vampiric figure and the extreme frenzy connected with it. [...] Konrad – a wizard, a prophet, a shaman, a vampire, exudes primitive, vampiric *alienation* in his song. [...] Konrad's song smites with wildness and alienation. It reveals a horrifying, mad, vengeful call resembling the yowling of vampires and werewolves (Janion, "Polski korowód" 236, original emphasis).

Romanticism introduced folkloric, Slavic vampire myth and frenzied style into high culture, literature, and art. The category of Romantic frenzy is "a trait of one of the romantic genres (called <the mad literature>), a tendency to saturate the world depicted with themes of dreadfulness, crimes, madness and untamed passions freed from the control of the mind" (Okopień-Sławińska 132). Mickiewicz advocated in his lectures that vampirism is an internal state, an essence of a person, not something enforced from outside by an evil power. Interestingly for this thesis, according to Janion, the categories of madness and vampirism are connected with the theme of doubleness: "A vampire is our double, a double or a shadow of every person in the way that it embodies the <evil> – organic and internal – part of the soul, the <evil> that rests within us. A vampire

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<sup>15</sup> See the section "Beauty, Madness and Vampirism", pp. 122-131 below.

<sup>16</sup> See Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok*, pp. 164–171.

becomes a symbolic figure of transgression into evil” (“Polski korowód” 231-233). Stevenson’s “The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” springs to mind: Hyde, the doppelganger, gradually sucks life from Jekyll like a vampire.

The martyrological and Tyrtæan model of poetry described above was exemplified, and vastly popularised by Mickiewicz. However, some prominent writers and poets, such as Słowacki and Norwid exceeded it. These two authors, although more valued than Mickiewicz by modern-day researchers, did not influence the canon, as he did. Słowacki remained outside the martyrological aesthetic. “He was neither a soldier, nor a poet-soldier”, as Janion reminds us,

Before the Insurrection he did not belong to any secret patriotic association. His pre-November patriotism was frequently referred to, as “purely literary”, meaning that no political, or social reasons prompted him to it. [...] [W]hat is even worse – he adhered to his individuality and refused to succumb to prevailing tastes, and beliefs (“Żyjąc tracimy życie” 99-100).<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, Słowacki, as a rival of Mickiewicz, criticised the latter for his attitude towards sacrifice and martyrdom, and for dominating poetry with his model.

Norwid was the author of the innovative cycle of poems *Vade-mecum*. Repudiated by his contemporaries, he was highly admired in the period of Young Poland. Nowadays he is considered by many to be one of the most interesting Polish authors. Witkowska describes his attitude towards Romantic aesthetics in the following way:

[t]he writer who brought about the “necessary turn” in lyric poetry [...], a poet very much aware of the aesthetic goals he was striving to achieve, and equally certain of his negative assessment of Polish Romantic poetry – both patriotic/martyrological poetry, and lamenting, wistful poetry, expressing awe at the beauties of the Polish landscape (“Romanticism” 161).

To return to our subject, after losing state and governmental autonomy, after the division of Poland into three countries with different systems of education and administration, it became crucial for Poles to sustain their national cultural autonomy, and identity. “This [situation] led to a specific cult of history, to the attachment to the national tradition and to the pietistic defence of purity of language” (Jedlicki 102). After the November Uprising, interest in the problem of national identity awoke and patriotism converged towards nationalism. Urszula Tempska describes the situation in colonised Poland, since the dawn of the eighteenth century until 1918 in “Double

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Słowacki’s individuality among other Romantics, see Janion, *Żyjąc tracimy życie*, esp. the chapter “Zwierciadło zwierciadeł”, pp. 97-112.

Marginality or/as Double Indemnity?” as follows:

The task of consolidating and disseminating the sense of national identity, previously performed by institutions of statehood, was left to artists and intellectuals, who, censored by the partitioning regimes, camouflaged it as discussions over Polish cultural identity, "authentic Polishness" and its relationship to the cultures East and West of Poland. These considerations infiltrated the cultural and intellectual life of the country, branding the motley of operative aesthetics, from post-romantic, through positivist, and even avant-garde/modernist, and the arts of the period with a unique nationalist flavour (186).

Issues of martyrdom, radical patriotism, nationalism and identity entwine, and result in the Romantic myth of Polish Messianism. Mickiewicz introduced the idea in the third part of his *Forefathers' Eve*, by portraying Poland as "the Christ of Nations" (*Polska Chrystusem narodów*). He created an analogy between the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ, and the suffering, partition and future resurrection of Poland. Ursula Phillips and Knut Andreas Grimstad describe the doctrine as follows: "Against the background of intense Catholic faith, there developed the haunted idea of Messianism which, in its extreme form, presented Poland as the collective Christ, crucified to redeem the nations, one day to be resurrected by a new embodiment of the Holy Spirit" ("Introduction: Entering" 9).<sup>18</sup>

The intellectual and militaristic émigré community initially dominated the inhabitants of the partitioned country. However, they gradually restored their political forces and prepared a revolution. The January Uprising erupted in 1863. Witkowska summarises its impact as follows:

[It] is considered to be the most romantic independence movement in the history of Poland, inspired by the models and values of Romanticism literature: an absolutist notion of homeland and a maximalist concept of patriotic duty, chiefly involving sacrifice "for the cause," even including the sacrifice of one's own life ("Romanticism" 170).

The repressions were severe and transformed the revolution into a traumatic experience. The Russians ordered confiscation of property, expulsions to Siberia and executions. The January Uprising marked the end of the period and the beginning of Positivism, which rejected the Romantic ideals of martyrdom, sacrifice, and Messianism. However,

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of Polish Messianism, see Walicki, *Filozofia a mesjanizm*.

Romanticism has a significant continuation in Polish culture, literature and art. Its ideals and aesthetic are frequently revived under specific circumstances, such as historical events associated with the national identity, for instance the First and the Second World War, the Warsaw Uprising, the recent accession to the European Union. Romanticism also fuelled the national movement called “March’68”. The Polish communist party banned Kazimierz Dejmek’s theatrical production of *Forefathers’ Eve* because of its anti-Russian and pro-national orientation, thereby proving the remarkable influence of Mickiewicz upon Polish culture, and history. This decision provoked a series of spontaneous student manifestations directed against censorship and national discrimination. The Catholic Church, lecturers and other professions supported the demonstrations. Again, the consequences of this Romantic rebellion were severe. Participating universities were forced to discontinue several departments; many students and lecturers were dismissed. The communist anti-Semitic campaign forced almost twenty thousand Polish Jews, predominantly those associated with culture and science, to emigrate without the right to return. In 1980 the remaining participants of “March’68” helped to establish the Independent Trade Union “Solidarity”, thereby taking the first step towards a sovereign Poland.

## 2 Romantic Femininity and Feminism

Recall, Polish woman, our land fights for survival,  
Poland’s independence – here you have your rival.

ANONYMOUS SONG<sup>19</sup>

Apart from shaping Polish patriotism, Mickiewicz significantly contributed to the development of two Romantic myths, associating martyrdom, suffering and sacrifice with women: Mother Poland (*Matka Polka*), and *Polonia*. These images determined the Romantic view on femininity and endured in the collective consciousness of modern-day Poles, as dominant symbolic figures. Myths of an idealised mother and motherland vastly influenced conventional interpretations of Żmichowska’s *The Heathen*, and continue to shape the popular reading of the novel.

The development of the myths of Mother Poland and *Polonia* is associated with the fact that Polish culture is overtly masculine. Janion argues that it has been based on

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<sup>19</sup> Anonymous song sung during the November Uprising (qtd. in Witkowska, 160). The original passage says: “Pamiętaj, żeś Polka, że to za kraj walka, Niepodległość Polski to twoja rywalka.”

homo-social structure since the Middle Ages. This cultural “masculinity” was reinforced by Romanticism, which established a masculine community committed to the ideals of patriotism and brotherhood. Women were excluded from activities engaging men, such as fights, hunts, club meetings and journeys. Additionally, Polish society aimed at restricting women to motherhood. As the anthology *Nationalisms and Sexualities* reminds us, masculine dominated culture glorifies and sanctifies women, as mothers. In this capacity they do not pose a threat to the brotherhood, or male friendship. Elżbieta Ostrowska has taken up this theme extensively in “Filmic Representations of the <Polish Mother> in Post-World War Two Polish cinema”, and determined that the mother figure legitimises male homo-social relationships.

Against this social and historical background emerged the myth of Mother Poland. It originated in Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin’s eighteenth-century poem “Matka obywatelka” (“Mother Citizen”), and in his play “Matka Spartanka” (“Mother Spartan”). Mickiewicz popularised the theme in the widely favoured ode “To a Polish Mother” (1830) and elaborated it in *Forefathers’ Eve*, and his Parisian lectures. Mother Poland is a patriarchal mother of many sons (not daughters) driven by a single purpose: to encourage them, and all Polish men, to sacrifice their lives for the greater national cause (a selfless death in a senseless struggle). Mickiewicz advises this “daughter devoted to her father, a wife ready to follow her husband to the ends of the earth” (“Wykład XXX” 361) to prepare her son for “martyrdom – with an eternal tomb” (“To a Polish Mother” 68), for sacrifice without resurrection.<sup>20</sup> Mother Poland plays a significant part in the national fight for independence:

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<sup>20</sup> “To a Polish Mother”

“O Polish mother, if the radiant eyes / Of genius kindle in thy darling’s face, / If even in his childish aspect rise / The pride and honour of his ancient race;  
 If, turning from his playmates’ joyous throng, / He runs to find the bard and hear his lays, / If with bowed head he listens to the song / Of ancient glory and departed days:  
 O Polish mother, ill must be his part! / Before the Mother of Our Sorrows kneel, / Gaze on the sword that cleaves her living heart – / Such is the cruel blow thy breast shall feel!  
 Tho’ peoples, powers, churches truce declare, / And tho’ the whole wide world in peace may bloom, / In battle – without glory – must he share, / In martyrdom – with an eternal tomb.  
 Soon bid him seek a solitary cave / And ponder there – on rushes lay his head, / Breathe the foul vapours of a hidden grave, / And with the venomous serpent share his bed.  
 There will he learn to hide his wrath from reach, / To sink his thought as in the abyss profound, / Slyly to poison with envenomed speech, / And humbly, like the serpent, kiss the ground.  
 A child in Nazareth, our Saviour mild / Fondled the cross whereon he saved mankind: / O Polish mother, I would have thy child / Thus early learn what playthings he will find.  
 His young arms load his chains, his body frail / Full soon have harnessed to a barrow, so / Before the headsman’s axe he shall not pale, / Nor at the swinging halter crimson grow.  
 Not his to venture like a plumed knight / And plant the holy cross on pagan soil, / Nor like a soldier of new faith to fight / In Freedom’s cause, and for her sake to toil.  
 One day an unknown spy will challenge him. / A perjured court his adversary be, / The jousting-field, a secret dungeon grim; / A powerful foe the verdict will decree.

Polish woman, quite unexpectedly in comparison to the cultural norms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, finds herself at the very heart of national affairs, [...] assuming the role of a leading defender of the spiritual idea of Poland. [...] She teaches [her children] the elementary dogmas of the Catholic religion and a love for their lost motherland. It is she [...] who sends her son, husband or lover to fight for freedom, who waits for their return, and dresses their wounds [...] who mourns their heroic death on the battlefields or cries over their exile to Siberia (“Kobieta Polka” qtd. in Ostrowska, “Filmic Representation” 6).

Ultimately Mother Poland is a self-sacrificing virgin-mother, the mother of all Polish sons, the mother of the Polish nation, an embodiment of the Mother of Jesus, opposite of Eve and “the whore”.<sup>21</sup> Mother Poland constitutes the Marian Cult. The Catholic Church and its beliefs significantly shape the Polish collective consciousness. The folkloristic traditional culture was founded on the figure and imagery of the Virgin Mary, among others. The oldest Polish literary text, written in the thirteenth, or fourteenth century, entitled “Bogurodzica” is a hymn in her praise. *Bogurodzica* is a counterpart of the Greek *Theotokos* – the one who gives birth to God. Crowned *Najświętsza Maryja Panna Królowa Polski* (Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland), she holds holy patronage over the country, especially since her supposed phenomenal intervention during the Siege of the cloister at Jasna Góra, where the Miraculous Icon (*Cudowna Ikona*) was held.<sup>22</sup>

In turbulent times Mother Poland resembles the Mother Dolorosa, or Mother of Sorrows. The image originates from a thirteenth-century Christian Latin poem “Stabat Mater” attributed to Jacopone da Todi, which portrays the Virgin Mary witnessing her son’s crucifixion, and death. Its initial words “Stabat Mater Dolorosa” are translated as

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And for the vanquished man as monument / The gallows-tree will rear its sullen height; / For glory – but a woman’s tears, soon spent, / And fellow patriots’ whispered words by night.”

In [*Forefathers’ Eve*] can be found perhaps the most famous Polish image of a suffering mother, functioning as an unambiguous metaphor for the misery of an enslaved Poland. Mrs Rollison appears only in one scene, when she comes uninvited to a ball taking place in a palace requisitioned by Russian officials. She is there to beg for the freedom of her imprisoned teenage son. There is a powerful contrast between the woman in black mourning clothes and the splendour and arrogance of oppressors. Over the course of time this defining image lays at the heart of the myth of the Polish Mother” (Ostrowska, “Filmic Representation” 6).

<sup>21</sup> For the cultural image of the Mother of God, see Kristeva, “Stabat Mater”; Pelikán; Vanita; Warner, “Alone of All Her Sex”; Sandra Zimdars-Swartz.

<sup>22</sup> The event took place in 1655 during the Swedish Deluge – described by Henryk Sienkiewicz. For a brief introduction of this writer, see the section “Polish Positivism: A Set of Restrictions”, pp. 73-74 below; and for his connection with Maria Konopnicka, see the section “Maria Konopnicka: Borderline Case, Rule, Exception”, p. 79.

“The sorrowful mother stood”. In his fascinating analysis of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi’s music composed to the poem, Richard Will describes Mother Dolorosa as “[d]esigned always to forgive, she obeys the supplicant as dutifully as the ideal eighteenth-century wife obeys her husband. The text of the <Stabat Mater> disempowers her further, trapping her in the gaze of the narrator and limiting her self-expression to gestures of weeping and trembling” (606). Kristeva argues that the body of the Stabat Mater is limited to “the ear of the virginal body, the tears, and the breast” (“Stabat Mater” 320). Interestingly, Pergolesi’s critics accused him of feminisation of the text, of putting an emphasis on the Virgin Mary instead of Christ: “Pergolesi’s critics seem to have viewed the Stabat Mater as analogous to a public woman, endangering masculinity by inducing large numbers of listeners to identify with beauty and emotion rather than sublimity and action” (Will 605).

As suggested by Will, the theme corresponds with eighteenth-century Sentimentalism, thereby sharing characteristics with Polish Romanticism:

[There is] an emphasis on feelings and their manifestation in bodily symptoms, a special obsession with the feelings of distraught women, and an appeal to sympathy as a means of inculcating virtue – [...] the supplicant of the prayer is expected to internalize the heroine’s qualities by partaking of her tribulations (570).

The literary image of Mother Poland became a myth and a stereotype, decisively shaping the Romantic (and modern-day) view on femininity. For decades women were allowed to participate in the national community only in the capacity of mothers. Furthermore, the most desired realisation of motherhood involved bearing a son and providing him with a patriotic upbringing. Under these circumstances, there was no place for alternative approaches to patriotism and femininity, such as Żmichowska’s. As stated by Grimstad and Phillips, “the primacy of a particular form of masculinist patriotism in Polish writing has led, inevitably, to the suppression of a number of counter-discourses, such as feminism, radical socialism, lesbianism and the homoerotic” (“Introduction: Entering” 15).

The second allegorical representation of Poland as (virginal) motherhood is *Polonia* (Latin name for Poland). The image was probably modelled on Marianne – the symbol of the French revolution. Marianne was created and introduced to the collective imagination during the French Revolution (1789–1799). She became the national emblem of the French Republic, a personification of Liberty and Reason (also Nation, Fatherland and France). The most famous representation of Marianne is Eugène Delacroix’s painting “Liberty Leading the People” from 1830.

*Polonia's* appearance reflects the Polish historical situation. Romantic and post-Romantic literature, and art portray her in a brutal, direct manner. The comparison between Marianne and *Polonia* emphasises the latter's predominant association with death. While Marianne is young, vivid, sensual and wild, her Polish equivalent is imprisoned, chained, crucified, trampled by a horse, and lowered into a grave. Her body is humiliated, abused, tortured, symbolically penetrated and deflowered with a bayonet. Her most popular representation is the allegorical canvas *Polonia - rok 1863* (*Polonia - Year 1863*) by Jan Matejko, considered the most prominent Polish historical painter. It depicts two women restrained with chains by Russian and Prussian officers: *Polonia* dressed in black, and Lithuania covered in white.<sup>23</sup> The myths of Mother Poland and *Polonia* associate femininity with physical suffering and death. Elisabeth Bronfen described such a tendency as dominant in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European literature. In her inspiring *Over Her Dead Body* she states the following: "Freud has termed <death> and <femininity> as the two most consistent enigmas and tropes in western culture" (11).

The anti-emancipative Romantic myths of Mother Poland and *Polonia* were integrated into the collective consciousness, culture and politics, maintaining considerable significance into the twenty-first century. The landmark year for Polish history, 1989, brought about their transformation. Artists and writers took an interest in deconstructing the myths, for example Jan Rylke and his parodistic reproduction of Matejko's famous painting, "Łódź Kaliska" and their sexy and young "Orlica" ("Eagless") substituting for *Polonia*, Dorota Masłowska's *Snow White and Russian Red*, and Wojciech Kuczok's *Gnój. Antybiografia* (*Muck. Antibiography*). The issue was often invigorated by feminist art and criticism. Most notable examples include Monika Mamzeta's light-box "Jak dorosnę będę dziewicą" ("I Will Grow up to be a Virgin"), Elżbieta Jabłońska's series of photographs "Supermatka" ("Supermother"), and Anna Baumgart's sculpture "Bombowniczka" ("A Bombardier Woman"). Galleries, such as Warsaw's "Zachęta" Gallery and "Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej" ("Centre for Contemporary Art") organised exhibitions on the subject and initiated debates.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, modern-day conservative political parties often depend on these Romantic myths. In their campaigns, speeches and adverts a mother personifies

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<sup>23</sup> In 1569 Poland and Lithuania formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or The Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was ruled by a common monarch and in 1891 it adopted the Constitution of May 3. The third partition divided Lithuania between Russia and Prussia.

<sup>24</sup> I am referring here to such exhibitions, as "Polonia. Polonia" presented in "Zachęta" in 2000 and "Polka. Medium, cień, wyobrażenie" ("Polish Woman. Medium, Shadow, Expectation") presented in "Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej" in 2005.

Poland. They aim at preserving the image of an idealised Mother embodying the Mother of Poles, the Mother of God:

During the last two hundred years of the Romantic ruling [...] we had seen [*Polonia*] die, but we knew that she would resurrect. She sent sons to death in the name of her resurrection, and they accepted it. The mourning mother dressed in dark clothes – *Polonia* awoke horror and dread, but also compassion and love trembling out of fear. [...] The mourning mother, the mother-phantom, she had governed the Polish imagination until the Second World War, until the rule of the Marshal Law, and she still appears sometimes today (Janion, “Słowiańszczyzna” 315-316).

Beside Mother Poland and *Polonia*, against the background of Polish Romantic patriotism emerged a different feminine representation of revolutionary combat for independence. The most prominent feminine participant in the national struggle was Emilia Plater – one of the first initiators of the November Uprising in Lithuania.<sup>25</sup> Once she discovered that as a woman, despite her merits, she was excluded from the gathering of the ruling committee, Plater disguised herself as a man, armed herself with a pistol and a dagger, and organised her own partisan unit. If we are to believe the legend, when repeatedly advised to stand down and return home, she invariably replied that she would not abandon her post, until her motherland was freed. Emilia Plater died of hunger and exhaustion. Although her attitude was controversial – her courage touched madness, as she had no military background, and her contribution was questioned – she became the symbol of the revolution forthwith, and the idealised virgin-soldier. Plater’s name was popularised by Mickiewicz in his poem “The Death of the Colonel” (1832), and her fame was reinforced by the paintings of Wojciech Kossak, Francois de Villain, Hyppolyte Bellange, Achille Deveria and Philipp Veit. She also appeared on Polish notes issued in 1931, 1936 and 1940.

Emilia Plater is a feminist heroine as she “put herself in a position of *double revolt*: against foreign oppression of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and against patriarchal assumptions about gender identities. She rejected the submissive roles which male power as well as Russian supremacy had reserved for her” (Filipowicz, “The Daughters of Emilia Plater” 34). Filipowicz further investigates the cultural reception of the model of female patriotism represented by Plater: “her patriotic self-sacrifice has been readily accepted, but [...] the feminist content of her story has disappeared under the edifying image of a national heroine” (35). Alina Kowalczykova, described the lost

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<sup>25</sup> Emilia Plater was proclaimed the national heroine also by Lithuanian and Belarusian cultures.

self-portrait of Emilia Plater as a polar opposite to the well-known portraits consequently depicting the heroine in a masculine way: “From the 1820s remained (in the form of a photographic reproduction) only one oil-painted self-portrait of a woman. It was... Emilia Plater. It depicts a bust of a smoothly combed young lady in a dark dress with a boat neck and a lace collar” (154).<sup>26</sup> This description of Emilia Plater brings to mind Janion’s essay “Bogini Wolności. Dlaczego rewolucja jest kobietą?” (“The Goddess of Liberty. Why is Revolution a Woman?”) where the scholar analyses the well-known French Romantic incarnations of Freedom, such as Marianne, “Liberty Leading the People”, iconography of women of the 1848 revolution and images of the Paris Commune (1871), and describes Woman-Liberty as follows:

She is usually a young giantess, with a muscular torso, usually with a naked or half-naked prominent bust, sometimes armed with a lance or with a sword, she may carry a standard, may step on the crown, with a Phrygian cap on her head – the roman emblem of the liberated slaves. Such a goddess and her accessories awoke considerable dismay during the French Revolution (“Duch inności” 14-15).

The most popular and typical Romantic heroines – Karusia from “The Romantic”, Mother Poland, *Polonia*, and Emilia Plater – embody femininity defined by irrational passion, madness, suffering, death, martyrological patriotism. As determined by Chmielowski in 1895, “The essence of a woman [in Romantic literature] boils down to her heart – the only motor stimulating her spiritual and moral life, the only court announcing ultimate, irreversible judgements concerning all issues of life, the only attribute which decides of the woman’s glory, or disgrace” (“Kobiety” 16).

The Romantic masculinist tradition described above constituted a powerful canon, difficult to subvert. However, the Polish feminist movement emerged exactly in this period. Furthermore, as stated by Grażyna Borkowska it was “the most stormy period in the history of Polish feminism that is, from 1840-1845 to around 1914-1920, when the women’s movement first emerged, gathered strength, and became a topic of journalistic debate, the subject of polemics, disputes, fears and hopes” (“Alienated Women” 17). “Women are called to equality; spirits do not have gender” (“Dzieła” 283) declaimed Adam Mickiewicz during one of his lectures at the Collège de France, where he was employed at a prestigious post of Professor of Slavic Literature. I quote the above

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the unknown Emilia Plater, also see Meyet. On Emilia Plater, see Bachórz, *Jak pachnie na Litwie Mickiewicza* and “Zapach Litwy Mickiewicza”; Filipowicz, “The Daughters of Emilia Plater”.

sentence in order to prove Mickiewicz's diversity. Although commonly identified with the myths of Polish Mother and the female knights (Emilia Plater), he openly supported women's emancipation, and expressed his progressive views on feminine issues.<sup>27</sup>

After the 1830 Uprising, society predominantly consisted of unmarried women and widows. The majority of men were killed during the revolution, imprisoned, or deported during the post-insurrectional repressions. Chmielowski and Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński called it a matriarchy, or an "amazonery". Under these circumstances women formed the main intellectual force of the country and vastly dominated the underground national movement. They provided food for impoverished families, bandaged wounded soldiers, repaired uniforms, smuggled weapons. They did not abandon their households and their un-revolutionary behaviour was socially accepted.

In Polish Romanticism, significantly overlapping the Victorian age, the "Woman Question" was just becoming an issue in Poland. Moreover, it had a specific character: feminism was blended with patriotism. "When on the West the proponents of Emmeline Pankhurst gained courage to go to the streets and demand their rights, in Poland they went to the woods to nurse the insurgents or, if they didn't go to Siberia, they attempted to save what was left of Russian confiscates" (Bąbiak, "Portret kobiety" 177). Robert Blobaum analyses the overlapping of feminism and patriotism, as follows:

[T]he peculiarities of industrialization in Russian Poland [the Polish Kingdom], particularly its semi-colonial nature and resulting social consequences, had political impacts that would shape the formulation of the "woman question" and its discussion of women's roles in civil society and the imagined nation. The dominance of "Polish" industry by foreign capital, the absence of a large and ethnically Polish capitalist entrepreneurial class, the role of the intelligentsia as the core political force in Polish life, the impossibility of legal party formation in Russian Poland before 1905, and the rise of modern Polish nationalism were all factors that in the larger context of the country's capitalist transformation would sharply distinguish the Polish discourse on women from its west European counterparts and long endow the women's movement with a dual, if not split, personality combining patriotism and feminism (802).

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<sup>27</sup> In her essay on Mickiewicz and feminism, Phillips underscores his "radical views on the potential of women, declaring his support for women priests and noting women's potential for political and governmental roles" ("Feminist Overview" 63), as well as his attitude towards the famous feminists: Margaret Fuller, George Sand, and Pauline Roland. For a discussion of the subject, see also Phillips, "Apocalyptic Feminism".

I am now coming to the second pivot of emancipation: education. By the end of the Victorian period, British women could study at twelve universities and colleges for a degree, and at Cambridge and Oxford without a degree. At the time there were no university-level studies in Poland available to women. Women “not wanting to reach beyond their households, only attempted to gain competence and rights to regular education on the most modest scale, only to be able to reasonably guide the first steps of their children” (Chmielowski, “Kobiety” 10-11). The problem of inadequate education for women was often discussed by Polish feminists:

In the first half of the nineteenth century the education system for women was still undeveloped; the majority of girls were taught by governesses at home, and then-existing schools were at a very low level. According to public opinion, these institutions did not provide knowledge, but implemented certain values. Additionally, they only accepted girls from the aristocracy and gentry, as well as girls from the then-emerging class of urban intelligentsia. [...] Women with solid knowledge of classical literature, foreign languages, European writings, history and philosophy were usually self-taught (Borkowska, Czermińska and Phillips 36).

In Romanticism the issue of education for women was significantly shaped by Klementyna Tańska Hoffmanowa, a pioneer in the field of Polish pedagogics. Her *Pamiętka po dobrej matce, czyli ostatnie jej rady dla córki* (*Keepsake Left by a Good Mother, or her Last Advice to her Daughter*) published in 1819, was indisputably the pivotal pedagogical work in nineteenth-century Poland:

[It] achieved spectacular success. This fictionalized treatise on women's education was so well received that it went through eleven editions by 1901, thus becoming one of the most popular works written in nineteenth-century Poland. As a result, Hoffmanowa was the first Polish woman to earn her living as a writer (Filipowicz, “Wound” 9).

Although her contemporaries, such as Chmielowski, considered her a feminist, Hoffmanowa was an antifeminist with an anti-emancipatory standpoint on women's issues. She believed in the superiority of men and reinforced the patriarchal structure of society, and the conventional model of femininity prevalent across Romantic, and Victorian Europe (“the angel in the house”). In *Pamiętka po dobrej matce* a dying mother advises her fourteen-years-old daughter on issues concerning moral behaviour, religion, education and health. She points out that a woman should be sweet, kind, modest, obedient, submissive, patient and uneducated. She should know her place and focus on her wifely, and maternal obligations, and on pleasing others. The pedagogue

argued that women should not be “overeducated”. She was overtly against academic education for women:

Women certainly have less need to possess knowledge than do men; study should not be an aim of their lives, but an adornment. Deserving of the greatest condemnation are those women who do not know how to make praiseworthy use of such riches, turn them into ostentation, and who neglect far more important domestic and womanly employments for the sake of their books and talents. I never praise a woman when she devotes herself to higher studies; when she learns Latin, Greek, Hebrew, does experiments in physics or chemistry, or racks her brains over algebra or mathematics. To know how to make her husband happy, to make his life pleasurable, to bring up their children properly, to find new and innocuous ways of pleasing everyone: that is the system of education for a woman [...]. All she needs to know about mathematics is how never to stray from the straight line. It is enough for her to know the content of these higher studies only in the most general terms; she should possess instead as many as she can of those less heavy, more pleasant but useful talents that beautify life (qtd. in Phillips, “Upbringing” 207).

Although Hoffmanowa did not acknowledge the views of contemporary philosophers and female writers, as determined by Borkowska and Phillips, she became vastly popular due to the fact that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the absence of intellectuals, almost anyone could gain prominence in Poland. Phillips is astonished by this situation:

After the popular sensation caused by *Pamiętka po dobrej matce* it remained influential for decades after its publication, and [...] its author, on the strength of her banal opinions and their total lack of any theoretical basis, became the leading authority on education for girls, teaching from 1826 (until her emigration in 1831) at the newly established Institute for Governesses [...] appointed in 1828 to the post of inspector of all girls' educational establishments in Warsaw. Her fame even reached London (“Upbringing” 206).

In result, Hoffmanowa also had an impact on Narcyza Żmichowska.

### 3 Narcyza Żmichowska and (her) Enthusiasts

As a lecturer at the Institute for Governesses, Klementyna Tańska Hoffmanowa became acquainted with Narcyza Żmichowska, or Gabryella. Subsequently, in the mid-1870s, the latter became an editor of Hoffmanowa's *Dzieła* (*Works*) and the author of the controversial foreword to this work.

Żmichowska was unique, “other” and unconventional, as a novelist, and human being. She searched for different understanding of categories of “Polishness”, patriotism and femininity, from the ones defined by Mickiewicz, and Hoffmanowa. She chose subjects and aesthetics usually avoided by other women writers of the period. Furthermore, she was “fearless and independent” (Peterkiewicz 85), “wild and untamed, intelligent and alone” (Borkowska, “Feminism of Orzeszkowa” 96). Żmichowska was the first Polish feminist, the initiator of the first Polish feminist circle, the moderniser of the educational system and one of the first well-known homosexuals.

Born in 1819 in Warsaw, Żmichowska attended the only school for girls available at the time.<sup>28</sup> Afterwards, she continued her education in the prestigious *Instytut Guwernantek* established as an outcome of the education reform for women in 1825. The educational program included three years of elementary learning and a four-year preparation for the position of a governess.

After graduation, like many women in the same social and intellectual position, Żmichowska became a private tutor. In Poland, as in the Great Britain of the Romantic and Victorian era, there was no decent employment for unmarried women, except for the occupation of governess. Only this position allowed financial self-support, and was dignified and acceptable for an educated woman. On the other hand, a governess received a minimum wage, had an unstable position and an ambiguous status within the family. The two years spent with her employers in Paris, were dedicated to profound self-cultivation. Her brother Erazm, a sympathiser with the left-wing émigré community, influenced her choice of disciplines, as Borkowska informs us: “[s]he frequented the National Library in Paris to read contemporary philosophers (Schlegel, Schelling, Pierre Leroux, Saint-Simon, Enfantin), became knowledgeable in a number of disciplines (sociology, history, philosophy, literature) and made attempts at writing in French” (“Żmichowska versus Orzeszkowa” 86-87). She returned to her homeland with broad intellectual horizons, strong democratic beliefs and a cigar in her hand. She intended to open a decent boarding school for girls. Unfortunately, her plans came to nothing, because of her socially unaccepted radical views on politics and women's issues.

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<sup>28</sup> It was a school managed by Zuzanna Wilczyńska.

Żmichowska's literary career commenced in 1839 with the release of her poem "Maina i Kościej" ("Maina and Kosciej"). Another poem, "Szczęście poety" ("Poet's Happiness"), published two years later, became a manifesto of the feminist circle called the Enthusiasts. In 1846 Żmichowska published her first novel *The Heathen* and gained instant recognition. She entered a group of literati gathered around "Przegląd Naukowy" ("Scientific Review") edited by Edward Dębowski. In the absence of men – murdered, deported or imprisoned after the November Uprising – it was easier for a woman to penetrate cultural and literary circles. The intellectual atmosphere of the group and their passionate disputes were later portrayed in "Wstępny obrazek" ("Initial Picture") added to *The Heathen* in 1861.

Younger readers rapturously applauded the book's originality and exotic content, but more experienced, older critics found it immoral, and abhorrent. In 1869 Żmichowska described her controversial debut in a letter to her friend Wanda Grabowska:

When I lit my first cigar, my family was lamenting; when I mounted a horse, they were crying extensively and grating their teeth so loud, that you cannot even imagine; but I have desisted from cigars and horses much easier than from my work. I tore and burned more pages than I submitted for printing, but I have never retracted any passages out of concern for convention (Manuscript, qtd. in Żeleński 180).

In her books, more than any Polish female writer of the past, she addressed the issues associated with women. Żmichowska wrote about restricted educational possibilities, limitations related to marriage and motherhood, and the unfulfilled desire to be understood. She underlined the fact that the intellectual and spiritual development of women is controlled by legislation, and social conventions.

Between 1842 and 1849 an assembly of friends gathered around Żmichowska. This informal group of women, called *Entuzjastki* or the (female) Enthusiasts, is considered to be the first Polish feminist circle. It is difficult to establish who were the actual members of the group, because of the intimate and unofficial character of the assembly. The list of participants varies, depending on criteria chosen by critics. For Mirella Kurkowska, the decisive factor lies in the lifestyle of the Enthusiasts: there was the beautiful and pampered Zofia Mielecka, who divorced, ran away to Paris and became a novelist; the religious zealot Wincenta Zabłocka; the first Polish female philosopher Kazimiera Ziemiecka, as well as Dobrzyńska, Gosselin, Moraczewska and

Morzycka. One member of the assembly was the talented, disturbing snob Paulina Zbyszewska – Gabriella’s beloved, and prototype of *The Heathen’s* Aspasia.

The Enthusiasts attempted to support themselves financially – Dobrzyńska, Gosselin, Moraczewska, Morzycka, Zabłocka, Zbyszewska and Żmichowska were all unmarried. They did not want to be wives and mothers. Over relationships with men, the Enthusiasts valued female friendships, dubbed by Żmichowska with a word of her own invention – *posiestrzenie* (sisterhood). Most of the members smoked cigars, wore manly clothes and haircuts. They consciously behaved similarly to the famous Romantic woman writer, George Sand. The latter smoked a pipe, wore manly clothes and engaged in romantic love affairs (for example with the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin).

On the one hand, the Enthusiasts refused to define a coherent ideology for themselves. They had a different aim: they were “in search of themselves, of a fresh model of life, one that would be free of any clearly predetermined or prescribed obligation to the priorities established by the Polish Romantic paradigm, which privileged the creative power of poets and patriotic obligation to society” (Borkowska, “Żmichowska versus Orzeszkowa” 88). Phillips also argues the following:

[Żmichowska] was to seek a more open model for women, beyond being Catholic or Polish – and this included a more open understanding of Christian love; [...] above all she sought to free individual women from the tyranny of stereotyping. [...] In *The Heathen* the positive female models are not to be found in the main story, [...] but in the frame: the fireside companions, based on real living women taken from experience, not ideals or stereotypes, namely the Enthusiasts – women who were intelligent and educated, some married but mostly single, working as teachers, editors, writers, and in charitable activities, active, that is, in the public as well as the private sphere, socially – and in the context of underground conspiracy politically – aware, responsible and conscientious (“Femme Fatale” 31).

On the other hand, Polish feminism of the Romantic era is inseparably connected with the current political and social situation of the country. As indicated by Borkowska, “any <feminist> reflections in relation to the nineteenth century are of a patriotic and martyrological nature” (“Alienated Women” 38). Therefore, although the French emancipist movements influenced their beliefs, the Enthusiasts differed significantly from the French, English and American feminists. As underlined by Sławomira Walczewska, Żmichowska’s circle did not concentrate on the issue of suffrage, or the sexual and social aspects of femininity – crucial for the French emancipists. They believed in the social and political equality of the sexes, and woman’s right to education, but were also engaged in patriotic conspiracy, in political and subversive actions. The

Enthusiasts organised aid for prisoners, and provided food and clothes for those deported to Siberia, and their families.

To bring those two aspects together: Źmichowska and the Enthusiasts criticised the insurrection, as they rejected the Romantic ideals of suffering, and sacrifice. In the words of Borkowska, Gabryella's "involvement in conspiratorial work was intermittent and largely dependent on circumstances. The unconventionality of Źmichowska and the circle of Enthusiasts was constructed outside the conspiratorial movement and the ethos of martyrdom" ("Alienated Women" 53-54).

The Enthusiasts were involved in charity work, and attempted to improve the situation of the peasants and democratise the society. They were also engaged in educational, cultural and literary initiatives. They established schools and taught children, peddled illegal literature, and founded their own periodical "Pierwiosnek" ("Primrose").<sup>29</sup>

Źmichowska believed that the Polish emancipists were definitely in a more difficult situation than their counterparts in other countries. In fact, what differentiates the Polish feminist movement from the movement established in Great Britain and France is the fact that the Polish emancipists were socially accepted. Borkowska comments on Gabryella's opinion as follows:

If Źmichowska had been able to conduct more systematic comparative research, and if there had been a greater chronological distance between herself and the events she described, she would have seen that the women's movement in Poland in fact met with very limited social resistance. There was no lack of polemical literature [...], but resistance to women's liberation never reached the kind of concentrated attack, which in Victorian England, for example, even the most distinguished women authors were not spared. No, despite what the embittered Źmichowska tells us, in Poland there was no such war" ("Alienated Women" 87).

However, as they engaged in conspiratorial patriotic movements, the Enthusiasts endangered the Russian government. Ultimately, the police interrupted their activity and arrested most of the members in 1849. Źmichowska was imprisoned in the Lublin gaol, in an isolated cell for almost three years. Subsequent to her release, she was still forbidden to return to Warsaw for a period of another three years.

The type of feminism represented by the Enthusiasts, their attitude towards women's issues, and accomplishments in this field, have been variously evaluated throughout history. In comparison with other female circles of the Romantic period,

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<sup>29</sup> The journal existed between 1838 and 1843. It was edited exclusively by women, especially by Paulina Krakowowa, and published uniquely women's writings.

their activity was culturally and politically significant. According to Żeleński, “Amazons fell into various categories. The most noble and essentially the most exceptional were Enthusiasts; a paler reflection of them were women demanding emancipation; then there were the Lionesses – fashionable parodies of the others, who took on their more external features: cigars, short hair, freedom to express their opinions” (qtd. in Borkowska, “Alienated Women” 81). However, Walczewska disapproves of their antagonistic attitude towards other female circles. She believes that it postponed the development of Polish feminism and the discussion of the sexual liberation of women. Indeed, Żmichowska’s circle criticised the beautiful dollies (*lalki salonowe*) hunting for husbands in the salons, and the affluent, well-bred Lionesses. Yet the Lionesses were feminists. Commonly perceived as immoral, they attempted to transgress social conventions limiting women and their sexuality. Borkowska, on the contrary, values the feminist approach of the Enthusiasts and emphasises their vast accomplishments:

The Enthusiasts were not concerned with gaining a comfortable position in society or with securing certain defined rights; they changed the existing social structures in such a way that the frontiers of women’s public and individual freedom were pushed back. Those interested in contemporary feminist criticism will immediately appreciate this idea, which was way ahead of the general state of social awareness in the mid-nineteenth century (“Alienated Women” 56-57).

In her *Damy, rycerze i feministki* (*Ladies, Knights and Feminists*) Walczewska also accentuates their influence on the relaxation of social conventions:

Their determination and resistance to external pressures contributed to the transformation of women’s fashion and to the broadening of the boundaries of freedom concerning the female body. They wore loose, less hampering dresses and they cut their hair, in order to spend less time in front of the mirror arranging a hairstyle. Moreover, they gained social acceptance for behaviours previously reserved for men, like smoking cigars, horse riding, the possibility to leave the house without the company of a governess or maid (23).

After her return from Lublin in 1855 Żmichowska began to support the ideals of Positivism, such as pedagogy, philosophy, history and biology. She valued the transformation of the national mentality. For her, education was always the most important issue. She finally succeeded in establishing a school for girls, arranged popular lectures for women and organised illegal meetings for intellectuals. Using a *nom de plume*, Gabryella, she wrote *Książka pamiątek* (*Book of Memoirs*) and *Biała róża* (*White*

*Rose*) - two introspective novels depicting the new harsh reality. Hence, in 1863 she radically rejected the ideas behind the January Revolution and decided to spend it in the country, teaching children.

After the insurrection, she continued to write and correspond with friends. Then she created “Pogadanki pedagogiczne” (“Talks on Education”). However, Żmichowska was constrained by a conviction that her talent had vanished after creating her best work – *The Heathen*. She shared this faulty conviction with the critics of her time. Despite the fame and infamy caused by the publication of *The Heathen*, her attitude towards the January Uprising, and social and educational work, Żmichowska was quickly forgotten by her contemporaries. “The fame that accompanied her debut as a poet, and the success of her novel *Poganka* (*The Pagan*), proved transient. Critics were left nonplussed by this novel and, more especially, by her later novels. While her considerable talent is evident in her books, their meaning remains hard to grasp” (Borkowska, “Alienated Women” 75).<sup>30</sup> Żmichowska’s unconventionality, “otherness” and innovativeness resulted in the rejection of her works:

Polish women writers commit treason any time they redefine the national myth's strictures on gender, its mapping of the continent, or its vision of (Polish) literature: by writing women differently, writing Poland and Europe differently, or writing different literature than that posited by the nationalist discourse (Tempaska 187).

*The Heathen* is today her only novel taught in Polish schools. It is seen as a canonical text proving the typical Romantic understanding of patriotism, as glorified self-sacrifice for the country. Many aspects have been overlooked within the educational reading of this work. Gabryella died in 1876 in Warsaw, forgotten by everyone except for her closest friends and family.

Conventional analyses of *The Heathen* include at least one of the following interpretative perspectives: autobiographical, cultural, or historical. Following the autobiographical approach, the first narrator of the novel – Gabryella – is the *alter ego*, the equivalent of the author herself. This supposition is based on the evidence that Żmichowska used the *nom de plume* “Gabryella”. Moreover, the second (masculine) narrator – Benjamin – is a literary transposition of the author. Żmichowska’s wide-ranging correspondence with her friends suggests various parallels connecting her life with the plot and the protagonist. They were both the youngest sister/brother in a vast

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<sup>30</sup> In *Alienated Women* Borkowska translates the novel *Poganka* as *The Pagan*. This thesis uses Ursula Phillips’s more recent translation as *The Heathen*.

family, both were entangled in an important relationship with an older, sick brother, both led an Arcadian life in the country. The unattractive Źmichowska was transformed into the beautiful Benjamin. The author frequently discussed her unattractiveness in her correspondence. This is how she auto-ironically described her appearance in a letter to her brother: “fat nose, common lips, height of three or four feet, namely, your little Narcyza is a little monster” (qtd. in Kowalczykova, 16). Also, the group of women and men gathered by the fireplace in the frame story represents the Enthusiasts. Various scholars (Borkowska, Phillips, Źeleński) have identified Tekla Dobrzyńska as Seweryna, Stefania Dzwonkowska as Anna, Zofia Mielęcka-Węgierska as Augusta, Bibliana Moraczewska as Felicja, Anna Skimborowicz as Emilia, Wincenta Zabłocka as Tekla, Kazimiera Ziemięcka as Jadwiga, Hipolit Skimbowicz as Teofil the Child, Jan Majorkiewicz as Albert the Philosopher, Teofil Lenartowicz as Edmund, Edward Dembowski as Henryk. Źmichowska herself identifies most of the characters in her letter to Izabela Zbiegniewska.

The first writer to break the taboo and write about Źmichowska’s homosexuality was the forgotten novelist Łucja Rautenstrauchowa, who believed that Gabryella derived her pseudonym from the French Sapphic poetess and writer Gabrielle Soumet. Boy-Źeleński supported this theory by visualising Źmichowska as the Queen Bee circled by the Enthusiasts. In 1916 Maurycy Mann suggested that the imaginary Aspasia had a real-life prototype. Since this assumption was made, the critics have often indicated correspondences between “the heathen” and Zbyszewska, and read the story of Benjamin and Aspasia as the story of Źmichowska and Zbyszewska.

Indeed, these two romantic relationships have much in common. Źmichowska met Zbyszewska when she was twenty-five years old, shortly after the death of her beloved brother. As presented by Gabryella, Paulina was a hedonist in constant pursuit of pleasure; beautiful, talented, intelligent, independent, imprudent and educated in Europe. She invited Źmichowska to her magnificent country house, a magic palace, imbued with an artistic, cynical atmosphere. They separated in dramatic circumstances and parted. Their paths crossed again in prison, when the Russian police intercepted their letters. Imprisoned, Źmichowska wrote: “Paulina is my faith, she is my story...” (letter to Anna Skimborowiczowa, qtd. in Źeleński 148). According to numerous critics, *The Heathen* was based on this romantic relationship and the tempestuous parting.

The editor of Gabryella’s letters, Mieczysława Romankówna confirmed this suggestion. However, for her, *The Heathen* is not just about homosexual love, but about good and bad love. Her interpretation is very close to the reading presented by Phillips. In the story of Benjamin and Aspasia, Źmichowska seems to disguise in code her lesbian

affection for Zbyszewska. She later develops the theme of lesbian love in *Książka pamiątek*.

Traditions of reading *The Heathen* oscillate between the late eighteenth century, Romanticism, Realism, Positivism and Modernism. It borrows from different conventions and cannot be situated within a coherent literary tradition, or ascribed to a single epoch or style:

The quality that best describes Żmichowska's creative output (though it is still very imprecise) is *strangeness*. Narcyza Żmichowska's works are *strange*. By this I mean that they cannot be conclusively explained by referring to the narrative conventions of the period – of her period or of any other. [...] Żmichowska's novels [...] are both a little too old-fashioned and a little too modern (Borkowska, "Alienated Women" 100-101, original emphasis).

If we wished to chronologically investigate foreign influences on Żmichowska's writing we should firstly take into consideration her acquaintance with French culture, developed during her stay in Paris. The novel of intimate experience inspired the narrative forms of *The Heathen*. The book can be considered in relation to the significant Romantic tradition of literary confessions represented by J.W. Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, R. Chateaubriand's *René* and B. Constant's *Adolphe*.

Secondly, *The Heathen* marks the wane of fantastic Romanticism shaped by the themes of the Gothic; vampirism; bizarre and exotic nature; the protective mother; the beautiful, demonic lover; and the contrast between peaceful childhood and the satanic castle.

At another level, the novel contributes to the essential Romantic issue of the nature of Antiquity and Christianity, and their interplay. The period perceives Antiquity as an undefeated threat to Christianity. It is a pre-historical, pagan, iniquitous and chaotic era of false gods. Female protagonists appearing in Romantic literature and art often embody these sinful features associated with Antiquity. The opposition pagan-Christian and the image of the seductive heathen, were adapted from medieval culture. Their origin lies in the image of Venus – Roman goddess of love and fertility, beautiful heathen tempting Christians with physical pleasures and worldly possessions. This motif developed into two legends supported by the opposition of pagan and Christian values: the history of Faust, and that of Tannhäuser.

Within this framework, Aspasia represents Venus, and Benjamin's family represents Christian values. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the protagonists' names are connected to the corresponding traditions. In the Old Testament Benjamin, was the last son of Jacob. His mother Rachela gave him the name

“Benoni” meaning “the son of my sorrow” but his father changed the name to “Benjamin”. In Hebrew “Benjamin” denotes “a son of the south” or “a son of the right side.” In the Israeli tradition the right side and the south corresponded and were associated with good fortune. In the Polish language “Benjamin” also stands for someone loved and protected – *benjaminek*.

In a corresponding manner, Aspasia is associated with Antiquity. Her namesake lived in Athens in the fifth century (the Greek word *aspasios* means “greeting”).<sup>31</sup> Although, she appeared in the works of Plato, Aristophanes and other ancient authors, very little is known about her life. Modern research often questions most of the information as based on mere hypothesis.<sup>32</sup> She was a Greek hetaera from Miletus – a liberated woman of the period, an independent participant in public life and a contemporary courtesan, possibly even a prostitute in possession of a brothel, famous for her beauty, intelligence, wisdom and excellent education. As a patron of literature and art, she gathered around her the most prominent people of her times, such as Socrates, Pericles and Alcibiades. However, her associations with Alcibiades (Benjamin’s *alter ego*) are difficult to trace. Because of her non-Athenian provenance, Aspasia could not marry Pericles who was a well-known statesman. Instead, they became long-term lovers and had a son, Pericles the Younger. After Pericles’s death, she became a courtesan of Lysicles. In this light, Aspasia can be interpreted as a female genius – a counterbalance to the romantic male ingenious poet.

In *The Heathen*, time and space associated with Aspasia are created typically for Antiquity in Romantic prose. Time is not linear – it forms loops, and its pace varies depending on circumstances, such as the horse race, the costume ball, Benjamin’s fainting.

Although Żmichowska borrows from the Romantic aesthetic, in the guide *Pisarki polskie* she is portrayed as the precursor of the following epoch of Positivism, because of her belief in the utility of art. Phillips agrees that she does not belong to Romanticism:

[D]espite [her] contemporaneity with the “great” Romantic poets and the Romantic obsession with re-establishing Poland’s self-governance, [she does] not have “Romantic” concerns, but Positivistic ones. In [her] didacticism itself and in its object – the correct way to educate women – [she] could be described both as looking back to the late Enlightenment as well as forward

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<sup>31</sup> On the subject of Greek Aspasia, see “Aspasia” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; “Aspasia” in Kopalinski, *Encyklopedia “drugiej płci”*; Henry.

<sup>32</sup> Aspasia appears in several modern works: *Philothea* by L. M. Child (1835); *Pericles and Aspasia* by W. S. Landor (1836); *The Athenian Women* by G. C. Cook (1918).

to Positivism, linking these two periods and bypassing the concerns of [her] better-known male contemporaries (“Upbringing” 203).

Located between Romanticism and Modernity, *The Heathen* is associated with Decadence. Historically, the novel does not belong to it, as the decadent movement appeared in literature during the *fin de siècle*. However, the book is saturated with motifs characteristic of Decadence: vampirism, bisexuality, androgyny, the Gothic.<sup>33</sup>

Interpreters and critics indicate that *The Heathen* is influenced by the national political and social situation accompanying its emergence. Żmichowska had to cipher her novel when she wrote about the “national cause” and Polish history, in order to escape censorship. She used “Aesopian language” – a system of expressions with hidden political meaning. According to this reading, “the mother” is Benjamin’s mother, but also an embodiment of Mother Poland and the allegory of the nation. Henryk from the frame story represents Edward Dembowski – a young Polish activist and talented philosopher, who devoted his life to Poland’s freedom, and died at the age of 24 in a revolutionary uprising in Cracow. Żmichowska also suggests that Benjamin’s parents and his other two brothers (Józef and Karol) sacrificed their wellbeing for their family, or/and their life in a national fight for independence. Phillips introduces the opposition Christianity-Antiquity to the Polish background:

The opposition Christianity versus “paganism” [...] has often been seen as the central conflict of values in Benjamin’s story, where “Christianity” stands for altruism, social responsibility and – in the contemporary Polish context – commitment to patriotic causes, and where “paganism” is more or less synonymous with individualism or “egoism”, standing above all for the two most potent expressions of individuality: art and sexuality (“Femme Fatale” 20-21).

Conventional, nineteenth-century interpretations of the novel contrast preference for personal happiness and individual realisation in art – chosen by Cyprian and Benjamin – with the attitude exemplified by the rest of the family. Benjamin’s choice is read as betrayal of Catholic, national and traditional ideals. Furthermore, suffering and the sacrifice of artistic ambition, personal happiness, and life are highly valued and even glorified. Hence, Aspasia, associated with Antiquity and contrasted with the family, represents the negative pagan model of behaviour.

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<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of decadence in Polish literature, see the section “Young Poland: Decadence and Melancholia”, pp. 84-85 below.

## Chapter III: Polish Positivism: A Set of Restrictions

### 1 A Survey of the Main Trends

The collapse of the January Uprising – the last Romantic revolution – determined the end of the Romantic epoch. Polish society, painfully wounded by the two unsuccessful insurrections, followed by severe repressions enforced by the Russian authorities, aimed to protect its national identity with more peaceful methods. The new epoch of Positivism abandoned the ideals promoted by its predecessor: military ethics, self-sacrificing combat, revolution and martyrdom. Instead, it referred to the rationalistic tradition of the Age of Enlightenment, which was rejected by Romanticism. The name of the period of Positivism alludes to the Enlightenment-inspired movement, inaugurated by Auguste Comte. However, as Stanisław Fita reminds us, the emergence of Polish Positivism was not associated with Comtean thought. Chmielowski even discusses absolute ignorance of Positivist philosophy in nineteenth-century Poland. Magnone clarifies: “Warsaw’s positivists understood Positivism very broadly, they did not perceive it as Comte’s invention, but as permanent philosophical movement” (“Lustra” 19). Positivism replaced revolution with evolution, and poetry with tendentious novels, science, and hard work. Its widespread postulates proclaimed the merits of “organic work” and “basic work” (*praca u podstaw*). The concept of “organic work” was founded on the assumption that the nation (an organism) works effectively, when its “organs” are strong and healthy. In this regard, all social classes were expected to equally cooperate in the name of economic development. The idea of “basic work” was to support the unfortunate, least-educated Polish citizens. The educated and wealthy classes were called on to address the problems of the old-fashioned rural areas.

In the history of Polish literature there predominates an anachronistic and often misleading tendency to separate, and unambiguously oppose Romanticism and Positivism. I am referring here to the commonly accepted idea of the alternation of pre-modern literary periods according to which commencements and dawns are symbolically set at precise dates, associated with historical events. The concept was illustrated by Julian Krzyżanowski in his *Historia literatury polskiej* [*History of Polish Literature*] by a “sinusoid” of succeeding epochs. It indicates a tendency, according to which every period emerged in opposition to its direct predecessor and in reference to the latter’s predecessor. The “sinusoid” divides epochs into only two groups, embodying two distinguished models: the periods of the Middle Ages, Baroque, Romanticism and Young Poland are “dark”, while Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Positivism are “light”, and “spiritual”. However, the new era of Positivism continued the Romantic view on issues of literature. For both epochs, it was a nation-oriented instrument transmitting

contemporary ideas. Zdzisław Najder, points out: “the [Positivist] writer was first a citizen and only secondly an artist. The novel was, as before, considered a vehicle for political and ideological messages. Public problems were still considered much more important than private ones” (660). However, it should be emphasised that the new epoch radicalised the Romantic approach towards literature:

[Positivist] literature, as other fields, was dominated by the problem of utility. Most importantly, it was obliged to serve the entire society. [...] [I]t was supposed to protect the nation’s interests and to constructively influence the readers’ awareness, by developing and reinforcing their understanding of patriotic, and social duties (Markiewicz, “Pozytywizm” 26).

In contrast to Romantic literature, Positivist literature subordinated itself to the “higher” cause, and neglected its own artistic and psychological value. It abandoned poetry and drama – two genres representative of the previous epoch – as unsuitable for radically utilitarian purposes. There were only two well-known poets of this tradition: Maria Konopnicka and Adam Asnyk. Deprived of its former prestige and popularity, Positivist poetry was dubbed “poetry of non-poetic times” (*poezja czasów niepoetyckich*). Literature was dominated by novels, which exhibited a likeness to literary programmes, social diagnoses and ideological manifestos.

According to Leszek Kołakowski, the epoch comprised a set of restrictions. Self-restraint and self-limitation were the pivotal features of Polish Positivist literature. It departed from individualism in order to become universal. Borkowska indicates that, contrary to the explicit Romantic “I”, there was no Positivist “I”. Lena Magnone adds: “the significant self-renunciation of the writers of the period denoted rejection of individual needs, desires and aspirations, and evaluation of the <ethics of obligation> over the <ethics of love>” (“Lustra” 12). Therefore, literary characters were “types”, representatives of social and ideological groups, and not psychologically complex “individuals”. Najder states: “The hero's position, status, or function and his overt behaviour in general were given more attention than his thoughts and personality” (660). Later in the epoch, the novels became less conservative and more open to foreign influences. Indeed, Positivism reinstated the West (Great Britain and France) within an idealistic programme of “staving windows to Europe” (*przebijanie okien do Europy*).

The alleged “big three” of the Positivist writers included Henryk Sienkiewicz – “the most successful”, Bolesław Prus – “the most ambitious” and Eliza Orzeszkowa – “the most traditional” (Najder, 658). They were the authors of the great Polish novel of realism.

Sienkiewicz was an esteemed, immensely popular and prolific author. Maria Konopnicka's writing career was vastly influenced by his critical reviews of her poems and novellas, which were first laudatory and later expressed disappointment. Above all, Sienkiewicz is the author of monumental historical novels written "to embolden hearts" in the context of the suffering Polish nation. His trilogy on seventeenth-century Poland, comprising *The Deluge*, *With Fire and Sword*, and *Fire in the Steppe*, as well as *Quo Vadis* remain pivotal in the Polish literary canon and are widely recognised abroad. Sienkiewicz was awarded a Nobel Prize for literature in 1905. Konopnicka described the phenomenon of his ever-lasting popularity in the following way:

This applause is the fire warming our hearts, so it shall burn. We might be throwing needlessly grand pianos and paintings into this fire instead of wood, but our passion dictates this. Most importantly, this fire is good because it warms us. Speaking about Sienkiewicz creates a thousand opportunities to speak about Poland, its glory, its courage, its power, [and allows us] to honour our motherland (qtd. in Brodzka, "Konopnicka" 146-147).

Prus (Alexander Głowacki), the "most ambitious" of the "big three" was an important journalist and novelist of the Positivist era. As a newspaper columnist, he presented scientific discoveries and discussed social, and economic issues; as a novelist, he focused on social injustices experienced by the Polish nation. He is best known for his realistic novel *The Doll*, which presents a panorama of Warsaw's social classes at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Orzeszkowa was highly esteemed by Polish male critics and well-known outside Poland – she was twice nominated for the Nobel Prize: in 1905 (when she lost to Sienkiewicz) and in 1909. She also shaped the feminist discourse of her epoch. Positivism popularised the discussion of issues associated with women's emancipation, inaugurated in Romanticism: "[E]veryone was writing about it at the time: approvingly or critically, reviewing opinion of such topics as women's upbringing and education, so-called work outside the home, the status of married women, their place within the family and in society" (Borkowska, "Feminism of Orzeszkowa" 80). Orzeszkowa was the pivotal figure for the new generation of emancipists. Her contemporary women formed a circle around the writer. They sought guidance and support, similarly to the aspiring women who surrounded Żmichowska in the previous epoch. However, Orzeszkowa's circle did not comprise recognisable individualists. Borkowska describes the group as follows:

about a dozen or so writers, born between the end of the 1840s and the end of the 1860s (or a little earlier), of whom only one – Eliza Orzeszkowa – achieved lasting fame and recognition. [...] [A]ll of them [...] cultivated a similar pattern of creative activity; all of them [...] fitted into the new model of women's writing which arose in the wake of the 1863 January Insurrection (189-192).

There was one exception within this circle... Maria Konopnicka.

In 1880 Chmielowski described Orzeszkowa's circle as the third and final phase of Polish emancipation, drawing from the previous phases connected with the figures of Hoffmanowa and Żmichowska. He believed that Positivist emancipists exhausted the scope of women's interest, by combining knowledge concerning domestic and maternal issues (Hoffmanowa), education (Żmichowska) and their own expectations:

Finally appeared the need to reinforce the demands [of Hoffmanowa and Żmichowska] with the essential demand to enlarge the scope of women's employment. Especially after 1864 it became necessary [...] for women to be capable of supporting themselves with their own work, without needing to rely on a man's shoulder for assistance ("Kobiety" 10-11).

Chmielowski's view on the development of emancipatory ideas, suggesting historical continuity and constructiveness, is, however, too optimistic. Orzeszkowa adopts Hoffmanowa's sense of duty towards the family, society, and the fatherland, but most contemporary critics contradict his understanding of Positivist feminists as perpetuators of the Enthusiasts, and as active emancipists. They believe that the group abandoned the avant-garde attitude of Żmichowska's circle and substituted "self-realisation" for "self-limitation". Orzeszkowa was highly critical of the Enthusiasts: "they drifted into absurdity. In trying to imitate men, they made themselves and their aspirations appear ridiculous" ("O kobiecie polskiej" qtd. in Borkowska, "Feminism of Orzeszkowa" 97). Borkowska discusses the dissimilarity between the two circles and explains the categories mentioned above:

[Positivist emancipists] adhered to a model of self-limitation (in contrast to the self-realizing model of the Enthusiasts), while in relation to the "male" literary tradition, they chose a strategy of self-adjustment (in contrast to the exploratory or at least alternative strategy adopted by Żmichowska). [...] [B]y self-limitation [...] I mean the characteristic features of literature produced after the January Insurrection of 1863, which consists in a reticence on the part of the speaking subject, in a weakening of interest in sex, including its existential dimension, and in a precise connection between the content of work, which should be clear and predictable, and its

appropriate form – that is, in the respecting of the basic principles of realistic representation. [...] The Positivists see only the emancipatory variant of the women's question. The Positivists want for women those same laws and obligations that are already possessed by men. What is really at stake is their accession to the universal category of "citizens", not the realization of their individual life projects ("Alienated Women" 203-204).

While remaining indifferent to uniquely feminine issues and the feminine perspective, the Positivist emancipists "placed utmost emphasis on <the right to work> as well as on access to education leading to professional careers" (Blobaum 805). Hence, they shared the demand of "equal pay for equal work" with the first wave of British and American feminism.<sup>1</sup>

Orzeszkowa was commonly respected by the (masculine) critics and dubbed the "consciousness of the nation." She was judged to have "a kind of male brain" by a nineteenth-century critic befriended by Sienkiewicz, Teodor Jeske-Choiński. With these revealing words, he expressed his surprise and admiration for *a woman* with such literary talent.<sup>2</sup> The "pseudonym" signals Orzeszkowa's view on the women's question, as displayed in her literature:

Orzeszkowa climbed to the highest pinnacle. [...] Orzeszkowa was helped by her own strategy of action: modesty, even if pretended; readiness to compromise; avoidance of extremes; the propagation of programmes that emphasized social solidarity and reconciliation. As to the female issue, she formulated a position that would be no threat to males whatsoever, stressing the cultural "youngerness" ("młodszość") of females, their own imperfection and immaturity (Borkowska, "Żmichowska versus Orzeszkowa" 93-94).

Her novels are conservative with regards to emancipation, and marginalise the feminine problematic. Apropos of sexuality, Orzeszkowa remained reticent and promoted virginity. Her works are filled with sexually liberated heroines and *femme fatales*, punished for their immoral behaviour with social rejection. As determined by Małgorzata Anna Packalén, "Orzeszkowa merely duplicates the same old pattern: the woman-harlot, the folk version of the *femme fatale*, freely realizing her sexual needs, has no right to exist in the village community in the long term" ("Femmes Fatales" 60-61). As to the issue of motherhood, her works display negative mother-daughter relationships

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<sup>1</sup> Orzeszkowa's complex attitude to the women's question has been researched by Borkowska and explained in the appropriate chapters of *Alienated Women*, "Żmichowska versus Orzeszkowa" and, most importantly in "Feminism of Orzeszkowa". In addition to the fields of personal life and literature, Borkowska also analysed Orzeszkowa's journalistic publications, and private letters.

<sup>2</sup> The original expression *głowa jakby męska* appeared in Jeske-Choiński, "Powieści kobiece".

consisting of evil mothers and daughters, who value their fathers. It is worth noting that Orzeszkowa's critical attitude to mothers is often accompanied by a more favourable assessment of fathers: "[F]athers embody more solid values: diligence, emotional balance, modesty, knowledge. The daughters grow up in fear of their mothers' hysteria or imperiousness and in admiration of, or in sympathy with, their fathers" (Borkowska, "Alienated Women" 219). This theme is present in her novellas and in her most distinguished novel *Nad Niemnem* (*On the Banks of the Niemen*, 1888), a complex, multilateral representation of the Polish gentry.

Nevertheless, in her private life, the writer demonstrated intellectual emancipation. She married at the age of seventeen, on her mother's initiative. When the January Uprising collapsed, her husband was punished for allegedly providing shelter for insurgents and sent to Siberia. Orzeszkowa made a controversial decision not to accompany him in his exile, although it was she, who was involved in the patriotic movement. Moreover, she persisted in formally annulling her marriage. Then she commenced her literary career. The guide *Pisarki polskie* presents Orzeszkowa's decisions in the context of personal freedom and independence.

A typical heroine present in the works of Sienkiewicz, Prus and Orzeszkowa bears essential feminine features, as understood by Patmore and embodied by his "angel in the house" in the mid-century. Such a character is innocent, sensitive, moral, modest and selfless. Xenia Gąsiorowska notes that Positivist female characters are usually ladies:

As a squire's lady, the heroine arises at dawn to supervise the milking, to attend to the needs of the household or of the whole estate. Side by side with her husband, or alone if fate should make it necessary. [...] If she is rich, she finds time for philanthropy. She considers it her duty to be of help to the poor and the sick. As an unpaid housekeeper in the home of (mostly unfeeling) relatives, she is the mainstay of households where the lady of the house is a hypochondriac. [...] As a governess she bravely tries to instil noble ideals and a little learning in her young charges. She is usually rewarded by the author with a good husband (270).

To conclude this brief introduction of the "big three", I would like to quote Najder's evaluation of these prominent authors:

[They] developed within the boundaries of the [Positivist] tradition [...]. None of them [...] attempted to change the basic social functions of literature in general and the novel in particular; on the contrary, they all worked consciously and persistently to strengthen and broaden those

functions by broadening the popular appeal of literature and by enriching its content (657).

Sienkiewicz, Prus and Orzeszkowa dominated the Positivist literary scene, and the contemporary canon. How did the disregarded, misjudged and/or forgotten authors who exceeded the canon operate within this scheme? Let us now focus on Maria Konopnicka.

## **2 Maria Konopnicka: Borderline Case, Rule, Exception**

Maria Konopnicka is the writer who stepped out of line and exceeded the conventional Positivist model of writing established by Orzeszkowa. Nonetheless, for many decades she has been stereotyped and connected with this dominant model. Although some of her works are included in the canon, they were selected in adherence with the Positivist tradition. Moreover, there is no space for alternative interpretation. Therefore, this inclusion in the canon is rather harmful for Konopnicka's works. The author is presented as an uninteresting, old-fashioned figure. In the opening lines of her doctoral dissertation Magnone introduces the dominant, unjust, labelling approach to Konopnicka's life and work, and its drastic consequences:

How to write a contemporary monograph of Maria Konopnicka? The stereotypical approach towards Positivist literature, initiated in the 1950-s, proved to be extremely ruthless in regard to this author. Konopnicka's works remain today stigmatised with a fixed, unquestionable reading and status, excluding them from interpretation and condemning them to vegetation in dusty book storages ("Konopnicka" 3).

Magnone's monograph on Konopnicka seems to be written in response to the appeal of literary scholar Alina Brodzka: "the silhouette of this writing woman demands rejection of clichés. Konopnicka awaits a new portrait" ("Kobieta pisząca" 57). Indeed, until now Konopnicka was presented in a contemporary, unsteretyped way only in *Alienated Women*, where she was called "a borderline case, both the rule and the exception" (202). However, Borkowska did not devote enough space to this extraordinary woman writer.

Konopnicka (née Wasiłowska) had a miserable childhood. Half-orphaned by the death of her mother at the age of twelve, raised in accordance with Christian and patriotic values by her father, a bibliophile lawyer, she grew up in an "[a]mbiance of exaltation and seriousness, earnest patriotism and austere moral rules" (Brodzka, "Konopnicka" 6) reminiscent of the atmosphere of the Brontës's family home. On the other hand, the house from "Green Shore" springs into mind. Konopnicka describes her family home as follows: "Our orphaned house was almost a cloister house; we didn't

accept any visits and did not return them, there were no worldly, joyful conversations, and the walks arranged by the father usually led – to a cemetery” (qtd. in Brodzka, “Konopnicka” 6).

“[U]ntil the end of the 1870-s Konopnicka's personal life had proceeded along a well-trodden, very conventional path” (Borkowska, “Alienated Women” 199-200). She received private education at home, under her father’s watchful eye. Afterwards, she studied for a year at the well-known Warsaw *pensja* Sakramentek. It was a type of a boarding school for girls, wives-to-be and mothers-to-be. Miss Florentine will also attend a *pensja* for a year. In Warsaw Konopnicka met Orzeszkowa. The two women remained close friends until death. At the age of twenty she married a landowner, Jarosław Konopnicki, twelve years her senior. He belonged to the impoverished gentry (like Mrs Brońska) and after the January Uprising the family struggled to obtain food. During the ten-year-long marriage Konopnicka bore eight children, two of whom died soon after birth.

Her literary career began after the newspaper publication of the poetic cycle *W górach* (*In the Mountains*). This was not her first publication; two years earlier she published a poem under a pseudonym. However, it was *W górach* that caught the attention of Sienkiewicz and it is often considered Konopnicka’s debut. As already mentioned, Sienkiewicz’s reviews and comments exerted much influence on Konopnicka, and significantly shaped the development of her career. Sienkiewicz, then a columnist, presented himself as a celebrity and a “know-it-all.” Despite the fact that his career was just commencing, “[f]or the press and the Warsaw literary public, [his] opinion defined good taste” (Brodzka, “Konopnicka” 11).

Magnone analyses this first review, and points out that Sienkiewicz committed many factual mistakes and provided imprecise citations. She believes that this was due to the following fact:

[h]is mind created an image of a vernal, lovely, fresh, virginal poetess, a nightingale. [...] The male novelist adopted the role of a mature, notable writer, who may destroy a literary career (especially another man’s) or allow it to flourish (a lovely woman’s) on a whim. [...] <[T]he young poetess> who had enchanted Sienkiewicz, was at the time 34 years old and had six children. She was four years older than Sienkiewicz (“Lustra” 41-42).

Nonetheless, the laudatory tone of the review encouraged Konopnicka to pursue a literary career. She left her husband and the unsatisfying country life she led, and moved to Warsaw. She stayed in the villa Frascati – inhabited by the first narrator of “Miss Florentine”. In Warsaw she began an independent life, focused around struggles for

food, clothes and education for her six children. She single-handedly supported her large family by writing and private tutoring.

Afterwards, her life took another unconventional, interesting turn. Konopnicka decided to leave her children and set off on constant travels. According to Brodzka, family matters concerning her daughter's nervous disorder dictated the difficult choice. Helena was a severely disturbed kleptomaniac and she attempted to hurt her mother.<sup>3</sup> Konopnicka left the country for twenty years of unplanned wandering. As the Russian authorities disliked her, she did not own a passport and she could not settle anywhere. She visited Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, and returned to Poland only for short periods of time. Borkowska compares Konopnicka's decisions with Żmichowska's, and emphasises that their lifestyle choices were dictated by their need for personal self-development:

Where was [Konopnicka] rushing to, and what was she after? [...] Scholars have drawn attention to both political and family reasons. [...] It would seem that in 1890, shaken by family troubles or convinced of their inevitability, the poet made the most important decision of her life, a decision which must have been very hard: to part with her children. She needed solitude and decided to treat herself to that solitude ("Alienated Women" 200).

As for Konopnicka, she travelled with Maria Dulębianka, painter and one of the most important feminist activists of the time. Dulębianka fought for artistic education for women and their voting rights. Her most prominent contributions include: publishing *Polityczne stanowisko kobiety* (*Woman's Political Stance*, 1908), running for Sejm Galicyjski in 1908 – 10 years before women received voting rights in Poland, establishing Lwowski Związek Równouprawnienia Kobiet (Lvov's Association of Women's Equality of Rights, 1909) and taking the position of editor in chief of "Głos kobiet" ("Women's Voice", 1911).<sup>4</sup> Konopnicka and Dulębianka are considered the first well-known Poles to be engaged in a lesbian relationship. After their return, they inhabited the mansion granted to Konopnicka "by the nation" on the twenty-fifth anniversary of her work. Dulębianka, dubbed by her partner "the brave Peter" (*dzielny Piotruś*) frequently played the role of the husband during important official ceremonies and private occasions.

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<sup>3</sup> On the complex relationship between Konopnicka and her two daughters, Helena and the famous actress Laura, and its association with Konopnicka's works, see Magnone, *Lustra*.

<sup>4</sup> On Dulębianka, see Górnicka-Boratyńska, "Dawne mistrzynie" and Magnone, *Lustra*, and on her relationship with Konopnicka, see Tomasik.

Konopnicka seldom expressed her opinion on women's issues. She chaired the 1907 Polish Women's Congress (although she reacted sharply to Nałkowska's progressive speech) and supported women's rights to vote.<sup>5</sup> "Konopnicka wasn't an active member of the <women's movement> of the final decades of the nineteenth century. The poet had never participated in public discourse as an emancipist, she was rather averse towards such appearances in general" (Magnone, "Lustra" 201). The works of Żmichowska spring to mind: "Konopnicka does not speak about emancipation. Instead she simply lives as a feminist, travelling around Europe in the company of her friend Maria Dulębianka" (Borkowska, "Feminism of Orzeszkowa" 96). We have seen how unconventional Konopnicka's life is and how different from the traditional manner in which it is usually presented.

Turning to the issue of her writing, nowadays Konopnicka is predominantly associated with novellas and her innovative, non-didactic children's books – although her contemporaries most valued her poetry. She achieved a "breakthrough in the stiff and strict didacticism of children's literature" (Markiewicz, "Pozytywizm" 350). Her most ambitious and well-written work of the genre is "O krasnoludkach i sierotce Marysi" ("On Dwarfs and Orphan Mary").

"Miss Florentine" was published in the fourth collection of short stories, simply entitled *Nowele* (*Novellas*, 1897). Critics tend to point out the typicality of this work among her other writings. First, it refers to the Romantic tradition and re-evaluates folklore, and the voice of the public. As emphasised by Brodzka, Konopnicka's approach is innovative: she introduces characters from lower social classes as complex, experienced subjects. Second, "Miss Florentine" constitutes a typical situation for Konopnicka's novellas of a meeting between a narrator and a heroine. The narrator is also representative of many: an intelligent, not wealthy woman, a mother, "a listener and a witness [of a confession], or a helpful interlocutor – if it's necessary. Discrete, sensitive, reacting to the every movement of the thoughts of her/his partners, [the narrator] creates an atmosphere of trust, and eliminates the distance" (Brodzka, "Konopnicka" 206). Magnone analyses the connection between the author and her heroines in the following way:

Whenever she uses prose, [Konopnicka] writes about herself and writes herself into the opus. [...] She uses a specific speaking "I", defiantly feminine and identified with the author. However, it has nothing to do with the positivist, conventional, authorial narration where the narrator –

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<sup>5</sup> On Nałkowska's speech, see the section "Zofia Nałkowska: The Great Lady of Polish Literature", p. 89-90 below.

simultaneously one of the main ingredients of the realistic poetic – serves as a *port-parole* of the author. The woman narrator inscribed into Konopnicka's works is not only the author-narrator, but also the protagonist. Konopnicka's narration is a personal feminine narration. In her novellas, Konopnicka reaches to her own experiences. The writer chooses a feminine "I" when she really was, or could have been a witness of the described experiences" ("Lustra" 193).

A heroine named Miss Florentine (Panna Florentyna) appears in *The Doll* (published in a periodical: 1887-1889 and book: 1890). Konopnicka's protagonist bears a visible resemblance to Prus's character. In *The Doll* she is an impoverished relative of the female protagonist, Izabela Łęcka ("the doll"), responsible for managing all house affairs: housekeepers, debts and loans. She is "tall, dressed in black, shy" (32).<sup>6</sup> She is quiet, modest, cautious, and focused on *neatness* and *orderliness*. Although Miss Florentine, as Izabela's trustee, advisor and chaperone, is a rather important character in the novel, there is very little information on her. Moreover, as a servant, she is excluded from a social life filled with celebrations, parties and journeys. To my knowledge, no one has yet commented on the two "Miss Florentines" and the similarity of their characters. I would like to suggest that Prus's heroine might have served as an inspiration for Konopnicka.

I am now coming to the question of the transforming reception of Konopnicka's works. Her contemporaries hailed her the bardess of Positivism and surrounded her with a special cult. Under the tragic circumstances of the collapse of the 1864 Uprising, Polish citizens required a bard, or a bardess – a successor to the great Romantics: Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński. Therefore, Konopnicka's contemporaries most valued her poetic works. Her most famous poem, "Rota" ("The Oath") is a protest against German oppression. It soon became a significant patriotic chant, an anthem – accompanied by music composed by Feliks Nowowiejski. "This short piece was written, set to music, and sung all over Poland, at the time when the German Government was attempting to expropriate by law the Polish inhabitants of Posen. During the war, too, it was sung – in fear first, and in private assemblies – then in public streets and openly everywhere" (Dziewicki 66). In 1927 "Rota" was considered for the Polish national anthem. Konopnicka's funeral (in 1910) became an immense patriotic demonstration of

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<sup>6</sup> "wysoka, czarno ubrana, nieśmiała".

fifty thousand people. The Russian authorities feared the cult surrounding “the bardess”, and banned all her works, and initiatives aimed at commemorating her name.

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Konopnicka is nowadays perceived as a conservatively-Positivist, mediocre author of cut and dried, moralising novellas on social injustices. However, more insightful observers noticed that her works draw from versatile traditions and themes. Markiewicz and Bolesław Leśmian emphasise a potent affiliation with Romanticism. Under the influence of the former, Konopnicka gradually abandoned the positivist values of objectivity and pragmatism, and oscillated towards romantic patriotism and martyrology. Leśmian also discovered in her writings a split between mind, and heart, melody and rhythm. Concurrently, she was one of the few Positivist writers who remained considerably active in the Young Poland. Moreover, according to Markiewicz, she was the only writer of her epoch who attempted to compete with the new generation and who participated in the development of poetical technique initiated by it. She was considered “a moral authority of the previous generation” (Rembowska-Płuciennik 155). Fortunately, there are researchers, such as Brodzka, Borkowska and, most importantly Magnone, who continue this attempt to go beyond the well-established misconceptions and stereotypes connected with Konopnicka.

## Chapter IV: Young Poland: Decadence and Melancholia

### 1 A Survey of the Main Trends

The first symptoms of an anti-Positivist turn were visible in the 1880s. The beginning of Young Poland, or Polish Modernism is conventionally set in 1890 and connected with the emergence of a new generation of poets. Generally speaking, the epoch comprises two major trends: Neo-romanticism and decadence. The former was initiated by Artur Górski in a collection of critical articles jointly entitled “Young Poland”. They presented the beliefs of the “young” generation, and established a connection between the new, budding trend and the Romantic tradition. The pivotal experience, “the key trauma in the national memory” (Merchant 65) of Young Poland was the 1863 Revolution and its collapse. However, Neo-romanticism differently evaluated the uprising and drew different conclusions from its failure: “[For] many of the young Polish writers who initiated the Young Poland movement, [...] the so-called January Uprising was followed by a period of social and spiritual stagnation that lasted well into the 1880s. Young Poland, as a movement, was a conscious attempt to infuse national hopes with a new vitality” (Merchant 65). Neo-romanticism re-evaluated the Romantic ideals of revolution and repudiated Positivist rationality. It revived the concepts of an artist-bard, individuality and the primacy of the emotions. Additionally, it borrowed from Romanticism specific forms of expression, such as melancholy, somnambulism, despair and the death wish.

Traditionally the epoch of Young Poland is identified with Neo-romanticism – in accordance with “the sinusoid” created by Julian Krzyżanowski.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the period was highly eclectic and covered symbolism, naturalism, impressionism, pessimism, and intuitionism, among others. The second major current of the epoch can be illustrated with the slogan “art for art’s sake” aimed at liberating literature from ethical, socio-political, religious and national aspects, intrinsically attached to it throughout nineteenth century, in Positivism, as well as Romanticism. The concept was popularised by Stanisław Przybyszewski, a novelist, a playwright, and a scandalous member of *la bohème*, who soon became the artistic leader of Young Poland.

The idea of art as the highest value is connected with the decadent trend – interesting for my presentation of Komornicka and Nałkowska. Decadent motifs first appeared in the works of some Positivist writers, as a manifestation of the revolt against the bourgeois world. The proponent of Neo-romanticism, Górski criticised decadence as useless, and purposeless. In the 1890s the trend shifted from the social ground onto

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief introduction of the concept, see the section “Polish Positivism: A Set of Restrictions”, p. 72.

metaphysics. Polish decadence of the *fin de siècle* was inspired by the French trend connected with dandyism (*Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la decadence...*), and by the philosophies of Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson. As observed by Podraza-Kwiatkowska, women wrote the most typical decadent works. Possibly decadent poetics, via its association with death, decay and vampirism, enabled them to exceed the conventions of women's writing. Similarly to the Female Gothic, it allowed an untraditional expression of the feminine.

The themes of decadence frequently appear in Komornicka's works. Her early article entitled "Przejściowi" ("Transitory People") is dedicated to the theme of transitoriness characteristic of her generation. Her works are saturated with demons and spirits, and love-death antagonisms. In *Szkice* (*Sketches*) there is a "full range of decadent moods, including the death wish and nirvana, and a compulsive, obsessive autoanalysis" (Podraza-Kwiatkowska, "Młodopolska femina" 19). "Andronice" (from *Baśnie. Psalmodie*) portrays the king of Eropolis, bored with continuous sexual pleasure. The female protagonist Andronice is a typical sexual praying mantis. She begins to control the king's desire and changes him into a perverse masochist longing for humiliation, degradation and suffering. Although the themes of decadence are not prominent in "On Father and his Daughter", the fairytale is filled with typical decadent associations of love and death, Eros and Thanatos, as well as themes of revenge, violence and murder. Most importantly there is the demonic father and his infernal realm. The father mentally tortures his wife and daughter, violently avenges Alla's disobedience, and finally causes the death of both women, and the new husband.

In Nałkowska's modernist works we see the return of the typical decadent association of sexual pleasure, cruelty and boredom. In "Green Shore" they are connected with the protagonist Carolina and her erotic experiences.

Although male writers – Górski, Przybyszewski, Stefan Żeromski and Stanisław Reymont, dominated Polish Modernist literature, Young Poland brought a new attitude towards feminine issues. Finally, women spoke up – although, they often used masculine grammatical forms and pseudonyms.<sup>2</sup> Nałkowska was one of the women writers of the new generation – born in the 1880s and emerging in the first decade of the twentieth century – who initiated the process of "feminisation" of culture. It denoted sexualisation and the introduction of gender categories that reached beyond the feminine issues included in the scope of interest of the former authors. Instead, the process touched

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<sup>2</sup> For example: Józef Maskoff (Gabriela Zapolska), Adam M-ski (Zofia Trzuszczowska), Iwo Płomińczyk (Maryla Wolska), Piotr Włast (Komornicka).

every aspect of culture. Borkowska depicts this substantial difference between Positivist emancipationists and Modernist feminists, as follows:

The emancipationists point to only a few of the spheres of reality that are subject to “feminine“ or “female“ control. The Modernists maintain that the whole world of culture (and of social life) is founded on the opposition between “masculinity“ and “femininity“, where “femininity“, being culturally the younger, offers greater hopes and possibilities – including in the sphere of art (“Alienated Women” 257).

Women writers engaged in topics formerly tabooed, such as painful experiences associated with female corporality, especially during the period of puberty and motherhood (menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth).

This is the “first wave” of Polish feminism: the Enthusiasts, the “emancipationists” gathered around Orzeszkowa and the Modernist feminists. In her comparison of the situation in Poland and Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, Rosalind Marsh emphasises the scope of Polish feminism:

By the 1870s the women’s movement in Poland had grown quite strong, and from the 1890s some Polish feminists succeeded in establishing links with the international women’s movement. [...] The First Congress of Polish Women was held in 1905, three years before the first one in Russia—and, by contrast to Russia, subsequent congresses were held in 1907, 1917 and 1938, as the movement for women’s rights continued under the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939) (38).

The end of the Modernist era, the end of 123-year-long partitions, the end of the First World War – all of these events culminated in 1918. In this all-important year Poland regained its independence and Polish women received voting rights. Did Zofia Nałkowska and Maria Komornicka attempt to contribute to these transformations?

## **2 Zofia Nałkowska: The Great Lady of Polish Literature**

Nałkowska and Komornicka held entirely different positions in their times, their works have been differently evaluated, and today their reputations are incomparable. The former was a very successful writer. She was highly esteemed by her contemporaries, especially in the Interwar and Post-war periods.<sup>3</sup> Nałkowska was “the great lady of Polish literature” (*wielka dama literatury polskiej*) managing an influential literary salon,

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<sup>3</sup> Nałkowska wrote until her death in 1954.

where, among others, she supported and promoted Bruno Schultz.<sup>4</sup> She was the first female member of the Polish Academy of Literature – one of the major literary institutions of the time, and a long-term vice-president of the Polish Pen-Club. As a member of the National Council and a deputy to *Sejm* (the second legislative chamber), she was part of the Polish government.

Until today Nałkowska remains “one of the pillars of women’s writing, a prominent figure of the Polish literary scene” (Borkowska, Czermińska and Phillips 88), whose works are included in the canon. However, she is identified only with two literary texts from the Interwar and Post-war periods: most importantly with *Medallions*, and with *Granica (The Frontier)*. *Medallions. Jewish lives* is a collection of short-stories, or reportages written in reaction to the author’s experiences as the president of the Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes in Auschwitz – established immediately after the war in order to investigate Nazi crimes committed in Poland. This documentary consisting of official testimonials, intimate memoirs, private interviews, and chance conversations with victims and witnesses of the Holocaust is considered a masterpiece of antifascist world literature. The rest of her writings are barely recognised and her Modernist works have been entirely forgotten. The aim of this thesis is to throw light on this unexplored, however, in my opinion, most interesting period of Nałkowska’s work and to (re)interpret the astonishing “Green Shore”.

Nałkowska’s unusual upbringing and the intellectual atmosphere of her family home influenced her writing career. Her home resembled a literary salon, constantly filled with eminent writers, scientists and politicians. It was organised by her father, Waław Nałkowski, a brilliant scholar, distinguished critic and publicist, who collaborated with Komornicka within the group “Forpoczty” (“Avant-garde”).<sup>5</sup> In her family home Nałkowska received an extensive literary education, gained knowledge of foreign languages, contacts with well-known writers and scholars, and the awareness of social etiquette. As we are about to see, unlike Komornicka, Nałkowska decided to participate in the masquerade of the intelligentsia: “It is not difficult to make oneself liked, one only has to be insincere” – she wrote in her diary (“Dziennik” 25). According to Lidia Wiśniewska, “in social life Nałkowska puts on the mask of a person who wants to be liked and conceals whatever is destructive in her personality, but in order to function in the sphere of art she puts on a mask of decadence and decay” (120).

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<sup>4</sup> There was a hint of irony in Nałkowska’s title, as there was a common belief among her contemporaries, that Nałkowska greatly enjoyed her popularity and the fact that men adored her.

<sup>5</sup> On Waław Nałkowski, see Olszewicz; Wójcik, *Powrót*.

Returning to her education, Nałkowska attended a private boarding school in Warsaw and studied economy, geography, history, and linguistics at the famous underground “Flying University” (*Uniwersytet Latający*) – the first underground university operating in Warsaw between 1895 and 1905. It had over 5000 female participants, including Komornicka and Maria Skłodowska-Curie, which comprised 70 percent of students. It was replaced by the Society for Scientific Courses in 1906, legally registered with the Russian authorities. Under the new name, it still remained a predominantly female educational institution. Most of Nałkowska’s extensive knowledge is down to self-tutoring. Her writing career commenced at a very young age. She was fourteen when she published a melancholic poem “Pamiętam” (“I Remember”). Her early poems were printed in many Warsaw journals, such as the prestigious “Chimera”.

In the second stage of her career, interesting for my presentation of her, Nałkowska shifted to novels and short stories. Her Modernist works: *Women*, *Książę* (*Prince*), *Rówieśnice* (*Female Peers*), *Narcyza*, *Wężę i róże* (*Snakes and Roses*), a collection of short stories which included “Green Shore”, *Koteczka czyli białe tulipany* (*Kitten, or White Tulips*) are dominated by female characters and feminine motifs. They are also filled with typical Modernist themes of decadence, vitalism, egotism and individualism. “[S]he was a vitalist in her attitude to power, a decadent in her fascination with death and passing, a parnassian in her cult of beauty and art, in short – she was a typical product of her epoch” (Kraskowska, “Nałkowska” 19). Nałkowska was strongly influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophy which was very popular among women writers of the Modernist period. In “Green Shore” the father feeds his theories to Carolina and Bertha. In the light of my reading, this unconventional upbringing influences the future choices of the two sisters.

Nałkowska’s first book, her short story *Lodowe pola* (*Ice Fields*) and the novel *Women*, of which it became a part, exhibit interesting similarities with “Green Shore”. Carolina resembles the narrator and the protagonist of the earlier novel, Janka. At the beginning of the story the latter moves to a big city (a substitute of green shore) and learns that she cannot form a relationship with the only man she will ever love – a distanced, unemotional scientist Rosławski who represents a father-figure and exhibits similarities with the father of “Green Shore”. Correspondingly to Carolina, Janka searches for a substitute love-object. She behaves like a morally unrestrained, independent, modern woman (however, she does not succumb to her sexual passions). Finally, the protagonist returns to the starting point of her search – to the group of scholars, among whom she met Rosławski.

Another analogy between the two works is established by the correspondence between Janka's close friend, Marta, and Bertha. The two women, like the sisters of "Green Shore" can be considered doubles. Contrary to her friend, Marta initially does not abandon the idyllic country life. However, during the absence of the protagonist, she becomes unprotected and vulnerable, and as a result, succumbs to the domineering masculine figure of her adorer. Soon after becoming his wife, she begins to suffer from agoraphobia, hysteria and, finally, madness.

Furthermore, many of Nałkowska's novels from the Modernist period reproduce the theme of tyrannical love and the victim-persecutor relationship. "The closest erotic and emotional relationships between the family members, or friends are described in terms of torture, torment, obsession, tyranny, abuse, etc." (Kraskowska, "Nałkowska" 63).

Magdalena Rembowska-Płuciennik establishes a link between the author and her Modernist heroines: "They try to resolve the same problems Nałkowska addresses in her *Diaries*; they read the same works she mentions in her private notes. In creating her fictional characters, Nałkowska often portrays herself" (157). Her first marriage with mediocre poet and excellent pedagogue, Leon Rygier, brings to mind the relationship between Carolina and the priest's brother. Nałkowska "married [...] at the age of nineteen, in the first burst of erotic fascination, and [her husband] disappointed her with his carefree attitude towards life and their relationship" (Kraskowska, "Nałkowska" 14).

Turning to Nałkowska's active engagement in the women's movement: during the Polish Women's Congress held in Warsaw in 1907 Nałkowska delivered a controversial speech "Uwagi o etycznych zadaniach ruchu kobiecego" ["Remarks on the Ethical Objectives of the Women's Movement"]. Although she was not involved in the "national cause", it can be interpreted as a manifestation of the national interests. Nałkowska criticised the gathering for its backward, old-fashioned attitude towards sexual freedom. She advocated new ethical rules in accordance with equal standards for both sexes:

[S]he exposed the harsh rules that determined a woman's reputation. [...] According to this hierarchy only the ideal wife and mother was worthy of society's respect. [...] Women who sought independence, as artist for instance, or who were unmarried, were removed from the public sphere and condemned. Nałkowska openly criticized the prejudices of women against mistresses and prostitutes, whom she found to be the victims of the social and political system (Rembowska-Płuciennik 156).

She concluded her provocative speech with the following words: “We want the whole of life!” Many Positivist emancipationists who participated in the congress were shocked by Nałkowska’s public appearance. Konopnicka, who chaired the meeting, led a walkout in protest at the speech.

### **3 Maria Komornicka: Spirit in the Mask of Nakedness<sup>6</sup>**

In Young Poland the paths of Nałkowska and Komornicka repeatedly crossed. As a member of the project “Forpoczty”, the latter was a frequent guest and even a temporary inhabitant of the house of Wacław Nałkowski. The group comprised forty-four year old Nałkowski, thirty-four year old poet Cezary Jelenta and Komornicka, only nineteen years old. It prepared a now forgotten manifesto, which embedded European modernist issues in the local context. Certainly, it was unusual for a young woman to be actively involved in an avant-garde movement and in the creation of a major statement of the epoch.

However, as I have indicated above, Komornicka held a utterly different status from “the great lady of Polish literature.” For her contemporaries she was a promising young author, “an extremely prominent literary individuality” (Janion, “Lemańska” 187), who wasted her great talent. Her debut short story “Z życia nędzarza” (“A Life of a Beggar”), printed at the age of sixteen, began with the revealing, prophetic words: “I was a gifted man, with a big literary talent. [...] All of my abilities, all of my plans had vanished. Nowadays, I am just a handful of ashes, a dry leaf, a sad, empty zero” (“Szkice” 95).<sup>7</sup> Komornicka belonged to the so-called “Meteors of Young Poland” – exceptionally gifted, over-sensitive writers and artists, who failed to develop their careers, and often terminated them with a nervous breakdown, or a suicide. In his quasi-academic study “Forpoczty ewolucji psychicznej i troglodycy” (“Avant-garde of the Psychological Evolution and Troglodytes”) Nałkowski described the so-called “evolutionary type”, exemplified by Komornicka:

In life and literature there is presently a growing number of types, whose internal life dominates over external, spiritual over material, human over animal, reflective over active. Types with an extremely sensitive and subtle mental organisation. Types that cannot live in the atmosphere of vulgarity and, more importantly, spitefulness. Types with great disproportion

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<sup>6</sup> This is a paraphrase of a passage from Komornicka’s poem “Kaprys” (“Caprice”).

<sup>7</sup> “Byłem człowiekiem zdolnym, o dużym talencie pisarskim. [...] Nic nie zostało z moich zdolności, z moich planów. Jestem obecnie tylko garścią popiołu, suchym liściem, smutnem, pustem zerem.”

between desires and possibilities, and, what is more, incapable of fulfilling them; types therefore riddled with bottomless internal dissatisfaction (17).

Nowadays, Komornicka's works are completely unrecognisable. Her extraordinary life story only recently started to become known, because of feminist critics. This considerably different reception of her figure and writings, in comparison to the well-known and respected Nałkowska, is largely due to her personality and life choices. In the words of Wiśniewska: the two women "took as it were two different directions: Komornicka that of loneliness and madness. Nałkowska that of relationships with men, inside or outside of marriage, as well as an intense public life" (114). The above point is interesting for this thesis, in connection to the evident correspondences between "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore".

Let us present the handful of information gathered on Komornicka by the critics interested in this figure. Born in 1876, she received private education from Chmielowski. At the age of eighteen she left for Cambridge, most probably with the intention to begin studies, however she was never enrolled. She was deeply disappointed with English society, the university's environment and the mentality of the students.<sup>8</sup> At the age of twenty-two, Komornicka married Jan Lemański, an impoverished mediocre poet, ten years her senior. Her choice surprised both her family and close friends. Izabela Filipiak, in her doctoral dissertation devoted to Komornicka, suggests that the decision was caused by her longing for adventure, outrage and controversy:

The marriage with an indigent poet is a long-lasting scandal. His ancestry is sufficient to disturb a family belonging to landed gentry. His emotional and financial dependency on Komornicka was at the dawn of the nineteenth century considered a perversion. [...] Lemański [...] ensures a high level of adrenaline – he creates situations saturated with violence and power. [...] Lemański is also a perfect partner who can turn marriage into "camp" – he is capable of ironic gestures. [...] Only the mother and [Komornicka's sister] Aniela attended the ceremony. The rest of Komornicka's family ignored the wedding. They intuitively sensed that they would have been forced to participate in a farce (339-340).

Indeed, the marriage led to an infamous scandal. Lemański was pathologically jealous of his wife. He shot her and her cousin, because he suspected them of a secret understanding. Janion suggests that Komornicka, who opted for an unconventional relationship, was deeply disappointed with her husband and his jealousy-driven

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<sup>8</sup> She presented her dissatisfying journey in *Raj młodzieży* (*Teenagers' Heaven*).

reactions. His behaviour accentuated the traditionalism present in men's relations to women and marriage:

[She] was searching for a background that affirmed her decisions: rejection or transgression of roles socially attributed to women. Possibly, she believed that he was the kind of person to lead a life with, not burdened with the "obligations and duties of women", that he was – like her – not confined by conventional attitudes and behaviours. However, Lemański acted like a conventional, jealous husband ("Lemańska" 192).

The relationship with Lemański greatly influenced Komornicka's comprehension of femininity and masculinity, and shaped her future choices. It was a watershed in her life. In this context, we can trace correspondences between the marriage and the masculine-feminine relationships in "On Father and his Daughter". Lemański can be interpreted as the prototype of "the father" – jealous of Alla, and murderous towards her and "the mother".

However, Filipiak presents a different version of this tragic story. She claims that Komornicka was not a victim of the jealous, tyrannical husband. Instead, she voluntarily and actively participated in the fatal incident. Furthermore, Filipiak claimed, the couple might have staged the incident. In Filipiak's view, Komornicka's comprehension of marriage resembled the attitude of Rebecca: it is a game. The married couple continued it in the court:

Do the spouses know that every game is addictive? Does his love change her into a woman? How much more is she loved than other women (not everyone is shot at)? Duels and suicides are *à la mode* at the time. [...] Although it seems that the "Lemańskis" participated in the performance, it appears that the distribution of props was arbitrary. Someone was armed, someone pointed the gun, someone was shot at. Jan personified violence, Maria – total defencelessness (340).

In the context of Filipiak's interpretation of the marriage and the incident, Alla would not be a victim of her tyrannical father, but his accomplice in a love-hate relationship.

In 1901 Komornicka began her cooperation with the exclusive "Chimera", one of the major European journals dedicated to literature. "Since 1901, *Chimera* has been a champion of high-minded symbolist aesthetics under its editor, Zenon <Miriam> Przesmycki, and featured an eclectic mix of European, Asian, and American literature"

(Merchant 42).<sup>9</sup> She used a masculine pseudonym “Piotr Włast” for her reviews and essays. As Krystyna Kralkowska-Gątkowska reminds us, it was a common decision among women writers of the time: “The advantage of using a masculine pseudonym, or of at least imitating the style perceived as masculine, was that it secured a woman writer against biased, prejudiced reviewers” (“Cień twarzy” 15). In the case of Komornicka, the decision to choose a masculine *nom de plume* was more complex. On the one hand, it bespoke confusion, disunity and alienation. It foreshadowed her mental breakdown and transsexual transformation. Secondly, the mother chose it and thereby became involved in the future transfiguration. Filipiak emphasises the mother’s input: “<Piotr Włast> is a gift from the mother. [...] [I]t secures the bond between the mother and the daughter with a seal” (385-386). When the decision was made to shut down “Chimera”, Komornicka also ceased her literary activity. She was at that time “a mysterious author of an ailing magazine <Chimera>. Famous, or rather infamous. A wealthy woman without money. Unneeded by anyone, not convicted, but humiliated. Already a little insane” (Filipiak 439).

Scholars interested in Komornicka usually focused on this growing “insanity” and interpreted it in various ways. In 1907 Komornicka decided to undergo a symbolic transfiguration of sexes: she chose a man’s name and a masculine appearance. She became Piotr Odmieniec Włast by adding the word *odmieniec* (Eng. “changeling”) to her penname. The word *odmieniec* has an additional negative connotation. In the text *Biesy* [*Devils*] it refers to an outsider, or devil. Additionally, Komornicka had her teeth removed and chose an individual workout routine designed to build her body in accordance with her vision. She burned her dresses and started to wear masculine clothes.

Her/his contemporaries considered the transformation a great scandal, comparable to the outrageous atmosphere surrounding Oscar Wilde. The two writers have been frequently compared, firstly, in reference to their dandyism, decadence and autodestructiveness. Secondly, because of the fact that society initially adored them and subsequently decided to severely punish them. Thirdly, Komornicka admired Wilde and wrote a study about him – *Oskar Wilde. Apokryf idealny* (*Oscar Wilde. An Ideal Apocrypha*). Janion claims that “Komornicka chose the figure of Oscar Wilde for symbolic identification, [...] [S]he was searching for a double, someone whose example would allow her to follow the imaginary path of spiritual Transformation” (“In Memoriam” 271). The manifestation of Komornicka’s diverse sexuality had set her/him outside the spheres of language, culture, society. Indeed, her/his family banished

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on “Chimera”, see Bąbiak, *Metropolia i zaścianek*.

her/him to total isolation in a German lunatic asylum far away from home. Although (s)he repeatedly asked her/his mother to change her decision, Komornicka spent a total of seven years in various mental institutions.

(S)he was finally released when the asylum was evacuated at the outbreak of World War I. (S)he moved into her/his brother's mansion, but her/his isolation from the family and public life continued. Komornicka occupied the abandoned part of the house. In the words of Janion it was "the ultimate abandonment, rejection, seclusion, inability and reluctance to communicate (in fact on both sides), crankiness, silence with people and conversation only with ghosts" ("In memoriam" 316). Feminist scholars tend to stress that Komornicka chose this solitude because it guaranteed her/him independence. However, it was her/his family, who minimised contact with the writer: meals were brought to her/his solitary confinement; the mother avoided communication. Furthermore, Komornicka was financially dependent on her/his relatives.

In her/his brother's mansion (s)he turned into "the madwoman in the attic". The female protagonists listed by Gilbert and Gubar – including Bertha Mason, were found to be insane because of their unwillingness, or inability to adapt to social norms. They were punished with confinement in attic-like surroundings. The above symbolic of the attic as incarceration, rejection, marginalisation returns in *The Heathen*, where Aspasia – represented by her portrait – is rejected from consciousness and "established" in the attic.

Let us briefly discuss various interpretations of Komornicka's mysterious transformation into Piotr Odmieniec Włast. What was the character of the "sex change"? Was (s)he a transvestite, or a transsexual? The questions are extraordinarily complex. Her/his contemporaries, including the family, unambiguously believed that (s)he had lost her/his mind and was only fit for a lunatic asylum. They assumed that Komornicka was a homosexual.

The majority of modern-day scholars – usually connected with feminist critique – search for more complex and more rewarding interpretations. According to several scholars, Komornicka ceased to be a woman and became a man. Roman Zimand, advocates that (s)he changed her/his identity because (s)he was in conflict with the outside world and her/his femininity. Walczewska agrees that Komornicka did not want to be a woman. According to Walczewska and Zimand, (s)he agreed with Nietzsche, Weininger, Kretschmer, Möbius on the superiority of masculinity. Wiśniewska has a similar view on the subject: "Weary of the heterogeneity of the world, and of the magic – and vicious – circle that she cannot escape, Komornicka yearns for what is not: for what she sees as masculine, pure, entirely Spiritual; the will, the strength to impose a

hierarchy on opposites and contradictions” (123). Podraza-Kwiatkowska states that Komornicka, due to painful experience throughout her life, started to believe that it is better to be a man in the world ruled by men. She was “a victim of gender struggle” (“Młodopolska femina” 14). According to this scholar, in today’s world Komornicka would have had a sex-changing operation.

Boniecki disagrees: sexual aspects of the transformation were negligible. Janion advocates that the choice of masculine grammatical forms indicated humanity, not masculinity. Komornicka was not a hermaphrodite, or a homosexual. “Maria Komornicka” was “a cocoon containing the authentic <internal human being> who finally became also <external> and stepped out openly saying Who he Is” (“Lemańska” 197). Piotr Włast was a-sexual and “<the operation> of sex change took place primarily in the sphere of language, where language can also be understood, as the <symbolic of clothes>” (“Lemańska” 228). “This transsexualism has a cultural dimension. Transfiguration into a masculine body is, most importantly, a transfiguration into a masculine culture” (“In Memoriam” 250). In this context, Komornicka attempted to escape the misogyny of her/his times, and gain freedom through creative rebirth. Filipiak makes an interesting point that Komornicka tried to create an alternative discourse of alienation, between the two existing discourses – misogynist-modernist and early-feminist – which equally rejected her/him as an artist, and a woman:

In every one of her works [...] Maria Komornicka explored, researched and tested creations and provinces of diversity. These creations are indicated by the initially disguised characters: an egoist, a negative woman, a journeyman, a criminal, a converted Jew, a feminist, a *femme fatale*, an invert, a mother’s daughter, a writer suffering from “lack of experience”, a chimera, a libertine, a transsexual, a bard, a child, a madman (486).

We can conclude by stating that the nature of Komornicka’s transformation remains uncertain. Nonetheless, the consequences of the transformation were vast. Komornicka died in 1949 in a lunatic asylum, in which (s)he had lived since the beginning of World War II. Only three people attended the funeral: her/his sister Aniela and two nuns.

[Komornicka] was a nonconformist, possibly one of the most adamant in the history of culture of the last century. Her courageous journey into her existence is rather exceptional. For her nonconformism, for her rebellion against the accepted social conveyances, for her indomitability and independence, for her sacrifice to the gods of Internal Experience, she was punished with the most severe life and moral consequences: confinement in

a lunatic asylum, oblivion, condemnation, scornful superiority for the “miserable madwoman” (Janion, “Lemańska” 187).

Ritz believes that the transfiguration sufficiently explains Komornicka’s disappearance from public awareness:

[She] paid for invading the masculine domain with disappearance from the literary scene for a period of ninety years. If we take into account the fact that until 1907 she had been acknowledged as a young talent and author publishing in the prestigious “Chimera”, and moreover, if we take into account the current growing tendency to establish her high literary rank, the only explanation for this almost hundred-years-long absence in Polish literature is the act of sex change (Ritz, “Seks, *gender* i tekst” 276).

Recently Polish scholars have rediscovered Maria Komornicka. In 1965 Podraza-Kwiatkowska published the pioneering work “Tragiczna wolność. O Marii Komornickiej” (“Tragic Freedom. On Maria Komornicka”). It initiated the first wave of interest in the forgotten author, essays by historians of Polish literature: Maria Dernałowicz, Stanisław Pigoń, Janion and Zimand. After ten years of silence erupted the second wave, influenced by feminist criticism, psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Podraza-Kwiatkowska released a collection of Komornicka’s works entitled *Utwory poetyckie prozą i wierszem (Poetic Works in Prose and Verse)*. It was a crucial publication, as it enabled access to the writings, which previously remained almost inaccessible, due to the fact that the majority of them were published only in journals and magazines. Since 1980s Komornicka has become a subject of much academic research, criticism and literature. In 1998 Boniecki stated: “Maria Komornicka returns to the literary scene” (5).

In their creditable attempts to reinterpret Komornicka’s life and to re-establish her as a valuable author, many feminist critics fall into a trap of turning her/him into a representation. (S)he becomes a symbol of lack of understanding, loneliness, rejection. Instead of being stereotyped as “a madwoman in the attic”, a feminist, a homosexual, she is stereotyped as “the other”, and a victim of patriarchy. As a consequence, many of her/his works – uninteresting for these interpretations – are overlooked.

Turning towards Komornicka’s writing: after the appearance of *Forpoczty*, she printed a well-received collection of short stories, two plays and a travel journal. Afterwards, in 1900 Komornicka published a collection *Baśnie. Psalmodie (Fairytale. Psalmodies)* which included “On Father and his Daughter”. Her contemporaries held an unfavourable opinion of the work. It was instantly judged as an unfortunate mistake, an

abandonment of nonconformist ideals found in Komornicka's earlier writings. Also modern-day criticism generally does not value the work. Even according to Janion, the collection was a temporary breakdown of style: it has a "[t]awdry and ostentatious <feminine> aesthetic, and eroticism. [...]. The author abandoned her initial uncompromisingness in favour of simple beauties seen as attributes of the sophisticated, <lascivious>, and voluptuous femininity" ("Lemańska" 194).

There is a dominant tendency to read "On Father and his Daughter" against the author's biographical and social background. Such interpretations consider Komornicka's painful experiences with her father, her much older first lover and Lemański. They also point out her disappointment with old-fashioned social norms.<sup>10</sup> The text is usually interpreted as a manifestation and critique of patriarchal tyranny against women. Waław Wolski disapproves of the fact that Alla is being tyrannised by her father and not by her husband. In 1900 he wrote that the short story presents "a centuries-old masculine oppression, bondage of woman's body and soul, liberation supported by an enlightened woman (the spirit of the mother), and final happiness" (qtd. in Kralkowska-Gątkowska, "Cień twarzy" 90). In her interesting reading inspired by psychoanalysis, Kralkowska-Gątkowska focuses on the oppressive father-daughter relationship:

Fathers [from Komornicka's works] attempt to smoothly introduce their daughters to self-duplicating social structures entirely subordinating women to the power of men, to shift them between themselves in accordance with the legitimate institutions of marriage, or half-legal common-law marriage and prostitution. In this situation, a man is the only reality for a woman, relationship with him – her only future, maintaining this relationship – her only hope, delivering legitimate children – her only means ("Cień twarzy" 110).

Kralkowska-Gątkowska's interpretation of "On Father and his Daughter" using feminist and psychoanalytical context is an exception. Contemporary feminist critique focuses firstly on Komornicka's life and, after that, her other works. The fairytale rarely lies within the scope of its interests. Even Janion's groundbreaking essays on Komornicka and Filipiak's monumental dissertation only briefly mention the text. They merely indicate the autobiographical context of the work. Kralkowska-Gątkowska interprets "On Father and his Daughter" in relation to the transformation into Piotr Włast:

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<sup>10</sup> I have in mind her stay in Cambridge as well as the situation when she was taken for a prostitute and physically examined by the Warsaw police.

*The murder of a father* – Komornicka’s works are focused around this iconoclastic phantasm. The murder of a father – is the murder of God [...], the collapse of authority, the world in the state of chaos, disarray, despair. Loss of one’s own value. One conducts the battle with a father against the force of fascination. Finally, for one’s own mental good (paradox) one has to succumb. One appears in front of the father, God, authority, subject of desire, in a different form – as Son, obedient because of his power, invulnerable to wounds. Son, who survived tortures and ritual death, changed into a son from a daughter, *was reborn* and will continue his palingenetic attempts, until – like the mystics – he becomes God (“Cień twarzy” 128, footnote, original emphasis).

## PART II

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.

### Chapter V: The Role of Mothers

#### 1 Mothers and Daughters: Feminine Doubling

In the following chapter I examine the figure of the feminine doppelgänger and the positive nature of the doubling relationships between mother-figures and daughter-figures: Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason, the anonymous narrator and Rebecca, Benjamin and his mother, Benjamin and Aspasia, Alla and her mother, Carolina, Bertha and their mother, Florentine and Mrs Brońska. Doubling can be understood in three different senses: as a correspondence, as a polar opposition and as substitution.

The first major difference between Jane and the narrator of *Rebecca* is that throughout the novel the former searches for a substitute mother (Bessie, Miss Temple, Helen Burns, Mrs Fairfax, Diana and Mary, Mother Nature, and finally Bertha Mason), and that the mother-daughter relationship with Bertha enables Jane to accept the marital and sexual experiences of the first wife, and to reject the immoral offer of the sexually-threatening Rochester. In contrast, the narrator of *Rebecca* abandons her substitute mothers, Van Hopper and Rebecca, physically, and mentally in order to engage in a relationship with a man.

One of the pivotal arguments of the following interpretation of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is that searching for an autonomous subjectivity, Jane becomes Bertha Mason's double. The first wife is an alter ego, a forgotten mother, a representation of the repressed in the identity, unconsciousness and sexuality of the narrator. I have established a significant connection between these two women, by discovering that Jane is the only person who continuously hears Bertha's laughter, while the latter remains locked in the attic, and the only person, who meets her before the divulgation of truth. There is an additional important similarity between them: they are linked through Rochester and they are both motherless. Edward has never seen Bertha's mother and he initially believed her to be dead because Bertha's father, along with Rochester's father and his brother, plot the marriage.<sup>1</sup> He soon learned that she was a mad alcoholic locked up in a lunatic asylum.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As interestingly observed by Sandra Gilbert in "Jane Eyre and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", Rochester is treated as a trade good on the marriage market. His father arranges a wealthy marriage profitable for the whole family.

<sup>2</sup> As in the case of Bertha, incarceration and madness are equivalents of death.

Despite these similarities between the two women, the doubling of Jane Eyre and Bertha is predominantly based on the contradiction of characters. Rochester searches for a second wife who would be an absolute opposite to the first one. Bertha is about the same age as her husband – around forty years old, sexual, even lascivious. She comes from a rich family. She is imposing and gorgeous; Rochester describes her as “fine”, “tall, dark and majestic”, “splendidly dressed” (269). While the first wife is practically defined by beauty, for the plain, small and ugly Jane appearance is negligible. She is practically a child – very young, innocent, inexperienced and sexually uninitiated. Moreover, twenty years her senior, Rochester enforces infantilism, immaturity and sexlessness on her, by frequently calling her by names associated with childishness and innocence: an elf, a little girl. Additionally, in contrast with the well-to-do Bertha, Jane is poor and dependent.

Also Rebecca and the immature, innocent protagonist of du Maurier’s novel – we never learn her name – form a mother-daughter relationship. Although the narrator abandons her mother-figures, as the novel unfolds, she frequently imagines herself as Rebecca and identifies with the latter. In these situations her appearance changes immediately and she gains a “flash of knowledge in [her] eyes” (226). The west wing of Manderley, formerly inhabited by the first wife, is dark, quiet and calm, like a mother’s womb. Also the rhythm of the sea heard and felt in this part of the mansion may be associated with the mother’s fluids surrounding the embryo. Tania Modleski also interprets the bond between Rebecca and the narrator as a mother-daughter relationship. In her analysis of Alfred Hitchcock’s movie *Rebecca* based on du Maurier’s novel, she refers to the narrator’s clumsiness, constant confusion about her location in the house and her pointless, time-killing wandering around Manderley. Modleski contrasts it with Rebecca’s activity and Mrs Danvers’s ability to always appear in the right place and at the right time:

In psychoanalytic terms, the heroine might be said to be at the Imaginary stage of development – a time when the child’s motor control is not yet fully developed, and the mother’s, by contrast, seems superhuman in its perfection. Further, the mother’s appearances are terrifying because they are so unpredictable, a situation which, as Freud has documented, results in an intolerable feeling of helplessness on the part of the child (48).

Furthermore, the two wives symbolically merge for a moment during the costume ball, when the protagonist chooses the same costume as Rebecca did the previous year – they both dress as Miss Caroline de Winter. The narrator cannot recognise herself in the

mirror, because the costume changes her whole appearance. She embraces all of Rebecca's attributes: beauty, the pale face, a cloud of hair and a smile:

[I] was amazed at the transformation. I looked quite attractive, quite different altogether. Not me at all. Someone much more interesting, more vivid and alive. [...] I felt different already, no longer hampered by my appearance. My own dull personality was submerged at last. [...] I did not recognise the face that stared at me in the glass. The eyes were larger surely, the mouth narrower, the skin white and clear? The curls stood away from the head in a little cloud. I watched this self that was not me at all and then smiled; a new, slow smile (230 and 237-238).

The narrator truly enjoys dressing for Rebecca. Naturally, she does it unconsciously.

After the discovery of her body, the first wife symbolically returns to life and establishes a spiritual, unilateral connection with the narrator. She transfers her emotions and feelings associated with death onto the protagonist. From then on the nameless narrator begins not only to identify, but also to transform into the first wife. Her physical appearance changes permanently and she begins to resemble the first Mrs de Winter. She becomes pale and thin – which firstly, makes her look like Rebecca, secondly, like Rebecca when she became sick. The pallor and thinness are associated with cancer, and vampirism. “You’ve got thinner. Lost your colour” (163) – says Maxim and later reminds himself that soon before her death Rebecca “was looking paler than usual, [...] very pale, very thin” (310-312). The narrator looks at her reflection in the mirror in Rebecca's bedroom: “How white and thin my face looked in the glass, my hair hanging lank and straight. Did I always look like this? Surely I had more colour as a rule? The reflection stared back at me, sallow and plain” (187). The protagonist is often associated with death. She feels “deadly sick” (195) straight after visiting Rebecca's bedroom. “Why don't you sit down? You look like death.” (254) - says Beatrice during the ball. The narrator almost commits suicide when Mrs Danvers tells her about Rebecca's death. Finally, she feels breathless in the courtroom, during the discussion about the probable reasons for the first wife's death. The description of her condition resembles the process of drowning. She feels that there is not enough air in the room and begins to suffocate. The wave of heat, similarly to water, rises and gradually covers all of her body, up to her face:

It was hot, much too hot. Why didn't they open the window? We should be suffocated if we sat here with the air like this, and there were so many people, all breathing the same air, so many people. [...] I must try and get out of the door. I must try and go back to the waiting-room again. There was no air left in this place. [...] I could not see anything. It was hot, so very

hot. [...] The heat was coming up at me from the floor, rising in slow waves. It reached my hands, wet and slippery, it touched my neck, my chin, my face (347).

Hence, the narrator gradually identifies with Rebecca, they merge into one during the costume ball and, eventually Maxim's two wives switch places. The protagonist becomes the sick deathly woman, while Rebecca remains vivid and active. Mrs Danvers continuously attempts to resurrect her beloved mistress. She says to the narrator: "She's the real Mrs de Winter, not you. It's you that's the shadow and the ghost. It's you that's forgotten and not wanted and pushed aside" (275). Modleski analyses the theme as follows:

Mrs Danvers is really willing her to substitute her body for the body of Rebecca. [...] Thus, throughout the film the heroine's body becomes the site of a bizarre fort/da game which reaches its climax when, at Mrs Danvers's suggestion, she unknowingly dresses up exactly like Rebecca for the costume ball. [...] [T]he woman substitutes her body for her mother's. [...] [T]he woman does nothing but re-present another woman, the mother (48-49).

In the closing dream the narrator practically becomes Rebecca. She uses the first wife's handwriting and sees her reflection in the mirror. When she wakes up, she pushes her hair away from her face:

I was writing letters in the morning-room. I was sending out invitations. I wrote them all myself with a thick black pen. But when I looked down to see what I had written it was not my small square handwriting at all, it was long, and slanting, with curious pointed strokes. I pushed the cards away from the blotter and hid them. I got up and went to the looking-glass. A face stared back at me that was not my own. It was pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair. The eyes narrowed and smiled. The lips parted. The face in the glass stared back at me and laughed. And I saw then that she was sitting on a chair before the dressing-table in her bedroom, and Maxim was brushing her hair (426).

Maxim's two wives are constantly confronted with each other. Mrs Danvers and the narrator – the two women obsessed with Rebecca, regularly openly compare them. The second wife is "so very different from Rebecca" (Du Maurier 118). The essential dissimilarity, as in the case of Jane Eyre and Bertha, lies in their age, experience, their looks and their attitude towards them, and the association with sexuality. The narrator is

“an absolute child” (107), twenty-one years old – exactly half her husband’s age. She is consequently portrayed as a silly little girl, in contrast to the feminine, mature first wife. Rebecca’s beauty, charm, vitality and self-confidence are opposed by the narrator’s childishness and timidity. She describes herself as “[a]nxious, [...] tortured by doubt and indecision, [...] hopeful, eager, frightened, tearing at bitten nails, uncertain which way to go, what star to follow” (111). “I’m gauche and awkward” she says,

I dress badly, I’m shy with people.

[I]t seemed to me that even the most elementary knowledge of behaviour was unknown to me now, I should not know my right hand from the left, whether to stand or sit, what spoons and forks to use at dinner.

I realize, every day, that things I lack, confidence, grace, beauty, intelligence, wit – Oh, all the qualities that mean most in a woman – she possessed (165, 69-90 and 148).

Also the clumsiness of her appearance – clothes, makeup and haircut are contrasted with the first wife’s physicality. The narrator has “straight, bobbed hair and youthful, unpowdered face”, she is “dressed in an ill-fitting coat and a skirt and a jumper of [her]own creation”, [...] “shabby hat, too broad about the brim, and [...] low-heeled shoes, fastened with a single strap, [...] [a] pair of gauntlet gloves clutched in a grubby hand”, “a shapeless mackintosh, far too big for [her] and dragging to [her] ankles” (10, 30, 74 and 68).

Correspondingly to *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, in Narcyza Źmichowska’s *The Heathen* the doubling relationship bonds two, contrasted feminine characters: the mother and the lover Aspasia. Complication of the nature of this doubling relationship is due to shifts of genders and subjectivities, as the protagonist Benjamin is androgynous, and he oscillates culturally between femininity and masculinity.

The androgyny of the protagonist requires an elaboration: in *The Heathen* two voices contribute to the story, however, there is only one narrator. Gabryella is the first-person, female narrator of the frame story. She begins her tale with reminiscence of the “good, old times” spent by the fireplace, in discussions with a group of her friends. She recalls the evening when Benjamin, who is the most recent member of the meetings, presented his life-story. Gabryella repeats his words to the reader. In psychoanalytic terms, Gabryella is forced to take on the position of a masculine subject, in order to express her thoughts, experiences and desires. She creates an *alter ego* impersonated by a male sub-narrator, Benjamin. That he substitutes for Gabryella becomes most evident in the fact that they express themselves alternatively, never simultaneously. Moreover, throughout the frame story, the female narrator persistently encourages Benjamin to

speak. Subsequently, he becomes the narrator of the core story, nearly monopolises the conversation, while Gabryella withdraws from it completely. She does not contribute to the discussion; does not state her beliefs or experiences. “As Gabryella” she remains almost mute, but she has the possibility to articulate her desires and sexual experiences “via Benjamin”. She disguises herself as a man in order to additionally conceal the homoerotic context of her relationship with Aspasia.

To support my interpretation of Benjamin as a disguised feminine subject, I would like to point out his ambivalent status. He significantly distinguishes himself from the group of friends sitting around the fireplace. As Grażyna Borkowska puts it, “<Wstępny obrazek> (1861) attached to *Poganka* [or *The Heathen*] is the fantastic tale of Benjamin, a figure of unclear referential status; unclear, in that his status is different from that of the rest of Żmichowska’s heroes and heroines” (“Alienated Women” 101-102). I would add that he is portrayed as the Other, remaining outside the social boundaries represented by the group of friends. He is the last member who joined the circle – silent, aloof, unreachable and mysterious. The difference between male and female characters is indicated by pseudonyms. Women are called only by their names; men are awarded individual *noms de guerre*. Only Benjamin and his two pseudonyms break this rule. Their presence associates him with masculinity, but their number distinguishes him from the other men in the circle. Additionally, these pseudonyms originate from sources other than Albert-the Philosopher, Henryk-the Hotspur, Leon-the Methodist, Edmund-the Mystic, Teofil-the Kid, which describe intellectual or psychological features, and indicate political or/and military involvement, as *noms de guerre* appointed (to men) during a war. On the contrary, Benjamin’s pseudonyms relate to his physical appearance (the Bald) and his pleasurable distant journeys (Humboldt).<sup>3</sup> Differently from the military *noms de guerre* of the other men, they distance him from masculinity. Furthermore, Benjamin’s former physical beauty, mentioned throughout the novel many times, associates him with femininity. His gender is ambiguous and volatile. He is androgynous – he has both feminine and masculine features. Therefore, in order to denote the ambivalence of Benjamin’s gender, I will refer to the protagonist as “(s)he”. Following the psychoanalytic concept of bisexuality, Benjamin’s feminine attributes are predominant and (s)he can be read, as a daughter-figure.<sup>4</sup>

As a feminine protagonist, Benjamin is a counterpart of Jane Eyre and the nameless narrator of *Rebecca*. However, throughout the novel (s)he hesitates between

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<sup>3</sup> The pseudonym “Humboldt” could be a reference to German explorer, Alexander von Humboldt very popular in nineteenth-century Poland.

<sup>4</sup> See Freud’s “Three Essays”.

her/his two love-objects, the mother and Aspasia, and in this regard, (s)he is a masculine protagonist linked with Edward Rochester and Maxim de Winter.

Turning towards the nature of the doubling relationship in *The Heathen*: the mother and the lover represent two opposite aspects of femininity focused around maternity, protectiveness and virginity (biological mother), and independence, activeness and sexuality (Aspasia), and in this regard they can be integrated into a complete mother-figure. Benjamin's mother embodies her/his first wife and her/his first partner, as every mother does for her son. However, differently to Bertha Mason and Rebecca she is protective and selfless, and in this regard, she is the counterpart of the *second* wives – Jane Eyre and the nameless narrator – who provide assistance for their crippled, (partially) blinded and symbolically castrated partners. With respect to the fact that the mother embodies the conventional model of femininity, a nurturing mother and an industrious wife, associated with the domestic sphere (and the kitchen), silent in the presence of her husband, she is connected with the second Mrs de Winter. On the other hand, apropos of the fact that the mother is the most powerful person in the house, she resembles Jane who ultimately wins the gaze contest with Rochester and becomes his “eyes and hands”.<sup>5</sup> The influence and prestige of the biological mother, and the fact that she constitutes the centre of the house are suggested by the behaviour of her children, Cyprian and Benjamin who greet her before the father, and by the fact that she speaks at the Christmas table, breaks the holy wafer and gives it to the father. Moreover, the ritual of the Christmas Eve supper does not change after the death of the father.<sup>6</sup>

Aspasia constitutes the polar opposite of the biological mother. Her independence (intellectual and financial), education, knowledge, wealth and liberated sexuality all connect her with the first wives, Bertha Mason and Rebecca. She also embodies The Other, as she is a foreigner, a cosmopolitan, and a heathen. Her mysterious and magical castle surrounded by an almost impenetrable forest contrasts with Benjamin's plain, unpretentious, impoverished family home. Furthermore, in contrast to the protagonist's family involved in the national fight for independence, Aspasia devotes her time to the ostentatious, magnificent costume balls. The motif of masquerade links Aspasia with Rochester, who dresses as a gypsy in order to trick Jane into declaring her desires, and, predominantly connects the novel with *Rebecca*. In the latter text there is an annual tradition of a costume ball during which the nameless protagonist unintentionally dresses as Rebecca. Most importantly, the whole story is founded on a “masquerade” – Rebecca pretends to be a perfect wife and hostess of Manderley, the narrator attempts to

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<sup>5</sup> On the gaze contest, see the section “Blindness, Castration, Destruction”, p. 200 below.

<sup>6</sup> In the Polish tradition, Christmas Eve is the most important part of Christmas. On the rituals of Polish *Wigilia*, see Slivinska.

become the “disguised”, false Rebecca. In *The Heathen*, after following her on her/his horse, Benjamin meets Aspasia during a costume ball. (S)he is offered a costume of Alcibiades (Aspasia’s companion from Cyprian’s painting), but refuses and chooses a simple outfit resembling her/his own. As a result, “the heathen” calls her/him a mountain boy. Significantly, Aspasia’s life ends while she is dressing for a ball.

The doubling relationship of the mother and Aspasia, and the fact that they can be integrated into a complete protective/sexual mother-figure becomes most clear in their alternate presence and in the non-simultaneous nature of Benjamin’s emotional attachment to them. For instance, the protagonist is forced to discontinue her/his relationship with the whole family, when (s)he joins her/his lover in the castle. Aspasia demands exclusiveness and the narrator accepts this state of affairs:

“Father, mother, family were given you by chance, but me - you chose, took me for yourself from the whole wide world and so your whole world is only with me.” [- says Aspasia]. So I did not return... From then on I ceased to love my parents, my sisters, my brothers – anything, everything that I had loved before. I loved only Aspasia (102).<sup>7</sup>

Further into the novel, dissolution with “the heathen” allows an immediate reunion with the mother. After leaving the castle, the protagonist does not return to her/his cabin, but instinctively heads towards her/his family home. (S)he enters the house and cries from the door: “Mother! My mother!” (107, my trans.).<sup>8</sup> The latter forthwith offers her/him her maternal love. Moreover, she reclaims her motherly privileges and responsibilities. She says to her son: “[N]ow, when you came back to me, I regained the impression that *I gave birth to you for the second time*, and that now, as in the past, you need my constant protection and care” (109, my trans., my emphasis).<sup>9</sup> The mother installs Benjamin’s bed in the exact same place where her/his cot used to stand. The narrator rests in front of the fireplace with her/his head on the mother’s lap. The mother regains control over her/his sexuality, as the bed and fire are its symptoms, and representations. However, along with her/his mother’s love, the protagonist repossesses her/his name – Benjamin – unused since (s)he left home, six years ago.

Benjamin does not remember about her/his lover whilst her/his mother is alive. After the death of the latter, the protagonist stays with her/his sister Ludwika, who resembles the mother, but (s)he simultaneously searches for a substitute love-object. (S)he examines her/his father’s books and papers, and, finally, climbs up to the *attic* with

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<sup>7</sup> Unless stated otherwise, English quotations of *The Heathen* are taken from the as yet unpublished translation by Ursula Phillips. The pages in the brackets refer to the Polish edition of the novel.

<sup>8</sup> “Matko! Matko moja!”

<sup>9</sup> “[T]eraz kiedy wróciłeś do mnie, mnie się znów zdaje, że ja ciebie drugi raz na świat wydałam, że tak, jako wtedy, nie obejdzie się znowu bez moich starań i bez ciągłej opieki mojej.”

a lit candle – an ambivalent symbol of knowledge, and sexuality present also in *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*. The sight of the painting awakens unchanged feelings and desires – once more Benjamin longs to be with Aspasia. Moreover, the canvas imposes a destiny on the narrator. For the second time, (s)he chooses “the heathen” over her/his family (represented by Ludwika and the home), and desires to unite with her. However, this time (s)he attempts to transform the nature of her/his twofold mother-figure. In order to merge the protective with the sexual, (s)he invites Aspasia to live with her/him in the modest, impoverished family home. Naturally *the femme fatale* rejects the offer.

In *The Heathen* the theme of doubling is threefold, as it is additionally associated with Aspasia’s complex nature. This character has multiple incarnations in the novel. Except for the woman living in the castle, there exists Aspasia painted by Cyprian – a masculine representation of an ideal woman. The third Aspasia is a vision created by Benjamin while listening to his brother. She significantly varies from Cyprian’s representation, and in this regard, she has to be distinguished from the other Aspasia. The painter describes his vision as flesh-and-blood, unconventional and sexual:

“What do I care for the ceremony of conventional marriage! What do I want with a virgin who coyly lowers her eyes as though she were nodding off? Innocently laces her lips and gives me nothing in life except the rights stipulated by the statute-book? Oh! How different is my beauty from that petty soul pasted together with the usual moral prescriptions” (qtd. in Phillips, “Femme Fatale” 28, footnote).

Benjamin adjusts this idealised image to her/his own needs and anticipations. (S)he transforms Cyprian’s Aspasia into an innocent, protective and tender embodiment of her/his own biological mother. Following the above interpretation, “Aspasia” represents an embodiment of an ideal woman adjusted to the person who dreams her, and there could be an unlimited number of “Aspasia”.

Upon finally viewing the painting, the narrator identifies the three Aspasia: the artistic representation painted on the canvas, her/his idealised fantasy and the “real” woman from the castle. Cyprian’s painting works like a mirror, as do the portrait of Dorian Gray and the oval portrait from Poe’s short story. It changes depending on the person looking at it. Therefore, Benjamin does not see Cyprian’s creation, but the product of her/his own imagination (produced before (s)he saw the canvas). In *The Heathen* the painting reflects the observer and her/his feelings, desires, fantasies and dreams. It is kept in the attic – a symbolically unconscious sphere. Lured by Cyprian, the protagonist identifies with the painted Alcibiades. The canvas continues to play a significant part in the novel. It reinforces Benjamin’s fantasy and encourages her/him to

project her/his expectations on the “real” Aspasia from the castle. (S)he describes the situation as follows:

I had two souls, two bodies, two happinesses. In the picture I trembled under her caress, drank in the bright radiance of her eye; I was made proud by her joy, great by her love. Yet outside of the picture I was filled with an unwavering certainty, a judicious calm – for this woman was after all a living woman, and though she was lifeless, though she was other, there descended upon my breast such faith in the possibility of her every good, so many dreams and hopes that I felt that I who loved so much could create love in her that I could enter even hell and save even a devil. The picture promised me everything and the picture lived up to its promise (91).

The sight of the painting evokes unrestrained longing (when the protagonist sees it for the first and the second time). As a consequence, (s)he returns to the castle, accepts Aspasia’s cruelty, aggression and selfishness, and spends six years with her.

The imaginary *Aspasia*s (from the painting and the fantasy) and the woman from the castle are linked by the logic of the *doppelgänger*. By accepting or rejecting one of them, Benjamin is forced to respectively accept or reject the other. Therefore, by finally destroying the painting, (s)he concomitantly murders the woman from the castle.

Moving on to the question of the nature of feminine doubling as it is manifested in “Green Shore”, we can observe in the short story a complex relationship between three women: two sisters, Carolina and Bertha, and their mother. As the pivotal occurrence in the novel is the escape of the mother and her later absence, the fundamental difference between the sisters lies in their contrary decisions: to reproduce the mother’s steps, and leave the family and home (Carolina), or to stay with the father (Bertha). These choices, as well as the initial similarities (blood ties, the family home) constitute the doubling relationship between the sisters. The echo of this contrast between the sisters can be found in Packalén’s identification of two groups of female characters at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century:

diligent, hard-working women – patrons of the domestic hearth, and their complete opposite: women who feel no desire to work and who, in literary narratives, most frequently play the role of fully or partially conscious “temptresses” leading respectable men astray. Because – and likewise by force of tradition – those “hard-working and God-fearing” women of the former group are rarely endowed with beauty, something that is not begrudged to the flirtatious “temptresses” who seduce men thanks primarily to their external attributes (56).

Furthermore, the alternative decisions made by Carolina and Bertha correspond with two options available to the mother. To put it differently, the mother chooses to escape to green shore and engage in a relationship with another man, but instead she could have remained with her despotic husband. In this regard, the mother has two doppelgangers: Carolina, who imitates her choice and Bertha, who chooses the alternative and becomes her opposite. The twofold fate of the mother and her daughters is symbolised by the room associated with the mother, where the immense mirror broken in half reflects her portrait hanging on the opposite wall. We could imagine that the looking glass shows the face of the mother divided into two halves.

The doubling relationship bonding Carolina with her mother is constituted by physical similarity. As her mother, the protagonist is extraordinary beautiful. “[Carolina] is going to be as beautiful, as you are, when she grows up.” (48)<sup>10</sup> – states the handsome companion to the mother. The narrator also compares herself with her mother and emphasises her attractiveness: “I *inherited* my body after our beautiful mother” (53, my emphasis).<sup>11</sup> She establishes a connection between herself and the latter, based on beauty, youth, wealth and sexuality. Furthermore, the protagonist implies that she “inherited” her physical aspects; she received them from the mother. Does this resemblance influence or even oblige Carolina to replicate her mother’s decisions and to share her destiny? This question is extraordinarily complex and I will attempt to answer it below.

Certainly, the protagonist identifies with her mother. A psychoanalytical interpretation of the text indicates that Carolina emphasises her physical resemblance to the mother, or even invents it, because she desires to resemble her female parent. Moreover, the narrator unambiguously presents her mother as a victim, idealises her, models her behaviour on her, and believes that she has successfully escaped the tyranny of her husband. As believed by both, Bertha and Carolina, the situation between their parents is unequivocal: the mother is an innocent victim of the father – a brutal villain. According to the narrator, the father is despotic, deathly serious, rigid and cruel, while the mother is nothing but good, innocent and sweet. The latter is frequently compared to an angel. The melodeon and the figure of the Virgin Mary manifest her association with music and religion, which convey her contrast with the unattainable knowledge, and philosophy of the father.

As Carolina associates green shore with felicity, and dreams to reconcile herself there with her mother, when the time is right, she decides to repeat the actions of her

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<sup>10</sup> “Gdy dorośnie będzie równie piękna, jak ty.”

<sup>11</sup> “Ciało wzięłam w spadku po naszej pięknej matce.”

Similarly, Dorian Gray inherited his extraordinary beauty from his mother.

female parent, and escapes from the oppressive father to the longed-for, idealised green shore. In order to symbolically unite with the dead mother, she imitates the circumstances of her ruthless pursuit of happiness. She is a similar age to her mother (I would like to suggest that she actually had to reach this age). Like her predecessor, she leaves secretly – without even telling Bertha – with the assistance of a man. She receives help from the priest and his brother, while a servant aided her mother. The protagonist herself suggests the correspondence between her decision and the choice made by her mother:

I was twenty years old, *like my mother*, when I escaped our lonely house, our evil father into the world...

I ran away with the brother of the local priest who disliked our father and eased the complicated marital formalities.

We had seen each other only few times before – by coincidence. I was wealthy, almost as beautiful *as my mother*, I told him I longed for green shore, I asked him to take me there and I was the first to kiss him on the lips. So he fell in love with me.

He was young and lured by the romantic charm of adventure. We got secretly married – and left. Even Bertha didn't know a thing. Father didn't attempt to trace and follow us, even though it would have been very easy for him (54-55, my emphasis).<sup>12</sup>

The consequences of leaving home are vast. In order to come back, Carolina has to receive her father's written permission for return. When the protagonist contacts her father, she once more repeats her mother's gesture. I would like to suggest that the mother asks her husband for his acceptance of her return, in the mysterious, unopened letter. In this regard, Carolina incarnates a mother who comes back home from green shore.

The doubling relationship between Bertha and the mother is based on different aspects of the mother's appearance, character, and behaviour than in the case of Carolina. It is important to note that, although Bertha worships the mother and longs for green shore, just as much as her younger sister, she remains at home with her father.

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<sup>12</sup> "I miałam lat dwadzieścia, gdy, jak matka, w świat uciekłam z naszego samotnego domu, od naszego złego ojca.../ Uciekłam z bratem miejscowego księdza, który nie lubił ojca i dlatego ułatwił nam skomplikowane formalności ślubne./ Przedtem widzieliśmy się zaledwie parę razy – przypadkowo. Byłam bogata i prawie tak piękna, jak moja matka, powiedziałam mu, że tęsknię za zielonym wybrzeżem, prosiłam, by mię tam zaprowadził i pierwsza pocałowałam jego usta. Więc pokochał mię./ Był młody i lubił romantyczny czar awantury. Wzięliśmy w tajemnicy ślub – i pojechaliśmy. Berta nawet nie wiedziała nic. Ojciec nie starał się śledzić nas i gonić, chociaż przyszło by mu to z łatwością."

Instead, she substitutes for the absent mother. As her double, Bertha undertakes her obligations towards the household and the father/husband. Deprived of the mother and the sister who decided to follow the mother, alone with her despotic father, Bertha becomes the hostess of the house and a substitute wife. The father encourages his older daughter to perform domestic duties and emphasises her house-keeping skills. While Carolina indulges in love affairs, Bertha cultivates flowerbeds, embroiders sofa pillows and takes care of the handicapped grandmother. Finally, the older sister substitutes for the mother in the murder of the father.<sup>13</sup>

Before embarking on the analysis of “On Father and his Daughter”, it is essential to point out that there are significant correspondences between the text and “Green Shore”, which have not yet been explored. The connection between Alla and her mother is based on the same analogies that constitute the correspondence between Carolina and her mother, as well as Bertha and her mother. Furthermore, Alla’s palindromic name (Al – la) indicates doubleness and a split personality, and corresponds with the theme of two sisters. In this regard, Komornicka’s protagonist is a counterpart to both sisters. On the one hand, there are significant similarities between Alla and Carolina. First, the protagonist physically resembles her mother: “you are *similar* to me. I have *the same* eyes, lips, forehead...” (91, my emphasis)<sup>14</sup> – says Alla to her mother during their meeting. Additionally, they are both extremely attractive: the mother is “a beautiful lady”, “a woman of great beauty” (87 and 91)<sup>15</sup>; Alla has “a body of great beauty” (89-90).<sup>16</sup> Secondly, Alla, like Carolina, becomes enchanted by her mother (and her pleasant companions) and escapes to an unknown place – an equivalent of green shore. There, she is uncontrolled and unsupervised by her father and is able to engage in a relationship with another man. Thirdly, at the conclusion of the text, Alla returns into her father’s sphere of influence – similarly to Carolina who comes back home to her despotic father and immediately transforms into an obedient, silent daughter.

On the other hand, Alla resembles Bertha in the fact that she substitutes for her mother in the relationship with the father. After the death of his wife, the father shifts his feelings and emotions onto his daughter. He transforms the combination of love and mental torture, with which he addressed his wife, onto Alla. The latter reacts to his murderous affection in the same manner, as her mother: she does not love her

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<sup>13</sup> I will come to this point in the section “To Become a Feminine Subject”, pp. 178-179.

<sup>14</sup> “tyś do mnie podobna. Mam takie same oczy, usta, czoło...”

<sup>15</sup> “pani piękna”, “niewiasta wielkiej urody”

<sup>16</sup> “ciele cudownej piękności, [...] piękna”

tormentor, but she fears him. Finally, the protagonist dies, like her mother, out of fear of the father.

The physical analogy between the protagonist and her mother mentioned above implies a connection between the two women. However, the bond between Alla and her mother is intimate and metaphysical, and it reaches beyond the idea of doubling. During her meeting with Alla, the mother indicates that it predates the secondary relationship with the father. She introduces the theme of pregnancy and describes her relationship with the daughter in the following way: "Before you were born, I existed. And even when I am not here anymore, I am inside you, as you were inside me. Before your father saw you, my womb felt your presence" (92).<sup>17</sup> She suggests a somatic-metaphysical connection between a pregnant mother and an embryo, outside the sphere dominated by the father, moreover, in a sphere from where the father is excluded.

The mother (re)establishes a pre-Symbolic realm reminiscent of Julia Kristeva's Semiotic order developed in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, "From One Identity to the Other" and *Powers of Horror*. She transforms the enchantment established by the father – interdictions, control and constant observation, into an enchantment associated with maternity and femininity. In addition to a relation of doubling based on visual correspondence, the mother uses maternal and feminine symbols in order to reinforce the connection between herself and the daughter. She suggests that the sphere associated with the mother – everything outside the castle – is very different from the lonely, unapproachable, cruel, devilish father's land. Krystyna Kralkowska-Gątkowska unambiguously contrasts the realm of the father with the realm of the mother: "[there are] two dimensions: the first – subordinated to the masculine principle, chthonic, infernal, evil, the second – expressing the female principle: aerial, heavenly, good" ("Cień twarzy" 93). The mother appears in Alla's sleeping chamber in the company of joyful, laughing, singing and dancing magical creatures who claim to be brothers, and sisters of the protagonist. She transforms the dreary Imaginary world introduced by the father. She fills the dark and solitary bedroom with light, sweetness, music and a scent of flowers. The mother resembles a good fairy, or a prince; her entourage suggests that the land located on the peripheries of the infernal masculine centre is an Elysium.

The metaphysical bond between Alla and the mother, which allows the latter to approach the protagonist in her sleep, wake her up from the dream or spell caused by the father, and persuade her to follow her, resembles the connection between Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason. I have in mind the situation when the first wife contacts Jane via the wind, as Mother Nature and suggests that the protagonist can now return to Thornfield.

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<sup>17</sup> "Kiedy ciebie jeszcze na świecie nie było, ja byłam. A choć mnie już nie ma, jestem w tobie, jako ty byłeś we mnie. Nim ojciec twój cię ujrzał, czuło cię łono moje."

In the last text analysed in this section, “Miss Florentine”, doubling consists in the protagonist’s and Mrs Brońska’s continual alternation between the position of a mother and a daughter. Most of the time Florentine attempts to reverse the natural-biological order by behaving like an attentive and overprotective parent, and her mother accepts this state of affairs. In the course of the story, the protagonist undertakes the following actions towards Mrs Brońska: nurturance, dressing, putting to bed, silencing, forbidding her to spend time with certain people, and punishment by keeping her indoors. Additionally, she constantly emphasises Mrs Brońska’s immaturity and compares her to a child: she “was always like a child...” (122)<sup>18</sup>, “sleep, baby, sleep!” (123).<sup>19</sup> Florentine imagines the perfect free day in the following way: “We will be running the household together today! *I will prepare dinner, I will clean mother's cap nicely, I will iron it, I will freshly garnish it, I will comb mother's hair, [...] I will do many braids... I was speaking as to a child!*” (133-134, my emphasis).<sup>20</sup>

The mother reconfigures the order and becomes a parent when Miss Florentine is ill with a fever. She is immobilised in bed for three days, while Brońska attends to her. She offers her own, more comfortable bed, places a pillow under the protagonist’s head and covers her to keep her warm. At the conclusion of this scene, the daughter manifests her gratitude and respect for the mother, by kissing her hands. Later, Brońska takes the dominant, parental position in her indisputable decision to leave Florentine. The latter abandons her usual commandeering voice, and instead obediently places her head on the mother’s knees in a childish gesture. The mother hums a lullaby, makes a sign of a cross on Florentine’s forehead and silences her with the words previously repeated by the protagonist: “Hush, daughter, hush, people will hear...” (137).<sup>21</sup> Mrs Brońska’s decision to leave home in order to start an independent life is ambivalent in this regard that it is common for a growing daughter, and not for a parent.

The constant alternation of the “mother” and “daughter” is based on substitution. This becomes most clear, when Mrs Brońska instinctively begins to knit when Florentine loses her job as a seamstress. The nature of the relationship is remarkably

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<sup>18</sup> “to zawsze było jak dziecko...”

<sup>19</sup> “Spać, dziecko, spać!”

<sup>20</sup> “Razem tu sobie gospodarować dziś będziemy! Obiad zagotuję, czepczyk mamie ładnie wypiorę, wyprasuję, świeżutko ugarniruję, główkę mamie wyczeseję, [...] warkoczyki [...] pospłatam... Jak do dziecka tak to wszystko mówię!”

<sup>21</sup> “Cicho, córko, cicho, bo ludzie usłyszą...”

though coincidentally close to Luce Irigaray's description of the extraordinary connection of mother and daughter, and the alternating positions of the two women.

Miss Florentine and her mother perceive their relationship in quite contrary terms. The protagonist trusts in a metaphysical connection reminiscent of the bond between Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason, and Alla and her mother. Florentine's behaviour suggests that she believes that Mrs Brońska has the ability to read her mind. This is most evident when she compensates her negative thoughts about the mother with positive remarks. She confesses: "This heart will always be knitted with the mother!" (128)<sup>22</sup>, emphasises the mother-daughter tie and attempts to reinforce it. On the other hand, the relationship resembles a suffocating, uncreative *entrematernage* described by Irigaray in "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other". Magnone analyses this aspect of Irigaray's thought as follows:

In the light of Irigaray's theory, the mother-daughter relationships described by Konopnicka are not pathological, but rather typical. During her therapeutic practice Irigaray observed that women perceive the relationships with their mothers in terms of non-individual fusions characterised by sinister closeness resulting in the effacement of boundaries. Mothers and daughters function as collateral vessels, the daughter is the extension of the mother, she never fully separates from the latter, and she carries her inside – as the mother carries the daughter ("Lustra" 144).

Florentine assimilates the room inhabited by her and Mrs Brońska to a mother's womb, by increasing its isolation, enforcing silence and immobility, consequently forcing an atmosphere of emotional closeness, intimacy and eroticism. Subsequently, she locks herself with the mother inside the room. Unsatisfied with the intimacy of the first tenancy, she decides to rent a new room: silent, empty and peaceful, and separated from "the rabble". Additionally, the protagonist frequently lectures the latter in the following way: "sit quietly now, hush! [...] Hush, mother, hu-u-ush! For God's sake, be quiet! One can hear everything through the walls!..." (123).<sup>23</sup>

In order to recreate the emotional closeness of the mother-daughter relationship, such as she imagines it, Florentine reverses social roles imposed on daughterhood and motherhood. She infantilises and desexualises Mrs Brońska, and becomes (over)protective and authoritarian towards her. She conducts herself as a nurturing mother feeding her baby with "herself" – digested food and breast-milk – when she gives her mother food intended for her. Lena Magnone interestingly points out that "[i]t is

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<sup>22</sup> "To serce zawsze z matką jest zrośnięte!"

<sup>23</sup> "a teraz sobie siedzieć cicho, sza! [...] Cicho, mamó, ci-i-i-cho! Na miłość Boską, cicho! Przez ścianę wszystko słycać!..."

important for Florentine that her mother is aware of the fact that the supper she brings, has been taken away from her own mouth, kept from her own plate. Florentine desires to feed her mother with something of her own, with herself" ("Lustra" 142). When receiving dinner from her employers, she secretly wraps it in a napkin, brings it home and gives it to the mother. She emphasises the self-sufficiency of the mother-daughter relationship – she wants to be the only provider of food and she forbids Brońska to accept it from other sources.

On the other hand, Brońska does not perceive her relationship with the protagonist in terms of a spiritual bond. She is not interested in emotional closeness and exclusiveness, nor does she understand Miss Florentine's need for intimacy. When, before leaving for work, the protagonist returns three times to say farewell to the mother and to kiss her, the latter reacts with impatience: "Go now, go daughter!" (125).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Mrs Brońska resists Florentine's attempts to transform their relationship into an intimate, self-sufficient unity: she retains her individuality and maintains contact with the outside world.

Despite the implications of Florentine's behaviour, her relationship with the mother lacks empathy, affection and emotional closeness. In fact, these two women are indifferent towards each other, they cannot find a common language of communication. This situation is most clear in the protagonist's description of their day:

I wanted to [...] fully enjoy my mother's companionship today, to talk with her endlessly, to open my soul to her... She would have understood that I am right... that I want her happiness... that I love her so... But it went astray! Whenever I started speaking, either the mother did not understand me, or I did not understand her. As if [...] a forest had grown between us, as if a river had spilled, as if a mountain [...] had emerged between us, it was so difficult for mother to come to me, and for me to come to mother! It was so far, so painful, so foreign... I started speaking about this, about that, about something else and nothing! She listened as if she didn't listen, as if she didn't know what I was talking about, or she objected immediately. And my tongue tangled up, I didn't speak, I couldn't speak straight from my heart... I chose my words carefully (134).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Idź już, idź, córko!"

<sup>25</sup> "chciałam się [...] przez ten dzień tą matką nacieszyć, tak się z nią nagadać, tak jej duszę całą otworzyć... Przecież by widziała, że ja dobrze myślę... że ja dobrze chcę... że ją kocham tak... A nie, nie szło! Co o czym zacznę, to albo matka mnie nie rozumie, albo ja matki. To jakby, [...] między nami las wyrósł, jakby się rzeka rozlała, jakby góra [...] stanęła między nami, tak matce trudno było do mnie, a mnie do matki! Tak daleko jakoś, tak ciężko, tak cudzo... Zaczynam o tym o tamtym, o trzecim, nie! Słucha, jakby nie słuchała, jakby nie wiedziała, co mówię, albo się zaraz sprzeciwi. A i mnie język się czegoś płącze; nie mówię, nie mogę mówić tak prosto od serca... Już te słowa dobieram."

The above quotation includes a suggestion that the mother influences Florentine to withdraw from language. In fact the last words of the mother spoken to her daughter are: “Hush, daughter, hush, people will hear...” (137).<sup>26</sup>

## 2 Acquisition of Feminine Sexuality

The doubling relationship between the daughter-figures and the mother-figures established in the first section of this chapter focuses around the association with sexuality. The protective daughter-figures, Jane Eyre, the nameless narrator, and Florentine, as well as Benjamin’s mother are contrasted with their sexually liberated doubles: Bertha Mason, Rebecca, Mrs Brońska and Aspasia. In the case of “On Father and his Daughter” and “Green Shore”, similarly, the daughters have doubles in the form of their sexual mothers, however only Bertha embodies a protective daughter-figure (or second, substitute wife), while Alla and Carolina acquire sexuality on account of their mothers. Let us now interrogate the sexual nature of the mother-figures in the texts selected for inclusion in this thesis.

The appearance of Bertha Mason is monstrous and inhuman, but also associated with sexuality. Her long hair, and repeated, rhythmical movement backwards and forwards, as well as the “convulsive plunges” (259) have a sexual undertone. According to her husband, she is even “perverse, [...] gross, impure, depraved” (270). The fire burning in Bertha’s attic cell symbolises desire. Her room is extremely intimate:

In a room without a window, there burnt a fire [...]. In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. [...] [T]he lunatic sprang and grappled [Rochester’s] throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled (258-259).

Bertha’s sexuality is associated with her origin, and the fact that she is a foreigner in an alien country. Bertha is half Creole (after her mother); her wedding with Rochester took place in Jamaica.<sup>27</sup> Also Jane is presented as the Other. From the very beginning she is contrasted with other people, such as Eliza and Georgiana. She is disliked and rejected

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<sup>26</sup> “Cicho, córko, cicho, bo ludzie usłyszą...”

<sup>27</sup> In “Three Women’s Texts” Gayatri Spivak interprets Jane Eyre in the context of postcolonial feminism. This theme is developed in Jean Rhys’s novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* from 1966, acting as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*.

by her family, because of her otherness. Moreover, she is punished for it. In her essay “Feministyczna redefinicja męskiego spojrzenia” (“The Feminist Redefinition of the Male Gaze”), Izabela Patyk analyses the theme as follows:

As a child [Jane] is particularly sensitive to the metaphysical realm; she sees a ghost, she believes that her dead uncle Reed observes her from heaven; moreover, she imagines that the doll accompanying her in her loneliness will come to life and begin to exist by her side in all respects. [...] Jane is not allowed to speak to any of the members of the Reed family until she changes her way of speaking, and she is kept in solitude (24-25).<sup>28</sup>

Similarly to Bertha Mason, Rebecca is evidently sexually liberated – she engages in various love affairs, including the relationship with her cousin Jack Favell, and Other. Her active sexuality is connected with the dominant, vivid, monstrous rhododendrons planted by her in Manderley. The flowers are “blood-red”, “bewildering, even shocking”, “slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic” (72), “massed” (93), “in profusion [and] exaggeration” (94); they enter the drawing-room through the window and dominate its atmosphere. Also Rebecca’s bedroom remains “vivid and alive” (186), “as though in use”, “the bed [is] made up”, “there [are] flowers on the dressing-table and on the table beside the bed” (185), the nightdress smells of rhododendrons. The first wife is totally independent – emotionally, intellectually, physically, and her behaviour is unacceptable to those who are not in love with her. She says: “I shall live as I please [...] and the whole world won’t stop me” (275).

Rebecca seduces her sexual partners with her extraordinary beauty: “A man had only to look at her once and be mad about her. [...] She would take them bathing from the boat, she would have a picnic supper at her cottage in the cove. They made love to her of course; who would not?” (275) – says Mrs Danvers. According to the maid, Rebecca did not perceive romantic love as a serious matter. It was only a game for her:

“She was not in love with [Jack Favell], or Mr. de Winter. She was not in love with anyone. She despised all men. She was above all that.” [...] “She had a right to amuse herself, hadn’t she. Love-making was a game with her, only a game. She told me so. She did it because it made her laugh. It made her laugh, I tell you” (275 and 382).

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<sup>28</sup> Translation is mine. All other translations from Polish texts in this thesis are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

Rebecca linked sexual intercourse only with pleasure. For her it did not have a purpose, such as procreation. During the course of the novel it becomes known that she was infertile.<sup>29</sup>

Richard Kelly suggests that Rebecca and her maid were engaged in a lesbian relationship.<sup>30</sup> This could be easily inferred when we take into consideration Mrs Danvers's obsession with the first wife's clothes and belongings, the time-consuming habit of brushing her hair – a sexual symbol – and their conversations concerning Rebecca's sexual games and her relationships with men. Harbord makes a similar observation: "Above all, the most passionate evocations of Rebecca come from Mrs Danvers (Rebecca's pet name for her an androgynous <Danny>), who recounts conversations, routines, habits, sayings, gestures, every detail of her mistress's physical presence" (101).

As stated above, Aspasia's nature and behaviour are contrasted with the silent, obedient mother of nine.<sup>31</sup> Sexuality is her predominant feature. She rejects marriage and motherhood, and perceives (physical) love in similar terms to Rebecca: as a game. Aspasia flirts with Benjamin, alternatively lures and deceives her/him, initiates an adulterous relationship, betrays her/him with another man. The relationship between the protagonist and "the heathen" is unconventional. Firstly, they are sexually involved outside marriage. Secondly, the unconventionality of this bond is reinforced by the fact that the narrator is innocent and Aspasia is mature, more experienced and older (compared to the conventional relationship between Rochester and Jane, and Maxim and his second wife, where both men are twenty years older than their female partners). Benjamin's feminine features allow her/him to transgress cultural and social boundaries, and engage in such an unconventional relationship.

Benjamin's mother is not sexually active, intellectually independent, creative, liberated and associated with madness. On the contrary, she is "maternal": benign, silent, protective, forgiving and sacrificing. When the traumatised protagonist returns home, she forgets her/his crimes against family and country, and immediately continues to tend to her/him. Benjamin's mother is associated with the Virgin Mary and divinity. She is "angelic, giving [a] blessing" (43). The protagonist often portrays her in circumstances resembling a Pietà – the subject in Christian art showing the mourning Madonna with Jesus's dead body on her lap. After her/his return home, they together

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<sup>29</sup> Rebecca suspects she is pregnant, but she actually has a cancer. In *The Women Who Knew Too Much* Modleski refers to a popular myth according to which cancer is associated with nymphomania.

<sup>30</sup> See also Berenstein and Hallett.

<sup>31</sup> See the section "Mothers and Daughters: Feminine Doubling", pp. 103-108 above.

assume the pose of a loving child and a forgiving mother. Benjamin places her/his head on the mother's lap, and the latter kisses her/his forehead and cries. The mother also represents Patmore's obedient angel in the house.

Together, Benjamin's mother and Aspasia, two supplementary counterparts, embody the dominant cultural repertoire of femininity, two stereotypes presented in the little devils' songs during the costume ball: Virgin Mary and Eve. "[T]here are indeed two <mothers of culture>, from whom a diversity of feminine types is derived – the temptress Eve and the healing Virgin Mary", as Bronfen puts it,

[...] [D]erived from Eve, Woman can serve as allegory of evil, sin, deception, destruction and negation that finds one of its superlative embodiments in the dangerous sexuality of the witch. [...] While figures of Eve incarnate the woundedness of humanity, types of femininity emerging from the figure of the Virgin Mary, the Mater Dolorosa lamenting over the dead body of Christ, come to allegorise the nourishing and healing mother, the redemption from flesh, sin and guilt (66-67).

The sexually dominating, heathen Aspasia embodies Eve, the whore, the *femme fatale*, the seductive snake from Eden, and the vampiric and the sexual Lilith.<sup>32</sup> She seduces with unattainable beauty, mysteriousness and wealth, leading others to sin.

Correspondingly to Adam, tempted by Eve's offer, while living in the castle, in Aspasia's proximity, Benjamin becomes self-absorbed, indifferent to the misery of her/his family, murderous.

Aspasia resembles Bertha Mason and Rebecca in her otherness, subjectivity, and independence. She embodies a figure of the Other: a foreigner, a cosmopolitan, a hedonist focused on parties and pleasures, indifferent to "the national cause". She is "other" (Żmichowska, "Poganka" 91). As in the case of Bertha Mason and Rebecca, her Otherness is associated with sexuality. She is a single, financially and intellectually independent woman – not a wife, or a mother. As the Other, Aspasia is automatically labelled a depraved woman and a heathen.

The mother of "Green Shore" is predominantly sexual. This becomes most clear in her choice to leave her sexless husband for a lover from green shore. Thereby she substitutes a man associated with philosophy and theoretical knowledge (an antithesis to sexuality), for a "foreign, young, very elegant" (47)<sup>33</sup> and wealthy man. Her escape from the castle-like family home to green shore suggests that the mother replaces the

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<sup>32</sup> On the female vampire, see the section "Beauty, Madness and Vampirism", pp. 126-131 below.

<sup>33</sup> "obcy, młody, bardzo elegancki"

Symbolic with the Imaginary. Instead of a patriarchal home filled with books and philosophical discussions, she now has a dreamscape, a fairy-tale hallucination of a prince charming.

The sexuality of Alla's mother is not dark and pagan, and most importantly it is not unconventional. The mother from Komornicka's fairytale does not manage her sexuality. In the first part of the story, before the return of her mother, Alla remains triply imprisoned within the sphere associated with the father: in his castle, in the bedroom and in her sleep. The father controls the most intimate spheres of her life – he evokes and supervises her dreams, arouses and subdues her desires. Furthermore, he “never caresse[s]” (88)<sup>34</sup> the protagonist. In the light of my psychoanalytical interpretation, the circumstances of the triple imprisonment – in the castle, bedroom and sleep – indicate Alla's a-sexual status. The protagonist embodies a statuesque, numb and sexually inactive Sleeping Beauty:

Not awakened by the sight of people, knowledge or play, [Alla's] soul was dreaming a tormenting dream in the body of great beauty. [...] Alla slept with a heavy sleep, she did not have any visions and did not feel anything. She was beautiful and dead in her sleep, like a marble statue on a grave (89-90).<sup>35</sup>

The fact that Alla is “beautiful and dead” brings into focus Bronfen's theory emphasising the connection between femininity and death, beauty and immobility.

As the story unfolds, the dead mother returns to penetrate the castle and the enchanted sleep of the protagonist, despite the precautions undertaken by the omnipotent and omnipresent father. The mother awakens Alla's subdued sexuality by shaking off the deathly dream. The awakening is described in the following way: “Suddenly she moved on the bed. Someone stooped over her, brushed the face with her face and called: Alla! Alla! [...] A glowing light suddenly hit her eyelids. Her eyelashes juddered; her heart contracted with an unknown tremble” (90).<sup>36</sup> The father cannot prevent the mother from contacting the protagonist, but he postpones their meeting. The mother has failed to awaken Alla in the past. She explains the situation as follows: “[The father] often isn't here at night, and then we [mother and her magical

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<sup>34</sup> “nie pieścił jej nigdy”

<sup>35</sup> “Dusza jej, nie rozbudzona ani widokiem ludzi, ani nauką i zabawą – spała dręczącym snem w ciele cudownej piękności. [...] Alla spała snem ciężkim, bez widzień, bez czucia. Spała piękna i martwa, jak marmurowe posągi nagrobków.”

It's a cliché in romantic literature to compare women to statues.

<sup>36</sup> “Nagle poruszyła się na łóżu. Ktoś pochylił się nad nią, twarz zetknął z jej twarzą i zawołał: Allo! Allo! [...] Zamknięte powieki uderzyło nagle jarzące światło. Zadrgały jej rzęsy, dreszcz jakiś nieznanym ścisnął jej serce.”

companions] come and wait until you wake up. And we call you every time. But only today you opened your eyes at the calling” (91).<sup>37</sup> In the light of my reading, Alla cannot hear her mother’s voice calling her to embrace her sexuality and leading her to marriage, until she reaches appropriate maturity.

At the core of my interpretation of “Miss Florentine” is the idea that relationships with simple and impoverished people, often referred to as “the rabble”, have a sexual undertone. For the mother they substitute for sexual intercourse. She urgently seeks contact with others: “I have to be with people! I have to chat, I have to have acquaintances...” (126).<sup>38</sup> Florentine perceives these relationships as shameful. Her attitude also suggests that contact with “the rabble” is of a sexual nature. When one of the church beggars attempts to visit the mother, the protagonist locks the door and says: “No, mother! [...] I will not move from this threshold! I will not let shame pass through! And I will not let my mother through” (130).<sup>39</sup> After this major argument with the mother, she associates the dispute with shame, fire (another sexual symbol) and death: “At home, after this great shame, I felt [...] as if there was a fire, a thief, death” (131).<sup>40</sup> While Mrs Brońska persistently engages in conversations with church beggars and neighbours (the protagonist frequently finds her in the middle of a discussion, for example with the washerwoman), Florentine attempts to enforce silence. She orders the mother to be quiet and searches for a new, quiet tenancy.

The mother’s sexuality and relationships with other people are connected with the central, complex theme of the novella: food and nutrition. The mother associates social contacts with acquiring food: “Yesterday there was a baptism at the shopkeeper’s... Everyone from the tenement went, there was goose, there was beer, there was pie, they ate their fill and even took some home, and what about us?” (134).<sup>41</sup> However, the protagonist rejects these relationships with other people and organises her entire life in the attempt to acquire exclusivity, as the only provider of food for the mother. She associates “not bought” or “earned” food with the feeling of shame. When Mrs Brońska assumes that Florentine asked her employer for food, the latter states: “[The mother]

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<sup>37</sup> “Jego często tu nocami nie ma, a wtedy my przychodzimy i czekamy aż się obudzisz. I co dzień wołamy. Lecz dopiero dzisiaj otwarłaś oczy na wołanie.”

<sup>38</sup> “Ja z ludźmi muszę żyć! Muszę pogadać, muszę znajomości mieć...”

<sup>39</sup> “Nie, mamo! [...] Nie odejdę od tego proga! Wstydomi przez ten próg przejść nie dam! I mamy tam nie puszczać!”

<sup>40</sup> “Tam w domu, po tym strasznym wstydzie, tak mi było, [...] jak po ogniu, jako po złodzieju, jak po śmierci czyjej.”

<sup>41</sup> “Toteż to bieda, że ty z ludźmi nie umiesz żyć, że znajomości z sąsiadami nie chcesz mieć! Wczoraj były chrzciny u sklepikarki... Jaki taki z kamienicy poszedł, była gęsina, było piwo, był placek, pojedli i jeszcze do domu wzięli, a my co?”

thought that [the meat] was asked for, begged for, and so calmly ate it, along with my shame?...” (125).<sup>42</sup>

The metaphor of eating comes together with the theme of speaking. These actions are alternative and substitutive for each other. Magnone indicates that “[i]n their relationship [of Florentine and her mother] nourishment has the function of speaking. [...] There is a suggestion that Florentine nourishes her mother to close her lips, to prevent her from speaking” (“Lustra” 142 and 143). I would add: because speaking symbolises sexual contact. The speech of “a daughter” from Irigaray’s “And the One doesn’t Stir without the Other” springs to mind.

### **Beauty, Madness and Vampirism**

In all the texts chosen for analysis, feminine sexuality is connected with attractiveness that, in turn, symbolises feminine sexuality. Lacanian psychoanalyst Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni investigates the association between beauty and sexuality in *Dividing of Women, or, Woman’s Lot*. She suggests that beauty simultaneously arouses sexual desire and forbids it, because it is intangible, impalpable.

The breath-taking beauty of Bertha Mason and Rebecca marks their sexual liberation, and dominance. Rochester describes his first wife in the following words: “I found her a fine woman, [...] tall, dark and majestic, [...] splendidly dressed. [...] All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, *stimulated*: my senses were *excited*” (269, my emphasis). In *Rebecca* the theme of beauty is developed and the extraordinary attractiveness of the first wife becomes her essential feature. Hyperbolic remarks about Rebecca’s attractiveness dominate most of her descriptions: “She had beauty that endured, and a smile that was not forgotten” (47); “I suppose she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life” (151) – states Frank Crawley. Beauty defines her womanliness. She is constructed as a “social butterfly” (110), a charming hostess amusing her guests during the ball. “She had an amazing gift, Rebecca I mean, of being attractive to people; men, women, children, dogs” (210) – says Beatrice, Maxim’s sister.

Kyle Dawson Edwards analyses the influence of Hitchcock’s film on the novel by interrogating the marketing strategies undertaken by the film’s producer, Saleznick International Pictures (SIP). The creation of “Rebecca Luxury Wardrobe” and “Rebecca Makeup Kit” focused on the physicality of the first wife:

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<sup>42</sup> “To myślała, że wyproszony, wyżebrany, i tak go spokojnie z tym wstydem moim razem zjadła?...”

While the “Wardrobe” was noteworthy for its breadth (formal evening gowns, handkerchiefs, hats, umbrellas, raincoats, negligees and nightgowns, and costume jewelry), [...] it is more intriguing for its ostensible attachment to what one might call the Rebecca legend. These were products that the fictional title character [...] might have worn. [...] [T]he “Rebecca Luxury Wardrobe” and Rebecca look-alike contests seized upon the ambiguity of the character’s identity and allowed anyone to be as glamorous, mysterious, and beautiful as the original Mrs. De Winter (37-38).

The protagonist of *The Heathen* frequently describes the physical attractiveness of her/his lover: the colour of her skin, the appearance of her eyes, lips and hair. The extraordinary attractiveness of Aspasia is emphasised many times in the novel. She is even dubbed “the beautiful woman” (95, my trans.).<sup>43</sup> Beauty has a visible sexual undertone and is used in a seductive manner.

Also in “On Father and his Daughter” the mother is “a woman of great beauty” (91).<sup>44</sup>

The pivotal attribute of the mother of “Green Shore” is physical attractiveness strongly connected with desire and sexuality. Her beauty, youth and apparel are frequently stressed by the protagonist. She describes her female parent during the secret meeting as follows: “She did not resemble the person from the memory, or the one from the portrait. First of all, she was much younger than both of them. Then, eternally more gorgeous... A tall, slim blonde in a silk, fair traveller’s coat and a little hat. She looked almost like a girl” (47).<sup>45</sup> The mother consequently emphasises her beauty and youth, and guards it against external factors. She highly values her attractiveness. Afraid that breast-feeding may endanger her beauty, she ruthlessly decides to buy breast milk from Margaret and thereby condemns Margaret’s baby to death. She resembles Cinderella, running away from her tyrannical family to a handsome, wealthy prince. During the secret meeting in the village, her masculine companion hurries her and forces her to jump into the already moving carriage. Does she have to hurry before the spell breaks?

On the other hand, the unattractiveness of Jane and the second Mrs de Winter, as well as their indifference to their looks (clothes, makeup, hair) mark their sexual inexperience and innocence. Jane’s social position – youth and status as an orphan, her

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<sup>43</sup> “piękną kobietą”

<sup>44</sup> “niewiasta wielkiej urody”

<sup>45</sup> “Niepodobna ani do tamtej ze wspomnienia, ani do tej z portretu. Przede wszystkim od obu znacznie młodsza. Następnie nieskończenie piękniejsza... Wysoka, smukła blondynka w jasnym jedwabnym płaszczu podróżnym i małym kapelusiku wyglądała prawie na dziewczynę.”

looks – lack of beauty, and clothing – plain simple dress, are all signs of a puritanical, subdued and marginalised character. Additionally, the protagonist is desexualised and disembodied throughout the novel by Rochester who calls her names associated with purity: an elf, a little girl.<sup>46</sup> She initially refuses the role of a sexual being, and her relationship with Rochester is not based on physical attraction (like his relationships with other women). On the contrary, she undertakes the task of a nurturing mother. She looks after him from the very moment of their first meeting until the end, when he becomes disabled. They meet in portentous circumstances. Jane coincidentally finds herself close to the place where Rochester falls from the horse. From that time she protects him conspicuously, saves his life and helps to hide Bertha. When Jane leaves him, Rochester becomes literally and symbolically unprotected. Almost immediately he suffers a death-threatening injury. The narrator returns to Thornfield in order to become his “eyes and hands”, and to devote the rest of her life to helping him. Her complex position of the governess symbolises repressed sexuality. Mary Poovey analyses it in Victorian England and its literature:

Two of the figures to which the governess was repeatedly linked begin to suggest why her sexlessness seemed so important – and so unreliable – to her contemporaries. These figures are the lunatic and the fallen woman. [...] The casual connection between the governess and the lunatic [is elaborated] by metaphorically tying both to a vitality stunted, silenced, driven mad by denial and restraint. This vitality may not be explicitly represented as sexuality here but its sexual content is present in the images to which this last phase alludes (129-130).

Also in *Rebecca*, the infantilism of the narrator, her lack of social experience, and her child-like appearance and behaviour imply her sexual innocence. The fact that Maxim is her first love suggests that she is sexually inexperienced and uninitiated. She says to her husband: “There has never been anyone but you” (163) and “[Y]ou know everything there is to know about me. There’s not much, I admit, because I have not been alive for very long, and nothing much has happened to me, except people dying” (41).

Although the protagonist secretly desires to resemble Rebecca, the emotional and mental distance between the two wives grows continually, predominantly on Maxim’s account. Similarly to Edward Rochester, he also struggles to prevent his second wife from growing up. He constantly infantilises her, treats her “as a child, rather spoilt,

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<sup>46</sup> His attitude changes after the marriage proposal and he begins to attempt to transform Jane into Bertha, see the section “Fear of Feminine Sexuality”, pp. 184-185 below.

rather irresponsible, someone [...] patted on the shoulder and told to run away and play” (220). He orders her not to bite her nails, or to finish her meal: “[E]at up your peaches. [...] Get on with your peach and don’t talk with your mouth full” (227). He addresses her as his “sweet child” (225). Maxim suggests that the narrator should dress for the costume ball as Alice in Wonderland and, in fact, she already resembles this fictional character. Also the suggestions made by Maxim’s friends have an infantile, pure and virginal character: little Dresden shepherdess and Joan of Arc. Similarly to “Green Shore”, the novel demonstrates a correspondence with the fairy tale “Cinderella”:

[A] young girl, cast adrift in life, of at best modest background and stuck in a demeaning job, meets and marries a rich Englishman who is lord of a castle; there is a wicked stepmother (Mrs Van Hopper) and a wicked stepsister (Mrs Danvers); there is a costume ball with an unhappy denouement (Yanal 68-69).

Maxim ignores the physical appearance of the protagonist – her clothes, haircut and makeup. His actions reveal a desire to be involved in a relationship with an immature child. “It’s a pity you have to grow up” (59) – he confesses openly. He perceives his wife’s maturation, as a personal threat and wishes to remain in an a-sexual relationship. When the narrator imagines Rebecca and identifies with her, he comments:

You looked older suddenly, deceitful. It was rather unpleasant. [...] I don’t want you to look like you did just now. You had a twist to your mouth and a flash of knowledge in your eyes. Not the right sort of knowledge. [...] There is a certain type of knowledge I prefer you not to have. It’s better kept under lock and key (226).

Robin Wood also believes that “Maxim de Winter marries the (unnamed) heroine because he sees her as a helpless child [...] whom he can mold and dominate” (266).

Florentine also recognises the powerful connection between sexuality and looks, however, she disregards her appearance, and associates it with widowhood and death. Contrary to the mother from “Green Shore” who emphasises her attractiveness, youth and desirability, Florentine constantly de-eroticises her body. Her clothes are black, worn and simple. The narrator begins the story with the following description of the protagonist: “She was standing in front of me, straight, skin and bones, slightly stiff, in a black, woollen, very neat, seedy and often-mended dress, in a black self-made coat, in a tattered hat and worn-out gloves” (115).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Stała przede mną prosta, chuda, trochę sztywna, w czarnej, wełnianej, bardzo czystej, wytartej i gęsto wycerowanej sukni, w czarnej okrywce, którą widocznie sama sobie uszyła, w wyrudziałym kapeluszu i w nicianych rękawiczkach.”

Female sexuality connected with extraordinary beauty and Otherness is associated with the figures of the madwoman and of the female vampire.

Bertha Mason suffers severe punishment for her licentious appetite. She is excluded from society and the official sphere of the house. In truth, she has been pronounced insane and locked away in the attic, because of her sexual desires and her attempts to fulfil them. After the secret about Bertha is revealed, Rochester does not clarify the nature of her madness. Instead, he postpones the explanation he owes to Jane. He finally discloses the basis of his hatred for Bertha after the interrupted wedding ceremony, the visit to the attic and the conversation with Jane. I would like to draw attention to the fact that “it is not because she is mad [he] hates her” (Brontë 265-266) – Rochester despises Bertha because of her demanding sexuality. He describes her as a “perverse and imbecile [...], intemperate and unchaste [...], gross, impure, depraved” (270). She had “giant propensities” (270). “Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard! [...] Bertha [...] copied her parent in both points” (257-258). “She is [t]he true daughter of an infamous mother” (270).

Bertha’s status as a creature lodged between life and death resembles that of a vampire. When she attacks Mason, she “suck[s] the blood” (187) out of him; later she “la[y] her teeth to [Rochester’s] cheek” (259). Jane describes her as half-human, half-animal:

[A] woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight, but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell. [...] [T]he visage and features [were] fearful and ghastly. [...] It was a discoloured face – it was a *savage* face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments! [...] This [*ghost*], was purple: the lips were swelled and dark, the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes.

[A] figure ran backwards and forwards. What *it* was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: *it* grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; *it* snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but *it* was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid *its* head and face (250 and 258-259, my emphasis).

One of the presuppositions underlying this thesis can be formulated in the following way: Bertha’s madness and her vampirish sexuality allow her to remain a speaking subject within the masculine dialectic. Furthermore, her subjectivity grows

stronger, when she is locked away in the attic, and separated from the order of the Symbolic and the official sphere. She reconstructs herself as a second wife from the margins of the Freudo-Lacanian dialectic. She communicates with Jane and has a great impact on her future life. The marriage is called off because Bertha reminiscences on her wedding day, upon trying on Jane's veil. Subsequently, her actions allow the narrator to marry Rochester. The first wife destroys the mansion, cripples and symbolically castrates Edward, and commits suicide. Her insanity in connection with sexuality enables Jane Eyre to become a narrator. However, when she returns as her double (Jane), Bertha represses her sexuality, textuality and subjectivity – the reasons for her incarceration, madness and death. She passes her knowledge of a mature woman and a mother-figure onto Jane. The protagonist escapes the model of sexuality forced on her by Rochester and becomes a speaking subject in the terms of Hélène Cixous. She expresses herself as an “invisible” spectator from the margins of Symbolic language.<sup>48</sup>

Rebecca's sexual identity is much more subtly associated with lunacy, than Bertha's. For Maxim de Winter her attributes are inhuman, monstrous, and revolting. He suggests a connection between depraved, immoral behaviour and insanity, and opposes them to love: “She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through. We never loved each other, never had one moment of happiness together. Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency. She was not even normal” (304). He calls her a devil and suggests that she was insane. From his point of view, her active, liberated sexuality is associated with evil and madness.

Additionally, the first Mrs de Winter strongly resembles a vampire: her physical appearance – “cloud of dark hair against the very white skin” (139), her connection with only three colours – white, black and red; associations with the bloody red rhododendrons and a voracious sexual appetite. Moreover, Rebecca refuses to die completely. Even after her death she has a strong influence on the inhabitants of Manderley. Horner and Zlosnik argue for a triple symbolic killing of Rebecca's body. Like a vampire, she has to be killed more than once. Firstly, her body is infected by cancer, secondly, shot in the heart by Maxim, thirdly, drowned in the sea. I would like to suggest another, final assassination: after the three killings her body still returns, to be finally burned and to morph into dust.

There are two types of the female vampire in the Polish texts chosen for inclusion in this thesis. Vampirish counterparts of the sexual first wives, Rebecca and Bertha

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<sup>48</sup> This theme is taken up extensively in the section “To Become a Feminine Subject”, pp. 149-155 below.

Mason include Aspasia, and the mother of Bertha and Carolina. In contradistinction, Miss Florentine represents an a-sexual vampire.

Aspasia is portrayed as a dangerous force, associated with paganism represented by little brother demons and Satan (in her associations with Satan, she resembles Alla's father). Her heathen nature corresponds with the madness imposed on Bertha Mason and Rebecca by their husbands, and is closely related to her liberated, domineering sexuality. As the madness of the "first wives" conceals and explains their sexuality, so Aspasia's unconventional sexuality is blamed on her paganism.

Aspasia's unknown, vague age – she is the embodiment of the Greek *hetaerae* Aspasia – and her unusual death, as an effect of the painting's destruction, all suggest that she has an ambivalent ontological status and is not entirely human. Like Rebecca, she physically resembles a vampire. She is associated with two colours: white (paleness) and red (blood). The unusual pallor of her skin allows Benjamin to see her face in the dark forest. Cyprian compares the blush of her cheeks to blood, and shortly after, he bleeds. Bloody symbolism frequently appears in Benjamin's descriptions of "the heathen". The narrator mentions her "pale countenance, which yet seemed to burn with the blood that had just flowed from it, or the tide of blood that was about to sweep into it with the first beat of her heart!" (72). Her teeth flash like pearls and remind us of Poe's vampiric women: Ligeia, Rowena, Morella, Berenice, Magdalena of "The Fall of the House of Usher" and the heroine of "The Oval Portrait" – constantly half-alive or half-dead, oscillating between life and death, always ready to return to the world of living. They suffer from long, mysterious and acute diseases, and when they die, their death is unobvious, ambivalent. Many hours after the entombment, their faces begin to demonstrate signs of life: red blush, red lips and white teeth. In the course of metempsychosis, *the second wife* Rowena returns to life as *the first wife* Ligeia – narrator's first and only love – repeatedly remembered and addressed by him in his thoughts. The constant recollection of the woman's image results in her actual resurrection – the same situation occurs in the case of Maxim and Rebecca.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, Aspasia's behaviour is compared with that of a vampire princess from Theresa's tale, who progressively sucks the life out of her beloved. Correspondingly, Aspasia gradually appropriates Benjamin's hobbies, interests and features. The narrator says:

First of all I surrendered to her the memory of my dead brother. She *drew it into herself with a kiss*, dispelled it by expressing it in words. Then I relinquished all the things that I liked. I stopped loving flowers. They began

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<sup>49</sup> See the following short stories: "Berenice", "Ligeia", "Morella", "The Fall of the House of Usher", and "The Oval Portrait".

to appeal to her: she wore them in her hair, at her side, arranged them in Etruscan vases. Everywhere was filled with flowers, and I was intoxicated with joy that having relinquished my own, I had brought her at least one pleasure in life. [...] From that moment on Aspasia gazed at the sky more often and I stopped loving the stars. [...] And from that moment on the sound of someone singing was beautiful to me only because of the impression it made on her – and I stopped loving songs (100-101, my emphasis).

In his essay “Horror, Most Horror!” concerning *The Heathen*, Jerzy Peterkiewicz argues that, “the vampirish theme stands for the total possessiveness of passion” (88).<sup>50</sup> He writes:

The story unravels the dark secrets of evil in the self-destructive love of Benjamin for a beautiful statuesque woman, who is “pagan” in her pursuit of pleasure outside morals and compassion. [...] It is the Hoffmann formula, adopted by the French romantics, which endows some chosen object with a demonic power (86-87).

Aspasia’s vampirish features call to question the figure of a prototypical female vampire Lilith. She is the vampire’s ancestor, originating in ancient Mesopotamia and adapted by the Hebrews.<sup>51</sup> The medieval Jewish legends declare that Lilith was Adam’s first wife. God created her directly from the dust of earth – not from the rib. She revolted against her husband, because he refused to accept her as an equal partner, also as a sexual being. Władysław Kopaliński’s *Encyklopedia “drugiej płci”* (*Encyclopaedia of “the Second Gender”*) indicates that Lilith, “spoke the <unspoken name>, grew wings and flew on them away from Eden and Adam whom she could not stand anymore” (“Lilith” 319). According to the legend, she participated in sexual intercourse with demons, seduced and murdered men. She was jealous of Adam’s second wife and harmed Eve’s offspring. Lilith was punished for her rebellion and most importantly for her liberated, unrestrained sexuality. She was condemned to an eternal life of loneliness.

Lilith is the embodiment of a sexually liberated first wife who is replaced by a maternal, dependent second wife. Aspasia repeats her behaviour and chooses subjectivity, independence and individual happiness over the accepted morality of martyrdom.

Also in “Green Shore” feminine sexuality is associated with vampirism. When she

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<sup>50</sup> On the subject of vampirism in *The Heathen*, see also Zwolińska.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of Lilith’s origin, see Has-Tokarz.

returns as a ghost, “[the mother] is laughing with bare teeth”, “in her lipless mouth – the teeth *always* flash” (63-64, my emphasis).<sup>52</sup> During the secret meeting in the village, she appears insanely young and more beautiful than ever. The rose in her clothes symbolises indestructibility.<sup>53</sup> This unnatural youth despite the lapse of time, and her extraordinary beauty, are uncanny. Did the mother sign a pact with the devil? Did she trade her daughters for eternal youth and beauty?<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the mother of “On Father and his Daughter” is a creature of a questionable ontological status oscillating between life and death, reality and fantasy. She returns to life as a ghost, a fairy, or a witch accompanied by dancing spirits.

Miss Florentine physically resembles a vampire. Her body and clothing constitute the three colours traditionally associated with this uncanny creature: white, black and red. She has a white face and a white cap covering her hair; black clothes (dress, hat, gloves), black eyes and tears, and red lips. These colours change under special circumstances. When Florentine mentions her mother’s death, her lips become pale, her face darkens, and the tears leave a dark mark on her skin. The protagonist has another vampiric feature – straight, white teeth which come into focus, when she becomes upset.

All vampirish creatures discussed in this chapter are associated with death. In the case of Bertha Mason, Rebecca, Aspasia and the mother from “Green Shore”, death in connection with sexuality leads to subjectivity, creativity, independence, strength. However, Florentine’s vampirism is only linked with death. In connection with her desexualised appearance consisting of black clothes resembling “armour” and the state of widowhood, Florentine’s vampirism underlines her association with a-sexuality, virginity, sexual innocence. In this regard, the protagonist does not embody the powerful, creative Lilith.

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<sup>52</sup> “śmieje się nagimi zębami”, “w ustach jej bez warg – zawsze błyszczą zęby”.

<sup>53</sup> See Kopaliński, *Słownik mitów*, “Rośliny”.

<sup>54</sup> This brings to mind Dorian Gray, and his not-elapsing youth and his unchanging beauty – gained as a consequence of his contract with the devil and forfeiting his soul (during the cursing of the portrait). Both texts can be read as modern variations of the myth about Narcissus. On the interpretation of Dorian as Narcissus, see Rank, Dawson. The pact with the devil also links them with the age-old story of Faust. See Tyson.

## Love for the Mother: Fantasy and Idealisation

In some of the texts analysed mother-figures, father-figures, events and magnificent mansions can be interpreted as projected by the imagination of the protagonists. In other works there exists an element of idealization of the mother-figures and motherly love, and an absolute, unconditional love for the mothers.

The transformations concerning the world around Jane Eyre – such as her employment in Thornfield – can be interpreted as actually influenced by her unconscious, and Bertha Mason and Rochester, as the products of her literary imagination. They are embodiments of her needs and desires projected by her unconscious. Jane creates Bertha and Rochester, and their reciprocal relationships, to complete empty gaps in her life. They become protagonists in Jane's narration, constructed for the use of her story. Simultaneously, her creative powers come from the first wife.

Jane begins her story with a description of her dull and monotonous life at Thornfield. She roams around the lower parts of the house, and, subsequently, climbs to the attic – a sphere symbolically associated with unconsciousness, imagination and daydreaming. From the top floor of the mansion she explains the mechanism of her imagination:

I climbed the three staircases, raised the trap-door of the attic, and having reached the leads, looked out afar. [...] Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third storey, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it – and, certainly, they were many and glowing; to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement, which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and, best of all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended – a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling that I desired and had not in my actual existence (94-95).

The silence and quietness of the third floor suggest that Bertha Mason does not occupy it yet. However, the fragment quoted above announces the future events: walking “backwards and forwards” on the last floor, “fire”, and “feeling” – love for Rochester. Indeed, immediately after she descends from the attic, the narrator mentions the mysterious laughter of Grace Poole. Also Rochester appears in the novel as a consequence of Jane's visit to the attic, as she encounters him immediately after climbing downstairs.

Starting from her first visit to the attic, the protagonist begins to narrate her life in terms of a novel. She successfully eliminates most of the previous threats, and regains absolute control over action and characters. During her visit to Gateshead Hall – where she greatly suffered as a child – she finds out that John Reed is dead, Mrs Reed is dying, and Georgiana and Eliza are maniacally obsessed with their problems. As suggested by Mary Poovey:

John Reed's suicide and the stroke that soon kills Mrs Reed are displaced expressions of Jane's anger at them for the dependence and humiliation they have inflicted on her. These symbolic murders, which the character denies can also be seen as displacements of the rage at the other figure who now stands in the same relation of superiority to Jane as the Reeds once did: Rochester (138-139).

Jane subsequently returns to Thornfield to find the mansion burned down, Bertha dead and Rochester powerless, crippled and dependant in Ferndean. She also soon learns that St. John Rivers is seriously ill. Following this interpretation, the novel is Jane's wish-fulfilment, a dream coming true. It also is a journey through her unconscious and a process of reactivating subjectivity.

Another first wife, Rebecca can also be interpreted as a product of imagination, or a projection of the desired self. The first wife is the absolute opposition, the dark complement of the protagonist, and represents everything that the latter is not and does not have. The nameless narrator unconsciously desires to have a sexually librated identity, modelled on Rebecca. Before her arrival at Manderley the narrator creates in her mind a powerful, suggestive image of the first wife, solely based on van Hopper's description fuelled by gossip and rumours, and the appearance of Rebecca's handwriting on the flyleaf:

I was following *a phantom in my mind*, whose shadowy form had taken shape at last. Her features were blurred, her colouring indistinct, the setting of her eyes and the texture of her hair was still uncertain, still to be revealed. She had beauty that endured, and a smile that was not forgotten. Somewhere her voice still lingered, and the memory of her words. There were places she had visited, and things that she had touched. Perhaps in cupboards there were clothes that she had worn, with the scent about them still. In my bedroom, under my pillow, I had a book that she had taken in her hands, and I could see her turning to that first white page, smiling as she wrote, and shaking the bent nib. Max from Rebecca. [...] Max. She called him Max. [...] The family could call him Maxim if they liked.

Grandmothers and aunts. And people like myself, quiet and dull and youthful, who did not matter. Max was her choice, the word was her possession; she had written it with so great a confidence on the fly-leaf of that book. That bold, slanting hand, stabbing the white paper, the symbol of herself, so certain, so assured (47, my emphasis).

Upon entering the imaginary dreamscape of Manderley, Rebecca's fantastic image rapidly develops in the narrator's mind. She creates her own, idealised vision of the first wife based on the opinions presented to her by others – “the most beautiful creature” (151) (Frank Crawley) with a gift to be attractive to everybody (Beatrice). According to the narrator, Rebecca is confident, graceful, beautiful, intelligent and witty:

[She is] tall and slim, with dark hair, [...] dark hair against a white face, someone whose quick eyes saw to the comfort of her guests, who gave an order over her shoulder to a servant, someone who was never awkward, never without grace, who when she danced left a stab of perfume in the air like a white azalea (141).

Horner and Zlosnik argue that Maxim's heritage is associated with dream and magic: “The text sets up Manderley as a dream space wherein fantasies can be fulfilled and the object of desire achieved” (102). Indeed, the house has the structure of a labyrinth and is surrounded by a mysterious garden. The imaginary construction of the mansion reveals the introverted nature of the text. Manderley is a dreamscape imagined and created by a child bored with Mrs van Hopper's companionship. The circular structure of the text – the fact that it begins and ends with a dream – suggests that the story is indeed the narrator's dream and a form of wish-fulfilment. The protagonist really is Alice in Wonderland, as suggested by Maxim, who falls asleep and enters the imaginary worlds. Light also observes that “[t]he girl herself is only a remembered and invented persona – relayed back to us by the older-woman narrator with whom we started the novel. The narrator is already projecting back into the feelings and thoughts of an imaginary younger self” (12).

As the story unfolds, the protagonist develops an obsession with Rebecca. The picture of the first wife dwells in her imagination:

I knew her figure now, the long slim legs, the small and narrow feet. Her shoulders, broader than mine, the capable clever hands. Hands that could steer a boat, could hold a horse. Hands that arranged flowers, made the models of ships, and wrote ‘Max from Rebecca’ on the fly-leaf of a book. I knew her face too, small and oval, the clear white skin, the cloud of dark

hair. I knew the scent she wore, I could guess her laughter and her smile.

[...] I should recognize her voice (262).

She begins to desire to become (like) her, as soon as she meets Maxim. She confesses to the latter:

“I wish I was a woman of about thirty-six dressed in black satin with a string of pearls.”

“You would not be in this car with me if you were,” he said; “and stop biting those nails, they are ugly enough already.”

“[...] I would like to know why you ask me to come out in the car, day after day. [...]”

“I ask you,” he said gravely, “because you are not dressed in black satin, with a string of pearls, nor are you thirty-six” (40-41).

She is disappointed by the circumstances of the marriage proposal and Maxim's description of the wedding. She compares the harsh reality with her vision of romantic love and marriage: “Not in a church? [...] Not in white, with bridesmaids, and bells, and choir boys? What about your relations, and all your friends?” (61). Nonetheless, she decides to marry him for two reasons. Firstly, Maxim is an obvious Freudian father-figure to her. She falls in love because he resembles her absent father, with his age and experience. Marriage with Maxim rescues her from the relationship with the dominant, demanding, substitute mother, Mrs van Hopper. She fulfils the Freudian dream, detaches herself from the mother and joins the father in a sexual relationship. By choosing her desire for a man, she chooses to destroy her mother-figure(s).

The second reason for marrying de Winter is more complex. On the one hand, it is a desire to replace Rebecca and become “the wife”. However, more importantly, it is a wish to replace her, as the charming and admired mistress of the legendary Manderley. In this regard the mansion can be interpreted as a love object. The protagonist unconsciously pictures herself in the position of the first wife:

He wanted to show me Manderley... [...] He wanted to show me Manderley... My mind ran riot then, figures came before me and picture after picture. [...] We would be in a crowd of people, and he would say, “I don't think you have met my wife.” Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de Winter. I considered my name, and the signature on cheques, to tradesmen, and in letters asking people to dinner. I heard myself talking on the telephone: “Why not come down to Manderley next week-end?” People, always a throng of people. “Oh, but she's simply charming, you must meet her—” This about me, a whisper on the fringe of crowd, and I would turn away, pretending I had not heard. [...] Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de

Winter. I saw the polished table in the dining-room, and the long candles. Maxim sitting at the end. A party of twenty-four. I had a flower in my hair. Everyone looked towards me, holding up his glass. [...] Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de Winter (60).

However, the narrator desires to embody a person Rebecca only appeared to be. She attempts to represent the image, which was really only a mask for the first wife.<sup>55</sup> Her dream is to become the ideal wife and the ideal hostess of the legendary mansion.

A similar situation occurs in *The Heathen*, where all three Aspasia's can be interpreted as products of the narrator's imagination and idealization of a perfect woman. Cyprian generates the first Aspasia in his imagination, transfers the image onto his canvas and passionately describes it to the protagonist, who cannot yet see the painting. Somewhere between Cyprian's mouth and Benjamin's ear, the second Aspasia comes to life and instantly overwhelms the thoughts, dreams, and unconscious fantasies of the narrator. What is the nature of this ideal woman imagined by the narrator? She incorporates the features of the biological mother and the "real" Aspasia. On the one hand, she is protective, benign, modest; she loves the protagonist with unconditional love. In Benjamin's hallucinatory vision, she watches over her/him, saves her/his life, caresses her/him. On the other hand, the "imagined" Aspasia resembles the woman from the castle with her beauty, wealth, pride and *sexuality*. The protagonist transforms her/his expectations onto the canvas painted by Cyprian and the painting begins to exhibit her/his own fantasy. The painted woman is a merging of the biological mother and "the heathen":

On the wall opposite my bed hung a painting of a woman caressing the head of a young man as it lay in her lap. It was her! Clearly her – the same facial features. [...] Yes, it was definitely her! But it was also more than her, more than that woman who had been illuminated for me in the flash of lightning or the blaze of fashionable oil-lamps; this woman's form was filled with another spirit: she was like the woman she could have been if she had loved; she was happiness, revelation, love itself. And that young man resting on her knees – so cherished, entranced, loved – was me (90).

It is important to note that the narrator falls in love with this second Aspasia, not with Cyprian's painting, or the woman from the castle. Out of these three women, (s)he

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<sup>55</sup> On masquerade and Rebecca, see the section "To Become a Feminine Subject", p. 157 below.

loves only the nonexistent phantom planted in her/his imagination by her/his brother. (S)he describes the situation as follows:

I crystallised Cyprian's words! And how I lived with them a full six months, with them and almost alone with them amid the mountains and forests. I fell in love with Aspasia. [...] I was clearly in love with my brother's words and with that person in his picture, who surely existed though I had never seen her. [...] Now it seems to me that it was then that I loved her the most, the most truly. [...] Oh, it was then that I loved Aspasia the most! (62-63).

Benjamin chooses the idea of a perfect woman, impossible to destroy by death and fire.

However the likeness of Bertha Mason and Rebecca, the "real" Aspasia is also imaginary. She materialises during Benjamin's half-conscious, dreamy horse ride. That she is also a fantasy is most clear in the fact that the time and space associated with her resemble a dreamscape. Aspasia and Benjamin get together in surroundings reminiscent of fantasy, dream, or hallucination. Their encounters take place at night, in darkness; they meet under unusual circumstances: in a dark forest, during a storm, during a horserace. Directly before their first confrontation, the protagonist falls asleep on her/his horse, "so tossed from side to side [that] the reins flew out of [her/his] hands" (64). The above suggests that the meeting is a mere dream. The protagonist does not recognise Aspasia in the dark forest, but later in the novel identifies her with her/his idealised fantasy (the second Aspasia). (S)he names the owner of the castle "Aspasia" and persistently forces on her her/his vision of the ideal woman. For the second time Aspasia appears after Benjamin's hallucination about the two women. She finds her/him in a river and invites her/him to her castle. Furthermore, this castle has a vague appearance and location. It resembles a mountain, or a volcano. Moreover, Benjamin cannot approach the castle under normal circumstances. First, it is located far from the cabin. (S)he says: "It must have been a long way from the castle to my lodgings" (90). Second, in order to reach it, the protagonist has to give in to her/his horse's instincts, or sail in Aspasia's boat. (S)he is unable to simply approach it on her/his own. It is difficult to grasp what Benjamin is chasing in the dark forest:

And so Falcon [the horse] flew – whilst many different images, pictures, fancies, memories flew through my mind, until Cyprian's words heard on that memorable night descended upon me likewise with great speed. In truth it seemed to me that I was racing *against space* – not metaphorically, but in reality, visibly and in person. It was a strangely agreeable feeling: space receding behind me in a stream of black earth, slipping away beneath the horse's hooves; space rushing past alongside me in two lines of gigantic dark outlandish shapes; space outstripping me overhead in a vast cloud of

outstretched wings that I could never have caught up with, that I always saw before me like the spirit of some fabulous bird. Ah, I tell you, it was marvellous! I whistled once more. Falcon did not run, did not fly – it was as though he drew into himself the whole fabulous remoteness of the place with his powerful, heightened breath; for the giant figures suddenly vanished, the cloud of birds fled, and *nothing remained except an immense open space* – boundless, barren, void. But it was an open space vocal with the sound of the wind whistling in my ears and the horse’s shoes striking the stony ground; an *infinity* lit up from below by an abundant hail of sparks that created from time to time what seemed like the breaking of a wave of fire, as they merged in their flight into bars of light; yet on both sides it was so dark, so dark as though *the world did not exist* (64-65, my emphasis).

This is a horserace “against space” and against time, towards “infinity” and a nonexistent world. “The heathen” lives outside time and space. Benjamin escapes reality in order to meet Aspasia and reach the castle.

Initially the protagonist projects her/his idealised fantasy onto the “real” Aspasia from the castle. (S)he unsuccessfully attempts to force tenderness, selflessness and modesty onto “the heathen”, and compares her with her/his biological mother: “she was saying in a voice so sweet and tender it was like that of a mother” (94). (S)he continually entices her to reject wealthiness and power, to abandon her magnificent castle and move to her/his modest cabin or to her/his parent’s “pure, sacred, God-fearing” (171) home. (S)he invites her with the following words:

My mother has died, [...] I suffer terribly. [...] For I, Aspasia, will not come to you. There where you are, there is only death and corruption. [...] But here, where I am, all is pure, sacred, God-fearing – as it invariably is among hearts that love one another, amid graves where tears are shed yet no one despairs. So I shall remain here, Aspasia, [...] and wait for you here (115-117).

Moreover, Benjamin enacts a Pietà with Aspasia, as with her/his biological mother. (S)he repeatedly places her/his head on her lap: during the costume ball, in the river, after the reunion in the castle. Under these circumstances, the protagonist misinterprets the intentions of the “real” Aspasia. While (s)he believes that “the heathen” saved her/his life, the woman explains that she was protecting Benjamin from the sun, for her own pleasure of admiring her/his beauty. She adopted a pose resembling a Pietà only coincidentally. Benjamin leaves the castle when (s)he understands the true nature of “the heathen”.

Interestingly, Cyprian introduces the image of a Pietà as the negative inspiration for his painting:

“I once stood in ecstasy before a wonderfully accomplished image of Our Lady in mourning for her son. I saw lips that did not complain, tears that flowed without knowing it, a soul liberated from nervous compulsion, an earthly existence thrust deep into the abyss of forgetfulness – I saw and I understood everything. Then, suddenly, the figures now in my picture obscured my vision. Perhaps some wise man can explain this sign to you with his law of ultimate ends; all I know is that I had been admiring holiness in the most terrible agony when holiness in the highest transports of happiness revealed itself to me; I know that I had been praying to the Immaculate Virgin of the Christians when an idea of the pagan past entered my soul and commanded me to paint it” (58).

The artist significantly modifies the image. Instead of a mourning mother and her son, he portrays lovers. He replaces the theme of suffering and sadness, with happiness and love. In his painting, the man is alive and the woman fondles his head.

Does Benjamin choose to love a nonexistent ideal because of its unattainability? If (s)he does, then (s)he locates her/himself in the position of a masculine subject. In terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, a masculine subject is captivated by an ideal he never reaches.

The protagonists of “Green Shore” unconditionally adore and love their mother, and they are incapable of evaluation of her behaviour, which actually shows ambivalence. They do not forget their mother, despite their father’s attempts consequently undertaken to eliminate her. The story of the hopeless fly caught by the cruel spider reflects their way of understanding the behaviour of their parents. Bertha comments on the situation in terms of a victim unsuccessfully attempting to escape her aggressor: “she tried to break free to no avail – and she was so scared – and she suffered so much” (59).<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, spiders have extraordinary sexual behaviour patterns. Female spiders are stronger and more aggressive. Some are sexual cannibals and, similarly to mantises, tend to eat their sexual partners during or directly after intercourse.

The reason for this adoration and idealisation of the mother is a combination of several factors. Firstly, the doubling, based on visual similarities (Carolina), and then the substitution and association with music (Bertha) establishes a connection between the

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<sup>56</sup> “dlatego ona tak wyrwała się na próżno – i tak się bała – i tak się męczyła.”

mother and her daughters. Secondly, hatred for the despotic father – a common enemy of the mother and the sisters. Thirdly, the intentional seductiveness of the mother. The mother uses a symbolic feminine repertoire in order to lure her daughters – Carolina, to escape to green shore, and Bertha, to murder the father. She incarnates everlasting beauty, she smells of flowers and brings her breast to our attention. During the secret meeting in the village she “smell[s] wonderfully, like spring, with violets – and she ha[s] a bunch of autumn violets pinned to her breast” (47).<sup>57</sup> The flowers on the breast indicate the attempt to evoke intimacy and closeness characterising a relationship between a mother and a baby. Beauty (additionally corresponding with Carolina’s attractiveness), flowers, and breast, reinforce the devotion of the sisters, despite the fact that their mother re-abandons them. The encounter in the village does not change their attitude to the mother, or the father. They continually detest the latter and long for green shore. The ambivalent use of the metaphor of the breast proves the point. During the secret meeting it symbolises intimacy, but the mother also decides not to breast-feed her children in order to prevent her body from ageing. Finally, Carolina repeats her mother’s actions and escapes, and Bertha substitutes for her as the murderer of the father.

As a consequence of their degrading and worshipping attitude towards the father and the mother respectively, the sisters associate the family home with misery and death, and green shore with happiness. The absent, but well-remembered mother fuels the desire for the mysterious green shore – an almost unattainable, undefined idyll, for which Bertha and Carolina constantly long:

[W]e sensed something and longed for something. Everything unfamiliar, collected and picked up from theoretical book abstracts, everything distant, forbidden, hated by the father, everything alluring, loved, and desired – we used to call green shore. The title of the most beautiful of Bertha's compositions was “The longing for green shore” (43).<sup>58</sup>

The extraordinary attractiveness of the mother, her abnormal youth (the seemingly reversed ageing process) and the fact that she leads a hedonistic (second) life with an attractive man, suggest that a desire for green shore is a sexual fantasy. The first entrance of the protagonist to Manderley springs to mind: the “slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic” rhododendrons, and the drive “twist[ing] and turn[ing] as a serpent [...] like an enchanted ribbon through the dark and silent woods” (71-72).

<sup>57</sup> “Pachni[e] cudnie, jak wiosna, fiołkami – i pęk fiołków jesiennych przypięty m[a] u piersi.”

<sup>58</sup> “[P]rzeczuwałyśmy coś i za czymś tęskniłyśmy. To wszystko nieznanne, razem wzięte, to wszystko wyłowione z teoretycznych konspektów książkowych, to wszystko dalekie, zakazane, zniechęcone przez ojca, to wszystko nęcące, ukochane, tęsknione – nazywałyśmy zielonym wybrzeżem. Najpiękniejsza z kompozycji Berty nosiła tytuł: <Tęsknota za zielonym wybrzeżem>.”

Similarly to the father of “Green Shore”, the despotic father of “On Father and his Daughter” fails to permanently annihilate his wife. Although we do not know how Alla perceives her mother, we know that she immediately identifies the physical similarities between herself and the mysterious woman: “I have the same eyes, lips, forehead...” (91)<sup>59</sup> and follows the mother to the unrealistic, unnamed land without hesitation. The somatic-mystical connection established by the mother serves the sole purpose of seducing the daughter and “stealing” her from the father. She employs the visual correspondence and the intimate connection to “wake” the daughter from the spell, or dream inflicted by the father, and to “steal” her from the castle. The mother destroys the bond when she delivers the protagonist to her husband, and disappears.

As demonstrated above, Florentine trusts in a metaphysical connection between herself and Mrs Brońska, and idealizes their relationship.<sup>60</sup> For instance, she believes that the mother has the ability to read her mind. She summarizes the bond with the following words: “This heart will always be knitted with the mother!” (128).<sup>61</sup> The same words could be used in connection to Alla, Bertha and Carolina.

## Hysteria and Music

The mouth is sealed, but the body screams.

KRYSTYNA KŁOSIŃSKA

The definition of hysteria (Gr. *hysteria*, “womb”) has transformed throughout the epochs, however, since Antiquity until the beginning of the twentieth century, it had had a common feature: association with femininity. The volatile and “capricious” hysterical symptoms were connected with stereotypically female behaviour (*la donna e mobile*). Throughout the years hysteria functioned as a universal tag eagerly attached to all incomprehensible, bizarre female illnesses. A famous neurologist of the nineteenth century Silas Weir Mitchell, for instance, called hysteria the “nosological limbo of all unnamed female maladies” (qtd. in Showalter, “Female Malady” 130).

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the majority of hysterical patients constituted aspiring women from the middle and upper class, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, Jane Addams, Edith Wharton (all treated by Mitchell), Alice James (the sister of Henry James), Ida Bauer (Dora) and Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.),

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<sup>59</sup> “Mam takie same oczy, usta, czoło...”

<sup>60</sup> See the section “Mothers and Daughters: Feminine Doubling”, pp. 113-115 above.

<sup>61</sup> “To serce zawsze z matką jest zrośnięte!”

among others. The best-known figure of the hysteric is Dora – the famous patient of Freud honoured by the contemporary feminists, who suffered from aphonia. The second famous recorded hysteric touched with a speaking disorder was Anna O. who was treated by Josef Breuer with success. Hysteria constituted a reaction to the public insistence on resignation from higher education and intellectually satisfying professional careers, the suppression of sexual desires and the imposition of unsatisfying, monotonous domestic routines. Furthermore, “female hysteria was rooted in contradictory social responsibilities imposed on women: they should be objects of adoration, self-sacrificing wives, pain-bearing mothers, lonely widows” (Kłosińska, “Ciało” 235). The disease enabled women to “escape” these exhausting duties.

The status of the female hysteric in the classical Freudian texts is of a patient requiring treatment. Initially, in *Studies on Hysteria* from 1895 hysteria is presented as a result of a childhood trauma. It is a form of repression, an attempt to forget the past, to block the unpleasant memories. The traumatic incident cannot be verbalized but it is manifested via physical symptoms. In Freud’s account, hysterics are victims of seduction and sexual molestation by older men – fathers, brothers, uncles, or the friends of the family. Since his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) Freud has begun to understand hysteria as a need to invent desires that are impossible to satisfy. “Hysterical symptoms should rather be seen as an attempt to fulfil a desire – a desire that can never be fulfilled” (Magnone, “Wokół <żony rzeźnika>” 180). During his treatment of Dora, initiated in 1900, Freud mistakenly and persistently stated that the source of Ida Bauer’s psychological conflict lies in his patient’s repressed desire for Herr K (Hans Zellenka), and overlooked the fact that she was in love with Frau K (Peppina Zellenka) – however, he was the first to notice his own error).<sup>62</sup>

For Hélène Cixous, a female hysteric has a status of a subject, moreover, she is a breaker of dominant rules and codes associated with the law of the Father. Hysteria is a creative protest, an intentional rebellion, and it constitutes an alternative language of feminine desire, capable of demolishing masculine discourse: “Silence: silence is the mark of hysteria. The great hysterics have lost speech [...] their tongues are cut off and what talks isn’t heard because it’s the body that talks and man doesn’t hear the body” (Cixous, “Castration or Decapitation?” 49). Hysterics are capable of expressing their desires nonverbally, via their bodies. For Juliet Mitchell, hysteria is “a daughter’s disease”: a mute, somatic protest against the patriarchal social structures (represented by her father) allowing articulation of desire for a subject excluded from Symbolic language. Irigaray suggests that a hysteric expresses herself via silence and mimesis, imitations of

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<sup>62</sup> See also *In Dora’s Case. Freud – Hysteria – Feminism* and the chapter “Dora: An Exemplary Failure” in *Freud’s Women*, p. 146-167.

patriarchal language. Showalter believes that the hysteric substituted the dominant language for another “speech”: “In the process of her hysteria she also <lost> the grammar and syntax of German, but gained in their place a mother tongue, a female language akin to the pre-Oedipal <semiotic babble that exists between an infant and its mother>, a language partly of the body and partly a pastiche of foreign words, gestures, and neologisms” (“Female Malady” 157). In general, contemporary feminists treat hysterics as proto-feminists. According to them, Ida Bauer decided to remain silent as a reaction to the world she did not accept. In the case of Anna O., the rejection of native language represents rejection of the father – identified with the fatherland, culture, social order (puritan, Judaist).

Bertha, the protagonist of “Green Shore” experiences hysteria, agoraphobia and possibly madness. The “female malady” is reflected in her appearance and demeanour. She has a pallid skin and an unusually thin body, and suffers from violent hysterical attacks. Carolina describes her sister as follows:

[a] girl with heavy brown braids, pale and thin was squirming and twisting in front of the piano, immersing her gorgeous, long fingers in keys. [...] Bertha played like a hurricane, like a great wind – she played to interrupt the terrifying fear of loneliness, to express the entire torment of desire and longing, to send this melody of expectancy, insanity and torture up to the very sky [...] Bertha used to throw herself at me with a scream, tighten her hands around my neck like claws – and suffer the usual hysterical attack (42).<sup>63</sup>

The older sister “now has so-called *agoraphobia*” (50, original emphasis).<sup>64</sup> Bertha’s illnesses evolve with time and her world gradually shrinks to the ground floor of the house. She becomes fully dependent on her father. She used to be able to enter the garden without reservation, but after Carolina’s return “[she] walks by herself only around the house, however, she is afraid to climb the stairs or to enter the garden. [...] Carolina [cannot] let go of her hand even for a second, [because] she will start crying out

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<sup>63</sup> “Dziewczyna o ciężkich brunatnych warkoczach, blada i szczupła, wiła się i łamała przed fortepianem, wpijając w klawisze swe cudne, długie palce. [...] Berta grała jak huragan, jak wichur – by zagłuszyć tę straszną trwożę samotności, by wyrzucić z siebie całe piekło pragnienia i tęsknoty, by pod niebo samo rozebrzmiała ta szalona z męki pieśń oczekiwania. [...] Berta z krzykiem rzucała się na mnie, ręce, jak kleszcze, zaciskała mi na szyi – i dostawała swojego zwykłego ataku histerycznego.”

<sup>64</sup> “Berta jest chora teraz na tzw. *agorafobię*.”

of fear or she will faint” (50).<sup>65</sup> After her return, the narrator recognises staggering changes in the appearance and behaviour of her older sister:

Bertha played until the evening. We sat in the grand room and listened in silence. I can sense that her play has changed entirely – but I cannot grasp the essence of the difference.

Bertha is becoming weaker every day. Today she fainted during a walk, although I was holding her hand.

I am terrified to notice the dreadful development of my sister’s illness (50, 57 and 50).<sup>66</sup>

Would this be the state of the mother, if she had remained at home?

As in the case of Bertha Mason’s madness, in “Green Shore” hysteria and agoraphobia result from the incarceration enforced by the father-figure. He deliberately allows the neuroses to develop, in order to prevent his daughter from becoming autonomous and self-reliant, and to preclude her escape. By forcing her to go outside and by arranging *regular* garden walks, he supports her agoraphobia. Furthermore, he emphasises her ill health and her inability to ever leave him. Carolina describes the situation as follows: “[W]hen the father [...] offered a walk [...] Bertha became even paler and sealed her lips. [...] I offered Bertha my hand and she clung to it with great force. Only then I realised that she was covering her eyes with her second hand and that her whole body was shivering feverishly” (49).<sup>67</sup> The father also promotes hysteria, by pushing Bertha towards music. According to Carolina, he ignores the fact that composing and playing music triggers Bertha’s hysterical attacks.

The father makes one effort to cure his daughter: he calls a doctor, who advises treating the disorder in a way typical for the doctors of his time – he suggests marriage and, by implication, sexual intercourse. One of the two most popular methods to stabilize the “wandering uterus” that survived until the twentieth century included advising sexual relations and pregnancy. The father rejects the advice without hesitation: “The doctor left – and didn’t come back” (43).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Sama chodzić może tylko po mieszkaniu, ale boi się stąpania po schodach, lub przechadzki po ogrodzie. [...] Dlatego proszę cię, Karolino, nie puszczaj jej ani na chwilę, zacznie płakać z przerażenia albo zemdleje”.

<sup>66</sup> “Do wieczora Berta grała. Słuchaliśmy jej w milczeniu, siedząc w wielkiej sali. Zdaje mi się, że teraz gra zupełnie inaczej – tylko nie umiem pochwycić istoty tej różnicy.”

“Berta jest coraz słabsza. Dzisiaj zemdląca na przechadzce, chociaż wcale nie puściłam jej ręki.” “Ogarnęło mnie przerażenie na myśl, że choroba mojej siostry tak strasznie się rozwinęła.”

<sup>67</sup> “ojciec [...] zaproponował spacer [...] Berta pobladła jeszcze silniej, zacięła usta. [...] Podałam Bercie rękę, której ona uczepliła się z całej siły. Teraz dopiero zauważyłam, że drugą ręką zakrywa sobie oczy, a cała drży, jak w febrze.”

<sup>68</sup> “Doktor odjechał – i nie wrócił więcej.”

As shown above, Bertha's hysteria is connected with music: "[she] used to throw herself at [Carolina] with a scream, tighten her hands around [her] neck like claws – and suffer the usual hysterical attack. She was often brought to them by music – however, she used to play constantly – in an increasingly passionate, increasingly strange manner" (42).<sup>69</sup> The music is also associated with the mother and sexuality: Bertha is a composer and a pianist gradually composing the dreadful melody about green shore. Finally, the tune played on the mother's forbidden melodeon becomes a murder weapon. The daughter replaces her female parent in the ultimate act of assassination. The fact that the mother desires to kill her husband becomes most evident in the dream retold by Bertha. It portrays the mother returning in the form of a deathly spirit and saying to her husband: "– To live – two dead bodies... To die – I still need yours. [...] She leans further over him and grabs his throat. She begins to strangle him... And he screams and he cannot wake up, he still cannot wake up..." (66).<sup>70</sup> The connection between music and sexuality becomes most clear in the fact that Carolina's desire for green shore – the sphere associated with the sexual mother and sexually-based relationships – arises when her hysteric sister plays the piano. The narrator reminisces: "After all, I always longed for green shore. – Especially when Bertha played – there, in the large hall downstairs" (42).<sup>71</sup>

In "Green Shore" music and hysteria represent creative powers translating a feminine perspective. Similarly to Anna O. and Dora, Bertha chooses an alternative, nonverbal language to communicate her desires. She is a hysterical speaking subject. Furthermore, she embraces her sexuality in connection to music, hysteria and agoraphobia. Although she does not escape to green shore, does not engage in sexually-based relationships, she becomes a sexual being. As in the case of her namesake Bertha Mason, incarceration by the father represents punishment for feminine sexuality, and insanity represents sexual liberation. On the one hand, her sexuality is linked with her father, who fuels the neuroses. On the other, music is connected with the mother, and hysteria and agoraphobia are culturally feminine disorders. Although she remains inside the house, she liberates herself from her emotional attachment to her father. Her subjectivity is not connected with his philosophy, but with the "female maladies". His

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<sup>69</sup> "z krzykiem rzucała się na [Karolinę], ręce, jak kleszcze, zaciskała [jej] na szyi – i dostawała swojego zwykłego ataku histerycznego. / Muzyka często doprowadzała ją do tego – mimo to grała zawsze – coraz namiętniej, coraz dziwaczniej."

<sup>70</sup> "– Dla życia mego – dwa trupy... Jeszcze dla śmierci mej – potrzeba mi twojego./ Niżej jeszcze schyla się nad nim, za gardło ścisnąć zaczyna. Dusić... A on krzyczy i zbudzić się nie może, dotąd jeszcze zbudzić się nie może..."

<sup>71</sup> "Tęskniłam przecież zawsze do zielonego wybrzeża. – Zwłaszcza kiedy Berta grała – tam w wielkiej sali na dole."

silencing does not affect her, because she chooses a different “language” of communication: music.

In her inspirational analysis devoted to the early-modernist works of Gabriela Zapolska, *Ciało, pożądanie, ubranie* (*Body, Desire, Clothes*), Krystyna Kłosińska interrogates the theme of music in the novel *Przedpiekle* (*Prehell*). The protagonist of the story is a young girl forced to live at a *pensja*. The music played by Stasia on the piano is associated with hysteria and madness:

[There are] various descriptions of the girl forced into the state of “frenzy”, “unconsciousness”, or unusual ecstasy, making her similar to a sleeping, hypnotized creature out of control over her behaviour and feelings. The girl [playing the piano] emphasises the physiological aspects of the arousal caused by the play, unambiguously draws the connection between the music and her body [...] transforming the musical text into a text where the sexually aroused body becomes the “subject” (Kłosińska, “Ciało” 172 and 175-176).

Similarly to the situation of “Green Shore”, music

is a nonverbal speech, in which a “voice” is heard: “a call for help”, “a claim”, “a desire”. [...] The girl contacts the listener through her play, she expresses her feelings carrying a meaning. At the same time the piano is [...] a means of the liberation of speech: the subdued feeling of “orphanage”, loneliness is unblocked via the “language” of music (Kłosińska, “Ciało” 171-172).

In “The Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous connects feminine language with the mother’s voice and music:

In women’s speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we’ve been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us – that element is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. Why this privileged relationship with the voice? [...] [A] woman is never far from “mother” (I mean outside her role functions: the “mother” as nonname and as source of goods).

[Mother is] what touches you, the equivoice that affects you, fills your breast with an urge to come to language and launches your force; the rhythm that laughs you; the intimate recipient who makes all metaphors possible and desirable; body (body? bodies?), no more describable than god,

the soul, or the Other; that part of you that leaves a space between yourself and urges you to inscribe in language your woman's style (881 and 882). Later she develops her interrogation of the connection between motherhood and music in her analysis of Marina Tsvetayeva's prose memoir "Mother and Music".<sup>72</sup>

In the story, as in Tsvetayeva's life, the mother – herself an unfulfilled musician, teaches her little daughter Musya how to play the piano. The memoir manifests interesting correspondences with "Green Shore". Firstly, the parents are contrasted with each other – the mother is connected with music and God, while the father is connected with books and newspapers.<sup>73</sup> The mother explains to her daughter: "the piano is a sacred object, and you must not put anything on it, not only feet but even books" (272). Tsvetayeva retrospects her childhood in a letter to Vasily Vasilievich Rozanov in the following way: "Mother and Father were totally unlike each other. Each had his own heartache. Mother's was music, poetry, yearning; Father's was scholarship. Their lives moved side by side without merging" (qtd. in Gove, 232).

The father is negligible, almost absent, and the mother dominates the story. Cixous interrogates the theme as follows:

The mother constantly enters the text. She is repression personified and at the same time a genius.

The mother fills everything. With the extension of her voice, she fills the missing space. While the little girl begins to climb musically, the mother already invades the entire space. ("Poetry, Passion and History" 133 and 142).

Moreover, the mother "deluges", "floods" the house with music.

Secondly, there exists a connection between music (the piano) and feminine body – the body of the protagonist and the body of the mother. Tsvetayeva writes: "Sweat pours, red fingers – *I am playing with my whole body*, with my whole not – inconsiderable strength, with my whole weight" (282, my emphasis). The mother's play is limited to the hands on the keyboard and the feet on the pedal. The body of the piano seems to substitute for the forbidden, distanced, insensate body of the mother. Monika Greenleaf makes a similar observation:

If her mother's body remains insentient to her "toucher" [Fr. "touch", "a way of pressing the piano keys"], the piano keys and pedals reward her transgressive pressure, sound for touch, and emotion for sound. The

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<sup>72</sup> Themes of motherhood and music are also present in another prose memoir "The Devil", also included in Cixous's analysis; however, the story mainly focuses on the mysterious encounters with the God-Devil, and the protagonist's complex relationship with him.

<sup>73</sup> Similarly to Rebecca and Maxim's mother, the mother of "Mother and Music" is also associated with water and the sea, see Cixous, "Poetry, Passion, and History", pp. 143-145.

*klaviatura* [Rus. “keyboard”], a piece of impressive nomenclature that she tames into the piano’s grin, thus becomes the keyboard of her own buried emotions, teaching her the joyful risk of pressing and releasing them (842). Cixous states “[t]he piano *becomes* the mother” (“Poetry, Passion, and History” 145) and makes an equation between mother and music: “the mother-music” (143).

It substitutes for the mother and for her gaze, as a mirror, the first mirror reflecting the face of the protagonist. Similarly to Bertha of “Green Shore”, she develops a complex relationship with the instrument. As does the subject in Lacan’s Mirror Stage, Musya acknowledges herself via this first reflection:

You look and looking, you look at yourself, gradually bringing first the end of your nose, then your mouth, then your forehead in contact with its black and such hard coldness. [...] The piano was my first mirror and my first awareness of my own face was through blackness, through its translation into blackness, as into a *language* dark but comprehensible (“Mother and Music” 289-290, my emphasis).

The instrument becomes her first love-object: “[M]erging with the piano’s blackness as if the piano had taken my mouth – and swallowed it. [...] And sometimes [...] I simply kissed the piano for the coldness on my lips” (290). The piano bears masculine features, it resembles a man, “an elderly male figure from the eighteen thirties: [...] the experienced, middle-aged, indispensably tailcoated dancer” (291).

Thirdly, the mother is distant, inaccessible and stigmatized with death. The protagonist describes her difficult relationship with the female parent: “Mother did not brings us up – she tried us out: she tested our strength of resistance: would our rib cages fall in?” (276); “My mother [...] demanded from me – herself!” (281). Again, the statement: “Mother truly buried herself alive inside us – for life eternal” (275) brings to mind the mother of “Green Shore” who left an inerasable mark on her daughters and their future. The persistent musical lessons, and the fact that Musya’s mother ignores her daughter’s poetic gift, just as her own musical talent has been forbidden, are aimed at creating a double.

In Tsvetayeva’s prose memoir there exists a strong connection between motherhood, music, suffering and death. There are two dead mothers associated with music. In addition to Musya’s parent, there is also another mother, the first wife of her father, a singer who died at a young age, “a songbird who soon fell silent” (“Mother and Music” 281). Apropos of the second mother, the protagonist confesses: “Mother used music – to wear me down”; “Mother deluged us with music. [...] Mother deluged us with all the bitterness of her own unrealized vocation, her own unrealized life, she deluged us with music as if with blood, the blood of a second birth” (281 and 283). The

mother's instrument – the piano – has a coffinlike appearance, the metronome is uncanny and threatening:

It was truly Death itself standing over a soul, a living soul which could die – deathless (already dead) Death. The metronome was – a coffin, and in it there lived – death. In my horror of the sound I would even forget the horror of its look: a steel stick, crawling out like a finger and oscillating with maniacal obtuseness behind a living backbone (284).

As in “Green Shore”, there is a sense of abandonment in the story: the mother denies her daughter's literary talent and devotes herself only to music – “I only regret music and the sun” (293) – she confesses on her deathbed.

The death of the mother represents the end of the story and the end of music. The protagonist rejects music and “erases” her talent, but she cannot abandon her mother: “I taciturnly and stubbornly reduced my music to nothing. Thus, the sea, receding, leaves pits behind, at first deep, then getting shallower, then barely damp. Those musical pits – the traces of mother's seas – stayed in me for good” (293). Greenleaf interprets the protagonist's gesture in the following way:

[She] answers her mother's death [...] by killing the pale, diligent imposer Musia [Musya] who was born of a kidnapped word. She locks up the piano in order to investigate time with her own chromatic instrument. Only in the liberating blackness of her mother's absence can [she] be born as the author of her memory space, with room to become herself (845).

Indeed, the death of the mother allows the protagonist to find her own language and to become a writer. However, initially, the music introduces her to the (feminine) language. Significantly, “her first, clearly meaningless and fully intelligible word, uttered before the age of one, turned out to be “*gamma*”, “scale”” (“Mother and Music” 271, original emphasis).

The piano makes her cross over to another world, that of language. Music *talks* to her. That is where she saves herself. Like a drowning person who tries to hang on to something, she hangs on to words in order to escape music.

Writing surges from the mirage, from the mirroring of the self in the black mirror of the piano. Writing is the hollow of the mother, her inverse. As soon as the mother-music dies, as soon as she withdraws, Marina stops playing (Cixous, “Poetry, Passion, and History” 133, 141, original emphasis, 145).

A similar idea of the connection between hysteria, music and female sexuality is reflected in Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The short story is an argument for sexual abstinence, delivered by a man who murders his wife in jealous rage, as he suspects her of adulterous behaviour.<sup>74</sup> He believes that his wife is romantically involved with a semi-professional violinist, with whom she performs Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* on a grand piano. Although the musician is physically unattractive and unappealing, he becomes seductive and irresistible in connection to his music. As in *Przedpiekle*, there exists a link between musical play and seduction. The musical performance excites the beautiful wife: her shining eyes, blissful smile and relaxed body indicate sexual ecstasy. The story masks a suggestion that the woman attempts to remain decent and faithful to her husband, but she becomes a victim of the "diabolic" music. It remains unclear whether the wife actually has an affair with the violinist.

In the context of this comparison, *The Kreutzer Sonata* presents a man with double sexual standards: although he leads a highly promiscuous premarital life, he expects innocence and passivity of his wife. He allows sexual practice as long as it serves the procreative purpose (they have several children). Nevertheless, he reacts to intercourse with bursts of rage, verbal insults and violent attacks. When the wife turns towards contraceptives and her sexual demands increase, the husband begins to fear her unrestrained sexuality. In this regard, the adulterous love affair is imaginary. It reflects the protagonist's fears and is a pretext for murder. It is important to note that the court finds the husband innocent. As do Rochester and de Winter, he successfully eliminates his sexual wife.

### **3 To Become a Feminine Subject**

The following chapter retraces a possible analogy between feminine sexuality and subjectivity. The presupposition underlying this thesis can be formulated in the following way: feminine doubling, in polar opposite to masculine doubling, can bring positive values. The creative subjectivity of the first wives in the British novels, in connection with their sexuality and madness, enables them to establish a connection with the second wives. The sexual nature of Bertha Mason and Rebecca has a positive value, as it allows the first wives to help Jane Eyre and the nameless narrator of *Rebecca*, respectively, to found sexual relationships with symbolically castrated, sexually undemanding husbands, who do not threaten their integrity, subjectivity, and individuality. Jane Eyre understands the voice of Bertha Mason. In the relationship with

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<sup>74</sup> This great murderous passion on the verge of madness links the narrator of *The Kreutzer Sonata* with the father of "Green Shore".

Rochester she becomes a mother, but remains a speaking subject and the narrator of the story. The second Mrs de Winter does not “hear” Rebecca’s calling. She does not embrace her subjectivity or sexuality. Her relationship with Maxim is not sexual (they have no children), but boring and fruitless.

The comparative context of this thesis leads to the following question: what do the mother-figures of the Polish texts have to offer? Does their sexual nature imply subjectivity and creativeness, as in the case of Bertha Mason and Rebecca? Does the doubling connection between the mother-figures and the daughter-figures lead to the acquisition of sexuality and subjectivity? Only a mother-figure who is independent, subjective and sexual can offer her daughter access to subjectivity.

Before embarking on answering the questions raised above, it is essential to clarify the difference between Jane Eyre and the nameless narrator of *Rebecca* in the context of acquisition of sexuality, subjectivity, and creativity.

Throughout the novel, Jane struggles to constitute herself as a subject. She has a complicated past predating her meeting with Bertha Mason and the relationship with the crippled Rochester. The portrayal of the periods of time spent outside Thornfield – early childhood, school years at Lowood, stay at the Gateshead Hall and the Moor House – are detailed, all-embracing and troubling. Escape from Mrs Reed initiates a long journey sown with difficulties and unpleasantness. The narrator often struggles for survival, endangered in her financial and social situation. The enemies she meets are vastly powerful and cruel. Initially, Mrs Reed and her son John unjustly physically punish her at Gateshead Hall. John Reed is the first of the beastly male characters appearing in the novel. “Brontë depicts young Master John Reed as virtually a paradigm of the Victorian bad boy”, as observed by Gilbert,

wallowing in gluttony, sadism, and a host of other deadly sins. Even at fourteen, Jane reviles [the boy] as a murderer, a slave-driver, and a Roman emperor. [...] And after he has left Gateshead, we learn that he has become so degraded that even his mother, herself Jane’s wicked stepmother, dreams that she sees “him laid out with a great wound in his throat, or with a swollen and blackened face” (204) (363).

At Lowood she experiences the death of her best friend Helena and the abandonment by her mentor, Mrs Temple. She is continually humiliated by Mrs Reed and her children, by the school principal and finally by Rochester – disguised under a gypsy costume. Soon after her escape from Thornfield, she faces death.

As the story unfolds, Jane searches for the substitute of her absent (dead) mother. She is an orphan and Mrs Reed, who is supposed to play the role of her mother, is an

archetypal, fairytale like, cruel stepmother. Pauline Nestor, in one of her monographs on Brontë, *Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre"* recalls a succession of mother figures. Bessie, Miss Temple, Helen Burns, Mrs Fairfax, Diana and Mary are all protective, nurturing "good" mothers. There is also Mother Nature – a maternal force personified in the moon, weather, fire and the ghostly image of Bertha Mason. All of these women and the embodiments of maternal power provide Jane with guidance, and support. There is, however, a deep ambivalence in the construction of these substitutive mothers. Their protectiveness leads to the silencing and immobilising of Jane. The "good" mothers contribute to the association of the female with the static and passive.<sup>75</sup> They create a convenient space for the narrator and make her calm, submissive, obedient, and less creative. In psychoanalytic terms, the "good" mothers attempt to preserve Jane in the dyadic unity within the Real order. They try to prevent her from going through the Mirror Stage, from gaining identity and subjectivity. "[T]he love and nurturance of the <good> mothers threaten to damage" (Nestor 40). Nancy Chodorow and Elisabeth Grosz both describe the danger of the mother's nurturance in *The Reproduction of Mothering* and *Volatile Bodies*, respectively. It promotes dependence on the mother, which is in conflict with autonomy.

Mrs Reed doesn't nourish Jane but supports her, as a narrator and a writer. Her behaviour and attitude towards her niece causes the latter to speak, and take action. It provokes Jane to openly express herself, to tell Mrs Reed what she really thinks and, most importantly, to leave Gateshead Hall. Mrs Reed provides Jane with a story she can write about. At this point the narrator begins her life journey and starts to define herself through writing about her life. Tony Tanner argues that Jane's identity fully depends on language and that she creates herself in writing.

Before Thornfield, the narrator experiences difficulties with expressing herself. Sometimes she even chooses a role of a passive voyeur. For example, at Lowood she silences herself for eight years. This quietness threatens Jane's subjectivity, the identity of narrator, and authorship. It is also symptomatic that Jane is unable to recognise herself in the mirror and, hence, to identify with her reflection. This situation occurs for the first time in the Red Room. This condition of a woman punished by confinement in the attic prefigures the circumstances of Bertha Mason:

I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: a strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where

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<sup>75</sup> Freud interrogates the cultural association between femininity and passivity. He challenges the equation, and emphasises the active features of femininity and motherhood, see "Femininity".

all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp (9).

On the morning after Rochester's proposal Jane takes a good look at herself in the mirror, but is unable to recognise herself. On the evening preceding the fatal wedding she still does not identify with the reflection. The situation changes after Bertha's visit to Jane's bedroom, when the first Mrs Rochester puts on Jane's wedding veil and destroys it. Previously the narrator had failed to see Bertha's face, but then the latter "turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass." (250) – says Jane. Just before the wedding the narrator turns to the mirror to check her appearance and "sees" herself: "So I turned at the door: I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (253). However, it is not her reflection, but an image of another woman. The mirror shows only one person, because this is how the doppelgänger presents itself.

Importantly, Jane's "good", silencing and immobilizing mothers are associated with virginity: Bessie and Helena Burns are immature; Maria Temple, Diana and Mary are connected with the idea of virginity by their names and puritanical behaviour<sup>76</sup>, while the mothers who reinforce Jane's subjectivity, Mrs Reed and Bertha Mason are monstrous, vicious, and sexual. The widowed Mrs Reed develops a quasi-sexual relationship with her son, John. It is continually repeated in the novel that he is the actual master of the house. Mrs Reed's behaviour towards Jane – injustice, confinement in the red-room – resembles sexual sadism. She is also the mother of three children. Bertha Mason's main feature is her licentious appetite. Her demanding sexuality is the reason for which she is pronounced mad and eliminated from Rochester's life.

Contrary to Jane Eyre, the nameless protagonist of *Rebecca* does not have a significant past comprising struggles for identity and subjectivity. All we know about her, before she meets Maxim de Winter, is that she is an orphan working as a companion for Mrs van Hopper. It seems like her life actually begins in Monte Carlo, upon encountering Maxim. The difficulties faced by her are silly, compared to those of Jane Eyre. Her enemies and concerns are half-imagined and unthreatening. Mrs Van Hopper is just a tiresome, blathering old lady, who adores rumours and gossips. The protagonist despises her because of her ridiculous taste in clothes, bad manners and inquisitiveness. But van Hopper does not endanger the narrator in any real way. Even when she proclaims that the protagonist is not suitable for Maxim and Manderley, her behaviour is incomparable with the cruelty, and severity of Mrs Reed. The second

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<sup>76</sup> Diana is a pagan Virgin Huntress, Mary/Maria is the name of Christ's mother (Virgin Mary).

enemy of the narrator, Mrs Danvers is more frightening. She dresses in black, moves noiselessly, never smiles. The protagonist fears her because of her association with Rebecca. Moreover, she knows that Mrs Danvers will never accept her as Maxim's second wife and, more importantly, as the mistress of Manderley. As the novel unfolds, the narrator develops a frightening image of Mrs Danvers in her imagination.

The comparison between the past of Jane Eyre and that of the second Mrs de Winter calls into question their subjectivity. Lack of a meaningful past, struggles and threatening enemies indicate that the protagonist of *Rebecca* does not attempt to become a speaking subject. Furthermore, although she is in a similar position to Jane – a physically unattractive orphan, socially insignificant and financially dependent on her employer, she does not devote her life to the search for a substitute mother, who would help her constitute herself as a speaking subject. Instead, she immediately and instinctively abandons her first substitute mother Mrs van Hopper to unite with a man. Maxim de Winter becomes her husband, as well as her father-figure. As the novel unfolds, the protagonist also abandons her second substitute mother-figure Rebecca.

Turning towards Jane Eyre's connection with the Symbolic order: the narrator does not go through the Mirror Stage and does not enter the Symbolic. She has a long succession of "mothers", but her father remains absent. This situation initially blocks Jane from becoming a wife and a mother. In *Expletives Deleted* Angela Carter points out that there is a succession of dead "fathers" in the novel. Firstly, Jane's biological father is missing; secondly, her uncle John Reed, who was supposed to replace her father and take care of her; thirdly, her uncle, from whom she inherits. Furthermore, the father of St. John, Mary and Diana dies shortly before Jane visits them. Rochester is the first and only father-figure with an ability to introduce Jane to Symbolic language and society. He is twenty years older than the protagonist, strong, sturdy and violent. I agree with Carter that Rochester denies his paternity and symbolically protects himself from death – as all fathers appearing in the novel die immediately. Although he consents to take care of Adele, he rejects her as a biological daughter.

Jane manages to finally transform Rochester into a "father" – at the end of the novel she mentions that they have a child – and thereby undertakes the role of a wife, a mother and a keeper of the house. However, on the other hand, she does not want Rochester to introduce her to the Symbolic realm. Within the love triangle/ Oedipal constellation with Rochester and Bertha, the protagonist is obliged to abandon the mother and join the father in a romantic relationship. Bertha must disappear, in order to make space for the second woman – the daughter Jane. Although the mother-figure dies, the narrator does not abandon her. Moreover, she immediately rejects Rochester and

leaves Thornfield upon discovering the truth about the first wife. The protagonist decides to become Rochester's wife only when he is crippled and symbolically castrated.

Although she is consciously overjoyed by the thought of getting married to him, she is unconsciously terrified by it. When her future husband calls her by a new family name, Mrs Jane Rochester, her look changes immediately:

"It is Jane Eyre, sir."

"Soon to be Jane Rochester," he added: "in four weeks, Janet; not a day more. Do you hear that?"

I did, and I could not quite comprehend it: it made me giddy. The feeling, the announcement sent through me, was something stronger than was considered with joy – something that smote and stunned: it was, I think almost fear.

"You blushed, and now you are white, Jane: what is that for?"

"Because you gave me a new name – Jane Rochester; and it seems so strange."

"Yes, Mrs Rochester," said he; "young Mrs Rochester – Fairfax Rochester's girl-bride."

"It can never be, sir; it does not sound likely" (227).

Furthermore, Jane describes the period of time preceding her wedding day unenthusiastically, in terms of an inevitable, inescapable necessity: "The month of courtship had wasted: its very last hours were being numbered" (242). She notifies her uncle about her wedding in a letter; he informs Bertha's brother, Richard Mason about it and, as a consequence, the latter intervenes in the ceremony. In psychoanalytic terms, Jane advises her uncle of her relationship with Rochester because she unconsciously wants to break it and regain her independence. Moreover, during the wedding ceremony she resembles a dead person. She is "quite out of breath, [...] the blood had [...] momentarily fled [from her face, her] forehead [is] dewy, cheeks and lips cold" (254). Her vampiric appearance again strongly associates her with Bertha Mason. In her gender analysis Godfrey makes the following observation:

[T]he performance of marriage [...] is parodied repeatedly throughout the text. From the charade wedding of Rochester and Blanche Ingram, through Bertha's costuming of herself with Jane's veil, to the climactic disruption of Rochester and Jane's first wedding ceremony, marriage is parodied and the subversive implications of Rochester and Jane's marriage are underscored (863).

I would also add to the above list the staged marriage of Rochester and Bertha Mason.

Within the Freudo-Lacanian perspective, sight and speech are essential for acquiring subjectivity. Prevented by Bertha's image appearing in the mirror, Jane does not identify with her reflection and does not go through the Mirror Stage. The first wife intervenes in the form of a repressed and forgotten mother, who returns from the pre-Symbolic sphere. She does not silence the protagonist, like the "good" mothers listed by Nestor, but nevertheless prevents her from becoming a speaking subject in connection with the dominant father's law and the Mirror Stage. Instead of becoming a mere object of male desire – *objet petit a*, or taking up the position of a masculine subject unable to say anything about feminine desires, Bertha encourages Jane to search for a third mode of expression.

With the support of her mother-figure with whom she identifies, Jane Eyre finally goes through the Mirror Stage. However, she does not recognise her reflection in the mirror and does not enter the Symbolic. In her search for an alternative, independent way of expressing herself outside the Symbolic, the protagonist takes up the position of a spectator and successfully observes others. She is a voyeur, who takes evident pleasure in watching. Moreover, she hides from people's sight in order to become "invisible". In this way she prevents herself from becoming an object. Jane Eyre remains a feminine speaking subject outwith the structures of Lacan's theory and the structures of the Symbolic realm, on the margins of the official culture and language. She is attempting to acquire subjectivity in Cixous's, not Freudo-Lacanian terms. Her silent, subjective voyeurism is contrasted with the silent position imposed on Jane by her substitute mother-figures, and interpreted earlier as negative.

In contrast with Jane Eyre, the narrator of *Rebecca* does not attempt to search for an individual mode of expression. On the contrary, she enthusiastically and thoughtlessly jumps into the Symbolic realm. She automatically enters the order during the wedding ceremony as Mrs de Winter. She obsessively repeats her new name – the indication of entrance to the new realm – it becomes a mantra for her: "Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de Winter. I considered my name, and the signature on cheques, to tradesmen, and in letters asking people to dinner. [...] Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de Winter. [...] Mrs de Winter. I would be Mrs de Winter" (60). However, the protagonist does not go through the Mirror Stage and does not establish herself, as an independent speaking subject. Although she enters the Symbolic order, she does not exist within it.

In *Rebecca* the question of subjectivity is connected with the characters' names. In the case of the first wife, the significance of her name indicates the fact that she constitutes an autonomous active subject. Importantly, Rebecca is usually referred to by

her Christian name, not associated with her father, or her husband. Furthermore, her name has the power of a magical exclamation. The narrator is unable to articulate it for a long time. When she finally succeeds, the act strongly affects her: "I could not believe that I had said *the name* at last. I waited, wondering what would happen. I had said *the name*. I had said the word Rebecca aloud. It was a tremendous relief. It was as though I had taken a purge and rid myself of an intolerable pain. Rebecca. I had said it aloud" (139, my emphasis).

The fact that the protagonist does not assume her subjectivity is suggested by her initial namelessness (her name remains unknown throughout the whole story). Later references to her name indicate its negligible status. It is "mumbled" (Du Maurier 14) by Mrs Van Hopper and surprisingly correctly spelled by Maxim. Moreover, the unspoken name subjects her to her father. The protagonist suggests that her father has given her the family name, as well as her Christian name. In the conversation between Maxim and the narrator, "<You have a very lovely and unusual name.> <My father was a very lovely and unusual person.>" (25) an important connection between the name and a person's character is established. Afterwards the protagonist receives a new name – Mrs de Winter. However, firstly it belongs to her husband, and secondly, it was previously owned by another woman. Upon receiving the name and hence, subjectivity, the protagonist becomes *the second* Mrs de Winter. Moreover, she constantly hears about her predecessor, an owner of a name (Rebecca), often referred to as Mrs de Winter. The narrator makes an assumption, according to which Rebecca is more suitable to be called "Mrs de Winter" than her. When Mrs Danvers calls her in the morning-room using the house phone and asks for Mrs de Winter, the narrator automatically responds: "I'm afraid you have made a mistake, [...] Mrs de Winter has been dead for over a year" (95). The domination of Rebecca's name illuminates the fact that the protagonist does not have a name. She remains nameless even after receiving her husband's name.

Rebecca's name is connected with the act of writing. It is her way to oppose the dominant male subjectivity portrayed in the novel. Like Adam in Eden she has the power to name and possess. It is important to note that she modifies her husband's name to Max. Her handwriting appears in the texts written by her, her signatures (on the flyleaf of the book of poems) and monograms (on the handkerchief found in the mackintosh's pocket and on her belongings kept in her untouched bedroom). These are all proofs of self-articulation. Her handwriting is possessive, confident, "bold, [...] certain, so assured" (47), "alive, [...] full of force" (63), even aggressive – her hand seems to stab the paper with the pen. Rebecca's pen can be perceived as a tool and weapon. It reflects her agency, vitality and powerful sexuality. Rebecca's morning-room resembles

an office, it is “business-like and purposeful, [the writing-table is] no pretty toy” (94).

Her desk is arranged purposefully:

There was notepaper also in the drawer, thick white sheets, for rough writing, and the notepaper of the house, with the crest, and the address, and visiting cards, ivory white, in little boxes. I took one out and looked at it, unwrapped it from its thin tissue of paper. “Mrs M. de Winter” it said, and in the corner “Manderley” (94-95).

Horner analyses the theme as follows:

Rebecca’s writing is proof of her efficiency (she runs Manderley like a business), appearing to reinforce the portrait of the ideal wife. Arguably, Rebecca is presented in the tradition of the “*chatelaine*” (the word entered the English language in 1855 to mean the powerful mistress of a country house). [...] [T]he semiotic of Rebecca’s handwriting complicates our perception of her function in the novel. The household documents written by her signify both acceptance of a certain social role and the ability to carry it out with verve and sophistication. [...] It is this autonomous energy, implicit in Rebecca’s writing, which impresses itself on both the narrator and the reader. Thus, there is a duality in Rebecca’s writing, which seems to tell one story but which gives the lie to it in the actual appearance of the writing itself. The activity of writing, then, is seen to be implicated in the production of sexual subjectivity (113-114).

For Rebecca, writing is a struggle to remain a speaking subject outside the dialectic which according to Lacanian analysis is rooted in patriarchal culture. In the words of Abi-Ezzi:

[t]he idea of writing as a means of opposing male authority [...] frequently signifies a rebellion against the father-figure, highlighting the need for an integrated female identity not based upon patriarchal values.

[F]emale writing both opposes and replaces the continuation of the male line in the text (245 and 249).

Rebecca disguises herself as a perfect wife and the mistress of Manderley. It is a costume fitted to cover up her other self and to allow her to preserve her sexual identity. The point of this disguise is to emphasise physical appearance – beauty, grace and clothes. Despite their opinions of Rebecca, people surrounding her realised that she was very active. She managed the house by herself, frequently organised balls and parties, rode horses, and sailed. However, only Mrs Danvers and Maxim convey Rebecca’s hidden identity. According to them, her agency was connected with her sexuality. The

housekeeper describes the first wife with enthusiasm and respect, as an energetic, vivid, courageous, and physically strong woman. Rebecca dared to cross limits set by social rules and expectations. According to Mrs Danvers, the first wife accessed knowledge reserved for adults at a very young age. The housekeeper suggests that she had been engaged in a sexual relationship with her cousin, Jack Favell, since they were teenagers. Rebecca seduced her sexual partners and invited them to her cottage. She perceived romantic love as a game.

Rebecca rejects the place accorded her by Maxim and others within society. Instead, she integrates female and male characteristics in order to find her own way of self-expression. This situation forces her to transform her life into a masquerade. She becomes an actress in the costume of a beautiful society lady concentrated on her physical appearance and celebrated parties. She plays an ideal caring wife and the mistress of Manderley in order to remain independent. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik go even further:

Rebecca moves from functioning simply as a binary opposite of the second wife's character, to indicating the multiple possibilities inherent in a female sexual identity. [...] Mrs Danvers's love for Rebecca and Rebecca's own diverse sexuality function to destabilize the heterosexual desire which drives the plot. [...] The triangle of Rebecca, Maxim and the narrator can bear, in interpretative terms, a multiplicity of desires: those of the family romance; the father/daughter romance; incestuous desire; lesbian desire; bisexual desire; heterosexual desire. Similarly Rebecca herself manifests a dynamic multivalent negative alterity: she is whore, lesbian, bisexual, vampire, Jew (125-126).

In her enlightening rereading of *Rebecca*, Harbord brings together the phenomena of same-sex desire and masquerade. She also suggests the "fluidity" of Rebecca's subjectivity:

The emphasis on clothes, on Rebecca's wardrobe and her last worn garments, places an emphasis on costume and appearance, which sets up a binary between artifice and authenticity. This set of oppositional values ultimately works to condemn Rebecca in the course of the narrative, when the "true" Rebecca is revealed as a manipulator of truth, a deceiver. What is interesting about this, and perhaps part of the contemporary appeal of the text, is Rebecca's masquerade of femininity, the flaunting of the theatricality of gender identity. Rebecca has learned through her own social ascent how femininity is constructed in all its class manifestations; therefore this knowledge is used by her. [...] Yet Rebecca does not simply invert a binary

of virgin/whore; she refuses the terms of this restriction, to be contained by the structure. [...] [W]hat characterizes Rebecca is fluidity, the ability to shift between subject positions and across social and cultural spaces, to transform herself. What Rebecca is ultimately condemned for within the texts is also what makes her appealing: her transgression of the categories of class, gender and sexuality (102).

The first wife joins the sexual, somatic experience with the textual one. She becomes a speaking subject through the experience of her body. The discovery of her corpse is extremely significant for all subsequent incidents in the novel. It dramatically alters the course of events, and changes the relationship between Maxim and the protagonist. De Winter demonstrates the implications of the discovery in the following manner: “There is no time. [...] We may only have a few hours, a few days. How can we be together now that this has happened? I’ve told you they’ve found the boat. They’ve found Rebecca. [...] They’ll identify her *body*. [...] The clothes she had, the shoes, the rings on her fingers. They’ll identify her *body*” (301, my emphasis). Moreover, the sole discovery of Rebecca’s body causes the transformation of the protagonist into the first wife.

In opposition to the first wife, the narrator is initially symbolically unable to write. She fails to choose a sauce and write it in the blank space in the menu. Afterwards, her handwriting begins to reflect her a-subjectivity. Contrary to Rebecca’s, it is “cramped and unformed, [...] without individuality, without style, uneducated even, the writing of an indifferent pupil taught in a second-rate school” (98), “small square” (426). The protagonist feels obliged to sit by the desk, but she is inactive, she does not write. She repeats Rebecca’s every-day routine but her actions are ineffective and purposeless. “[I had] to sit by the morning-table [...] every day, and *touch* the pen she had held between her fingers. [I had] to *rest* [my] hands on the blotter, and *stare* in front of [myself] at her writing on the pigeon-holes” (154, my emphasis).

The vampirish first wife refuses to die entirely and attempts to contact the second wife. During the course of the novel a connection develops between Rebecca and the nameless narrator, however, it significantly varies from the positive, mystical bond between Bertha and Jane Eyre. While the latter becomes a detective, hears and sees Bertha when nobody else does, solves the mystery almost by herself, respects the first wife, displays compassion for her misery and does not get formally involved with Rochester, until Bertha’s death, the new Mrs de Winter treats Rebecca as a threat and a dangerous enemy. The protagonist enters into a “romantic” relationship with Maxim,

despite her assumption that he still loves his first wife. On their wedding day she has only two pieces of information about him: he owns the magnificent Manderley and he adores his dead wife.

Rebecca attempts to “tell” her story to the nameless narrator. As an experienced first wife/mother-figure, she offers her a solution – how to live a life slipping between conventions, using female and male attributes. Rebecca’s story could also be read as a warning. It illustrates the highest price paid for subjectivity and a demanding sexual identity. In order to return (the name of her boat is “je reviens”) and reveal the truth about her death, the first wife reaches for help from the protagonist. However, the latter does not follow the clues left by Rebecca. Contrary to Jane, she is a poor detective and completely misses the truth about Maxim and his first wife. Even after the re-emergence of Rebecca’s body, she still believes in Maxim’s love for his late wife.

The first wife communicates with the narrator via the unconscious desires of the latter. When the protagonist attempts to imitate Rebecca, and become a perfect wife and hostess of Manderley, she unintentionally gains access to her creativity, and sexuality. Despite her efforts to submerge it, Rebecca’s experience awakens and provokes her repressed identity. This process is visible in the fact that she begins to physically resemble the first wife. The narrator undergoes a transformation provoked by the experience of the first wife’s body:

I suppose it is his dependence upon me that made me bold at last. At any rate I have lost my diffidence, my timidity, my shyness with strangers. I am very different from that self who drove to Manderley for the first time.

I was not young anymore. I was not shy. I was not afraid.

I am another woman, older, more mature... (9-10, 320 and 50).

As she begins to resemble the first Mrs de Winter, as the wife and the mistress of the mansion, she automatically gains access to her own sexuality. Her first entrance to Manderley is associated with the (first) instance of sexual intercourse:

This drive twisted and turned *as a serpent*, [...] even the midday sun would not *penetrate* the interlacing of those green leaves, [...] it was very silent, very still [...] this drive that was no drive twisted and turned like an enchanted ribbon through the dark and silent woods, *penetrating even deeper* to the very heart surely of the forest itself, [...] and on either side of us was a wall of colour, *blood-red*, [...] *slaughterous* red, *luscious* and fantastic [flowers], unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before (71-72, my emphasis).

In her analysis of the dialectic of past and present in the context of same-sex desire, Janet Harbord stated the following:

The memory of Rebecca certainly haunts the characters and dominates the text as a sort of absent centre of desire, the imaginary lack. Recalled through others' memories, never in flashback as perceptual evidence, Rebecca is intimately tied to the fictionality of desire, always in the process of construction for the reader, recalled "through the eyes" of a number of characters (100).

Afterwards the narrator gives more proof of her subdued sexual desires. She observes that her husband treats her like a child and their relationship is not based on sexuality: "Would we never be together, he a man and I a woman, standing shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, with no gulf between us? I did not want to be a child. I wanted to be his wife, his mother. I wanted to be old" (220). She uses Maxim's absence from Manderley to explore places associated with Rebecca – the boathouse and her bedroom in the west wing. The rhythmic sound of the sea associated with both these places is linked with dreaming, unconsciousness and sexual intercourse. During her husband's absence she also meets Rebecca's lover, Jack Favell.

Rebecca's final death shapes the nature of the relationship bonding the narrator with Maxim. It finally begins to resemble a sexually-based partnership. Mr de Winter notices that his second wife has transformed from an infantile, immature girl into an adult. In his eyes she gains a sexual identity. Subsequently, they kiss passionately for the first time. I would also argue that the act of locking the bedroom doors for the night symbolically allows sexual intercourse.

Furthermore, the discovery of Rebecca's body automatically gives the protagonist a new identity and the ability to create. Her namelessness and anonymousness decrease. Maxim acknowledges her individuality upon referring to her by her Christian name, and she repossesses the title and name "Mrs de Winter". She says to Mrs Danvers: "I'm afraid it does not concern me very much what Mrs de Winter used to do, [...] I am Mrs de Winter now, you know" (326). Moreover, she assumes the position of a speaking subject and begins to write and express herself:

There were a lot of letters on my plate. [...] I took my letters along to the morning-room. [...] The menu for the day lay on the writing-desk. Cold salmon and mayonnaise, cutlets in aspic, galantine of chicken, soufflé. I recognised them all from the buffet-supper of the night of the ball. [...] I put a pencil through the list and rang for Robert (324-325).

Concomitantly, the protagonist attempts to submerge her sexual identity. She rejects the true, concealed identity of the first wife, and denies herself access to the sexually liberated and creative self. Despite her conversion, she still remains the first wife's opposite. After the discovery of Rebecca's body, the narrator finally becomes Mrs de Winter – the mistress of Manderley and Maxim's only wife. Hence, she becomes what was only a meaningless masquerade for Rebecca – the perfect wife and hostess of the house. Rebecca, with her costume of a wife and hostess, and her liberated sexuality, becomes her darkest doppelgänger. The first wife embodies the repressed sexual identity of the second wife. Throughout the novel, except for her first passionate kiss with Maxim and the night spent with him behind the locked door, the protagonist attempts to destroy Rebecca, along with everything the latter represents, including her own sexuality. She desires to dispose of any objects associated with the first wife's agency, independence and sexuality. The fire destroys Rebecca's signature on the flyleaf of the book of poems. The protagonist's wedding present, a collection of books about art smashes the first wife's wedding present into pieces. This is symptomatic, as the books – symbols of knowledge, education and theory – destroy a figure of the cupid – a symbol of physical love.<sup>77</sup> The narrator also plans to remove the statue of a faun surrounded by the luscious rhododendrons, as soon as she arrives back from London. The faun, later referred to as the satyr, is also a symbol of lust. This symbol returns in the article about the discovery of Rebecca's boat, where Maxim is compared to a satyr, because he remarried soon after his first wife's death. Moreover, when the first wife and Manderley – Maxim's substitute mothers – are destroyed, the protagonist begins to act like his nurturing mother. Their father-daughter bond reverses into a son-mother relationship. The narrator says to Maxim: "You are my father and my brother and my son. All those things" (163).

The nameless protagonist rejects this intimate connection with Rebecca. In contrast with *Jane Eyre*, she values the already established bond with her father-figure (Maxim) over the bond with the mother-figure. Within this Oedipal constellation, Rebecca represents the mother-figure twice – both for the narrator and Maxim. They work in cooperation to destroy her. In psychoanalytic terms, the mother-figure has to be betrayed and abandoned by the daughter, as she prevents the latter from joining her

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<sup>77</sup> These two representations are frequently confronted with each other in literary works analysed in this study. In *The Heathen*, "Green Shore" and "On Father and his Daughter" books serve as symbols of knowledge, and are associated with the father-figures. In *The Heathen*, Benjamin's father introduces the ABC, and his father-figure, Aspasia gifts him with extensive knowledge and erudition. The father of "Green Shore" self-educates his daughters, suggests books to read and manages a library. The father from Komornicka's fairy tale decides not to teach his daughter how to read or write. For the interrogation of father's education, see the section "(No) Education", pp. 192-200 below.

father in a sexual relationship. As Maxim's mother-figure, she also stands in his way of establishing a relationship with his (second) wife. Although he murders her, he fails to destroy her entirely. Rebecca's spirit nevertheless inhabits his house, memories and present thoughts. She is still referred to as "Mrs de Winter"; she remains Maxim's wife, the mistress of his beloved mansion and the heiress to his fortune. He visits Monte Carlo – the place where she revealed her true identity to him – in search of a second wife. He seems to believe, and he is correct, that Rebecca's polar opposite will enable the final defeat of his first wife. The child-like protagonist transforms from an innocent witness to an accomplice, to carry out the murder. Indeed, she participates in Rebecca's destruction from the beginning of the novel.

At first, the narrator ineffectively attempts to replace the first wife in Manderley. However, after the discovery of the body, when Rebecca symbolically returns and the protagonist has the chance to reveal the truth about the murder, she decides to hide it. In this moment, when she thoughtlessly accepts Maxim's actions, she ultimately unites with him and abandons her mother-figure. She destroys Rebecca and performs a symbolic murder. The first wife's body is burned and buried, and "the vampire" dies for the last time. In the light of the logic of the doppelgänger, the death of the double is analogous with the death of a person. Therefore, by rejecting Rebecca, the narrator represses the agency and sexuality she represents.

When Maxim reveals that he murdered Rebecca, the narrator behaves as if her deepest dreams had come true, because he also admits his love for her. He attempts to explain his reasons for killing Rebecca, but the narrator deliberately ignores his words. She concentrates on the second part of his confession, where he reveals his hatred for Rebecca. When Maxim asks the narrator, whether she understands him, she lies to him: "<Yes,> I said, <my sweet, my love.> But I looked away from him so he should not see my face. What did it matter whether I understood or not? My heart was light like a feather floating in the air. He had never loved Rebecca" (307). She does not question his motive for the murder, or its ethical perspective. Her husband has just confessed to murder, and she feels happy and relieved! She should be at least concerned by the fact that the victim was his wife.<sup>78</sup> "I did not say anything. I held his hands against my heart. I did not care about his shame. None of the things he had told me mattered to me at all. I clung to one thing only, and repeated it to myself, over and over again. Maxim did not love Rebecca. He had never loved her, never, never" (306). As a result of Maxim's actions, the protagonist can replace Rebecca in the position of de Winter's wife. She accomplishes what she has dreamed of from the very beginning of the story. She does

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<sup>78</sup> The folktale about Bluebeard springs to mind.

In "Furious Lovemaking" Sandra Gilbert analyses *Jane Eyre* as a story about Cinderella and Bluebeard.

not believe anymore that she is “not the sort of person men marry, [that she does not] belong to [Maxim’s] sort of world” (57), [and she is] “not right for Manderley” (165). Now she takes Manderley into her possession. She gives resolute orders to Mrs Danvers, changes the menu and participates in conversations with guests. She replaces rhododendrons in the morning-room with vases of roses. Symbolically, the maternity of the roses substitutes for lustful rhododendrons.

Although Rebecca holds the same position as Bertha, that of a substitute mother and an older experienced woman, the anonymous narrator does not acquire knowledge from, or through her. The protagonist recognises her reflection in the mirror at the beginning of the novel. However, the looking glass is broken, because it does not reflect a speaking subject: “[A] funny little cracked mirror above the basin. [...] This is the present. There is no past and no future. Here I am washing my hands, and the cracked mirror shows me to myself, suspended as it were, in time; this is me, this moment will not pass” (49). Contrary to Jane, she does not search for her own means of expression and immediately settles for subjection.

Instead, the narrator becomes a patriarchal speaking subject. She does not exceed the boundaries of femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, as did Rebecca. On the contrary, she accepts her husband’s domination and her role of a lower-class “companion”. As observed by Light, “[i]n order to become a social subject – to think of herself *as* a self – she learns to accept the regulation of female heterosexuality through class differences which themselves necessitate sexual competition between women” (16, original emphasis). She begins to express herself when Rebecca – the rival – is eliminated and replaced. Moreover, the protagonist speaks as an accomplice in the murder of the first wife, as she supports her husband and decides to keep his crime secret. Light makes a similar observation: “The girl, in becoming narrator of the crime, transfers her identification from Rebecca to Maxim, and invites the reader to do the same. Her own identity solidifies and secures itself around this endorsement of murder” (16). The abandonment of the mother results in losing a part of oneself. The death of her double leads the protagonist to subjective destruction.

As analysed above, the circular structure of the text suggests that the story may be interpreted as the product of the narrator’s imagination. However, this is not an innocent dream. It begins with sexual initiation. It is a dream about the assassination of the mother. The narrator’s decision to symbolically kill Rebecca indicates that she does not want to fulfil her dreams. As the novel unfolds, she gains access to her sexuality and creativity. However, eventually she rejects it. She re-represses her subdued identity. She decides to preserve her dreams in her imagination. In her fantasies she constantly returns to Manderley and compares herself with Rebecca. Only in her dreams does she allow

herself to get in touch with the fantasy. In reality, she chooses a dull, childless life with the symbolically castrated and blinded man (to whom she reads aloud) in the position of his protective mother. The situation of sexual partnership between the protagonist and her husband lasts for only one day. Manderley represents Maxim's sexual powers and when it is destroyed, he automatically loses them. Like Rochester, he becomes symbolically castrated.

Let us now interrogate Benjamin's complex relationship with her/his mother-figures – the mother and Aspasia – in the context of the choices of Jane Eyre and the nameless narrator of *Rebecca*. On the one hand, although (s)he is not an orphan, Benjamin searches for a substitute mother-figure different from her/his biological mother. At the same time, (s)he abandons her/his mother for a sexual partner (Aspasia).

Benjamin does not make an ultimate choice between her/his mother-figures. Instead, (s)he shifts many times from the sex-less relationship with her/his mother to the love affair with Aspasia – in contrast with Rochester and de Winter who consequently attempt to annihilate their first wives, in order to replace them with the second wives. (S)he repeatedly oscillates between the two stereotypical models of femininity represented by the Virgin Mary and the angel in the house (the mother), and Eve, *femme fatale*, the whore and the vampire (Aspasia). In her/his imagination, hallucination, or sexual fantasies (s)he chooses the pagan, sexual Aspasia over her/his biological mother. However, in reality Benjamin remains closer to the model of protective maternity. Indeed, (s)he loves the nonexistent fantasy and not the “real” woman from the castle. Moreover, (s)he aims to transform “the heathen” into the “imaginary” Aspasia. (S)he attempts to enforce her/his mother's good, protective, nurturing nature onto the woman from the castle, while acquiring her beauty and wealth.

Indeed, the protagonist constantly juggles between *three* maternal personas: the benign biological mother, the sexual heathen and the product of her/his imagination. Initially, (s)he remains in the Imaginary, in an emotional attachment with her/his biological mother. (S)he does not perceive her/his body's boundaries, does not differentiate her/himself from her/his biological mother. This becomes most clear when (s)he does not mention her/his mother upon introducing her/his entire family to the circle of friends gathered around the fireplace. (S)he explains her/his behaviour as follows:

[W]hy I have not yet mentioned my mother. Ah! for she has been present in every one of my memories; I have felt her beside me so much that it seems to me I have been talking about her, or talking to her, all the time. [...] I

had a mother!... because in every such moment I see her always before me  
(43).

The father additionally redirects Benjamin towards her/his “Mummy” and the Imaginary realm by taking away the ABC and teaching her/him certain words which are dependant on the imagination. The narrator idealises her/his, “loving, angelic [...] blessing...” (43) biological mother.

As the story unfolds, the protagonist breaks the metaphysical, intimate bond with her/his mother. Stimulated by Cyprian’s words about the perfect woman, Benjamin distances her/himself from the protective, selfless mother, and leaves home and the Imaginary behind, in order to form a sexual relationship with another woman. (S)he moves into a solitary cabin in the woods, meets Aspasia during a horserace and chooses to live with her in the castle. Analogously to Rochester and de Winter, (s)he rejects her/his mother-figure/first wife. However, contrary to them, (s)he replaces the nurturing mother-figure with the sexually domineering Aspasia and forms a sexually motivated relationship with her. This decision is contrary to the choice undertaken by Rochester and Maxim de Winter, who substitute sexual first wives for maternal second wives, and it constitutes the essential difference between Benjamin and the characters in the British novels. The Polish protagonist undergoes a significant transformation. Her/his initial innocence, inexperience in love and lack of sexual initiation gradually disappear when her/his sexual desires are awakened by Cyprian’s speech about the ideal Aspasia, and when (s)he chooses an older, experienced, sexually demanding partner.

Further into the novel, (s)he abandons her/his lover, returns home, and immediately regains her/his mother’s love and care. However, after her/his mother’s death, Benjamin desires to rejoin with Aspasia. The latter rejects her/his offer and the protagonist continues a lonely life. Therefore, while Ursula Phillips and other scholars believe that Benjamin chooses Aspasia over her/his biological mother twice, my own point of view is that (s)he indecisively shifts her/his feelings between the two women/wives/mothers, until their death or final rejection of her/his affection.

In *The Heathen* the issue of assuming subjectivity and sexuality is complex. Firstly, the acquisition vastly depends on the result of the battle fought by Benjamin’s two mother-figures over her/his sexuality. While the meeting with Aspasia fuels the awakening of Benjamin’s sexuality, her/his biological mother attempts to restrain it. The battle between the two mother-figures constitutes two pivotal struggles. The first confrontation of the protective mother and Aspasia personified by a snake takes place in the attic. The mother interrupts the presentation of Cyprian’s painting by suddenly entering the room and causing the artist to drop the snakish canvas, which rolls on the

floor away from the protagonist. Benjamin acknowledges the significance of this moment with the following words:

[I]n that moment two opposing spirits were battling over my future. The spirit of darkness cast down by my mother's hand, still clumsily wrapped in the rough canvas of its packaging, rolled about slowly on the floor like a filthy reptile unwilling to concede ground; whilst the spirit of light, the woman, the mother, with her calm smile, her affectionate word, obliterated its power, wiped away moment by moment its sway over my life; and it was repulsed to a point far off – repulsed at least for the time being (qtd. in Phillips, "Femme Fatale" 42).

The biological mother wins this first battle by delaying the moment in which the narrator sees the painting.

The second struggle between the two mother-figures takes place in Benjamin's imagination. This circumstance additionally indicates that it is a confrontation over the protagonist's sexuality. Cyprian's death causes the protagonist to lose consciousness and to hallucinate about her/his mother-figures, while lying in bed. The first figure is an exaggerated representation of her/his biological mother. It is an old, impoverished, overprotective crone guarding *the bed*. It symbolises a shameful attachment to a poor, simple, uneducated life, and imprisonment. The second woman is the beautiful, glamorous and wealthy Aspasia from the castle. In the dream the protagonist attempts to escape her/his unattractive guardian and join "the heathen". Aspasia wins this second battle. However, when the narrator wakes up from the hallucination, (s)he sees the "imaginary" Aspasia, or rather (s)he enforces motherly features onto the woman from the castle. Benjamin interprets her behaviour as protective and tender, although she herself perceives it in an entirely different light. The hallucinatory battle ends in symptomatic circumstances. The protagonist wakes in the water – a symbol of birth, motherhood (waters surrounding the embryo in the womb) and rebirth.

Furthermore, Benjamin's repeated decisions to leave one of her/his mother-figures and unite with the other mother-figure are based on Aspasia's choices and moods. When "the heathen" throws her/him out of the castle during the costume ball, (s)he obediently returns to her/his cabin. But when Aspasia proclaims her love for her/him, Benjamin immediately leaves home, moves into the castle and shortly forgets about her/his family:

"Wait a moment... love... love you... Oh! Wasn't that precisely what I was looking for?... Who knows? Why should I not love you? [...] I want love. Beni, my Beni, love me, and I will love you..." [...] [W]e rowed upstream together and I forgot about everything, forgot about Cyprian's death. Aspasia relieved my soul of its grief for the dead man (97-99).

As the story unfolds, the narrator becomes unhappy, but (s)he does not leave Aspasia until the latter decides: “I do not love you. You do not love me. Let us go our separate ways, Benjamin” (104). Subsequently, the protagonist desires to rejoin Aspasia after her/his mother’s death but, as “the heathen” prefers separation and she makes the decision, Benjamin remains in her/his family home. Her/his passivity supports the interpretation that (s)he is a feminine subject.

The second characteristic of embracing sexuality and subjectivity in *The Heathen* is that the process is initiated by the sexually-based relationship with Aspasia who embodies feminine, as well as masculine features. As the substitute sexual mother, she introduces the protagonist into sexuality; as the father-figure she enables her/him to encompass language and education, and to enter the Symbolic realm.<sup>79</sup> Aspasia introduces Benjamin into culture, and science. On her behalf, the (s)he becomes an erudite, lettered diplomat, and “an exceptionally talented young man, a brilliant author of an important work on Ethiopian antiquity and of a brilliant little book of short poems [...] as well as our most excellent diplomat” (106, my trans.)<sup>80</sup> Benjamin describes her/his metamorphosis as follows:

Happiness, beauty and intellect, they were my love. Until then I had lived by whatever life had brought me of its own volition; now I spread my jealous arms and reached out on all sides in search of dreams, revelations, knowledge. [...] Now, nothing was indifferent, nothing was empty. Now I had to take something from everything, extract a moment of pleasure, interest, learning. [...] I had discovered a new world, another different world, a complete world. [...] [O]nly then did I let loose all the elements of my being, like a ship lets loose its sails to the wind, as I flew away, rushing headlong into infinity... into infinity!

I was addressed as count, baron, lord, *eccellenze*; that a doctoral cap was conferred on my head; and that once, when I was speaking, a gathering of solemn men in mortarboards and long black gowns bared their wolfish fangs at me and applauded with their fat, lean or bony hands...” (62-63 and 102-103).

Although the protagonist undergoes a transformation into a sexual subject on Aspasia’s account, (s)he remains emotionally attached to her/his first love-object: the

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<sup>79</sup> For the interpretation of Aspasia as a powerful father-figure, see the section “(No) Education”, pp. 193-195 below.

<sup>80</sup> “młodzieniec niepospolitych zdolności, genialny autor ważnego dzieła o starożytnościach etiopskich i zachwycającej książeczki drobnych poezyj [...] oraz najznakomitszy spomiędzy dyplomatyków naszych”

biological mother. In this regard, Benjamin significantly varies from Rochester and de Winter, and resembles Alla who is unable to separate from her father. The second love-objects of Benjamin and Alla – Aspasia, and Alla’s mother and husband, respectively – do not weaken the emotional attachment to the first love-objects. Benjamin and Alla both travel to distant countries, only to return to the destination associated with their mother and father, respectively.

Benjamin repeatedly abandons her/his mother-figures and finally destroys all three women: her/his biological mother, her/his lover and the product of her/his imagination. First, (s)he unintentionally contributes to the death of her/his mother. The night after her son’s return, the latter suddenly begins to suffer physically. It seems that her illness and death are caused by Benjamin’s homecoming. The protagonist hears an inner voice in her/his head repeating: “You are killing her – killing her” (109). Afterwards, Benjamin burns the painting and simultaneously destroys the nonexistent, “imaginary” Aspasia shifted onto the image painted by Cyprian, and the “real” woman from the castle. In this regard, the protagonist subconsciously assassinates her/his protective, as well as sexual mother-figures – in contrast to Rochester and de Winter who attempt to eliminate only their sexual mother-figures/first wives.

In *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* and *The Heathen* the daughter-figures (repeatedly) abandon their mother-figures, while in “On Father and his Daughter”, “Green Shore” and “Miss Florentine” the mothers leave their daughters.

The behaviour of the mothers of “On Father and his Daughter” and “Green Shore” demonstrates ambivalence. The mother from the fairytale resembles Bertha Mason who “resurrects” from the ambiguous sphere of the attic and visits Jane Eyre, while the protagonist is asleep. However, while Bertha aims to warn Jane against Rochester, Alla’s mother reappears in her daughter’s sleeping chamber in order to push her into marriage with an unknown groom. She promises an idyll and lures the protagonist with sweet music, floral scent, the amusing companionship of her brothers and sisters, and, most importantly, with her own divine, sexual presence to obediently comply with her instructions. Following the “prince in the shining armour”, Alla escapes the sphere of the father and subsequently immediately becomes a wife. In this capacity she enters the Symbolic realm on behalf of her mother. This is an instant transformation from a daughter into a wife, from one man to another, from one bedroom to another.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This theme of passing women from one man to another returns in “Green Shore”, see this section, pp. 174-175 below.

Compare to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s notion of women as objects of exchange presented in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, and to Irigaray’s answer to his observations in “Women on the Market”.

The mother takes the protagonist directly from her sleeping chamber in the castle to the wedding feast. When does the protagonist decide to get married? When does she choose the groom? The answer to both questions is that she does not. The heretofore-absent mother arranges everything. In the castle, surrounded by the music, the scent of flowers and the joyful companions, she promises much, but in reality she can only offer marriage with an accidental stranger. As a result, Alla cannot constitute herself as a speaking subject.

The father cannot restrain and control his daughter's sexual desires outside the castle – Alla assumes her sexuality in the peripheral mother's land. This fact is indicated in her transformation from a numb, dormant, inactive "sleeping beauty" into a sexually awakened woman. Her burning red lips, face and chest, the glowing eyes, the heavy breathing, the blinking of her eyes, the loose hair suggest an aroused sexuality, or even intercourse. "She was sitting by the wedding table next to the groom. Her eyes, large as moons, were ablaze with happiness, love was burning her small lips blossoming with purple. She panted with unconscious happiness and repeatedly closed and opened her eyes" (94).<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the interaction between the protagonist and her husband has a sexual undertone. Initially, the groom kisses his wife's long braids – as the hair is a sexual symbol, hair restrained in braids suggests controlled sexuality. The husband intends to increase Alla's desire and, indeed, her appearance becomes more eroticised. When she searches for the groom, she has a burning face and chest, and her hair is not arranged in braids anymore. It is loose, like the hair of the lascivious Bertha Mason, Rebecca and Mrs Brońska. Most importantly, Alla has a sexual purpose in seeking the groom: at the conclusion of the fairytale she awaits him in her sleeping chamber, in bed.

The mother fulfils the role of a matchmaker and disappears as soon as Alla leaves the castle and becomes a wife. She does not even accompany her during the wedding feast. She is indifferent to Alla's problems with the absent husband and the spirit of the dead father. Filipiak points out that the mother's return only emphasises her lack:

Although the presence of the mother has been disclosed, her absence has deepened – oddly, inexplicably, essentially. The mother does not share Alla's happiness by the wedding table. She does not advise her how to deal with the father's messengers. She disappears in a key moment and does not help her daughter to avoid the trap in the sleeping chamber.

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<sup>82</sup> "siedziała przy uczcie weselnej – a obok siedział pan młody. Szczęście płonęło w jej oczach, jak księżyc wielkich, - miłość paliła jej usta, małe, kwitnące purpurą. Dyszała radością bezprzytomną – i kolejno zamykała i otwierała powieki."

[Her] power is not credible. Her tradition is an illusion. Her nature is too carefree. Her attitude towards the daughter is frivolous. Her absence in the key moment is a broken promise (337 and 338).

The entourage created by the mother – referring to motherhood and femininity, establishing the doubling connection between the mother and the daughter, suggesting that the mother's sphere is a pleasant place – is just a masquerade designed to lure Alla. When the mother recedes, the joyful, fairytale-like atmosphere instantly disappears and the wedding feast transforms into a violent sexual orgy, or a *bakkheia*. “The uncountable horde of radiant creatures dressed in clouds, flowers and stars [who] [g]rabbed their hands and surrounded [Alla] with hundreds of circles, small and large, and swung to the rhythm of the tune faster and faster, and swirled around [Alla] throwing flowers on her while dancing” (90-91)<sup>83</sup> become self-absorbed, violent wedding guests. Their joyful dance transforms into an orgiastic trance: “Nobody in the ballroom thought about Alla or about the groom. They danced to the bitter end, the violin wheezed, the trumpets yowled; couples swirled chaotically, occasionally hitting each other, forming circles, small circles, crosses” (97).<sup>84</sup> The guests embrace pleasure and forget about Alla. She feels lonely upon receiving the news about her father's death and upon unsuccessfully searching for her absent husband. Naturally, the mother is absent when the deadly ghost of the father appears and takes the protagonist with him.

Furthermore, in “On Father and his Daughter” the mother does not offer liberation from the emotional, destructive attachment to the father. In the castle she promises “to rescue [Alla] from her imprisonment” (91)<sup>85</sup> and “to conquer [father's] magic” (91)<sup>86</sup>, but the truth is that her intervention does not change anything. Although she escapes the castle, Alla remains spellbound. She begins to perceive the father as her only love-object; he is still in control of her sexuality – furthermore, of aroused sexuality. She is incapable of forming a (sexual) relationship with another man. Her appearance and demeanour change when she is thinking about the father: “To cover up her fear and sorrow [associated with the father], the bride [drinks] wine and *let[s] her lover kiss her*” (95-96, my emphasis).<sup>87</sup> When the father's messengers arrive, she begins a wild, eroticised dance. Kralkowska-Gątkowska notices that “[w]hen Alla goes dancing [with

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<sup>83</sup> “nieprzejrzane zastępy istot promiennych, strojnych w obłoki, w kwiaty, w gwiazdy [które] [u]jawszy się za ręce, otoczyły [Allę] setkami kęgów coraz szerszych, - a kołysząc się w takt pieśni coraz prędzej i prędzej – wirowały koło [Alli] obrzucając ją w przelocie kwiatami.”

<sup>84</sup> “A w sali nikt nie myślał ani o Alli, ani o panu młodym. Tańczono do upadłego, charczały skrzypce, wyły trąby, pary wirowały w zamęcie, uderzając chwilami o siebie, łącząc się w koła, kółka, krzyżyki.”

<sup>85</sup> “wybawić [Allę] z niewoli”

<sup>86</sup> “czary na [ojca] czary”

<sup>87</sup> “panna młoda, by zagłuszyć nagle trwogę i bolesć, piła wino i dała się całować oblubieńcowi swemu”

her hair loose] she is alone, partnerless. Dance symbolically represents an erotic act. Therefore, we can interpret a lonely dance as the rejection of the erotic” (“Cień twarzy” 109). I agree that the protagonist rejects the groom, but I would like to suggest that she dances for her father. The rather insipid husband only temporarily substitutes for the father.<sup>88</sup> Initially he rivals with the latter for Alla’s attention and affection: when the father’s messenger “drop[s] to the ground wanting to embrace Alla’s legs with his arms, [t]he groom pushe[s] him away” (96).<sup>89</sup> Afterwards, the protagonist perceives the two men as doppelgangers and, finally, she exchanges the groom for the father. The husband suddenly disappears during the feast, because Alla rejects him as a sexual partner and symbolically hails the father. The latter reappears in the life of the protagonist, revived by her sexual desire. Her relationship with the father is of a masochistic nature. His activity is contrasted with her passivity. This is most evident in the final scene, when Alla lays in bed paralysed by fear, and the father finds her, approaches her and murders her.

This calls for an interpretation in relation to the fairytale genre. Kralkowska-Gątkowska underlines similarities between “On Father and his Daughter” and the fairytale “O niedobrej córce” (“On Bad Daughter”). In the latter tale the female protagonist chooses an affluent prince over her impoverished father. The father discovers her location and approaches her palace, but he is thrown out. The daughter is ashamed of him and her simple background. During the ball thrown by the protagonist on All Souls’ Day, the father returns in the form of a ghost and carries the daughter off to the land of the dead.

Although Bertha and Carolina of “Green Shore” perceive their parents in absolute terms, and present their mother as a victim, her behaviour demonstrates great ambivalence. She is predominantly selfish, irresponsible, infantile and cruel. She values her personal happiness and freedom, more than her children’s wellbeing. The mother abandons her daughters twice. After secretly sneaking out of the house, and leaving her daughters with a despotic, insanely rigorous, suspicious and jealous man, she suddenly appears in the village and wishes to see her daughters. Bertha and Carolina assume forthwith that she will take them away. Only this time Bertha, the agoraphobic and hysteric, leaves home without the permission of her father. However, the mother is not concerned about her daughters’ lives, she is only interested in issues associated with

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<sup>88</sup> In the words of Kralkowska-Gątkowska, the groom is “a by-product of women’s miseducation. Starting from their childhood, women are being inculcated with the need to marry a beautiful, preferably a-sexual youngster (husband-doll!) designed to answer their every whim and aesthetically complement the marital land of ideal happiness” (“Cień twarzy” 108).

<sup>89</sup> “I padłszy na ziemię, chciał rękami objąć nogi Alli. Odepchnął go pan młody.”

herself. The narrator notices that “she did not even ask about [their] happiness” (47).<sup>90</sup> Instead she asks: “Is Bertha taking piano lessons, do[es Carolina] remember mummy” (47)<sup>91</sup> – foreshadowing future events. Furthermore, she is just a passerby who does not intend to take her children with her. She organises the meeting in order to demonstrate her happiness, everlasting beauty and youth, and her handsome male companion. There is a suggestion that she hopes her daughters will inform the father about her success. Secondly, their presence in green shore would destroy her perfect world, for example, by indicating her true age. She states to her masculine companion: “I am not vain at all: I didn't hesitate to show you that my daughters are this big” (48)<sup>92</sup>, suggesting that she *is* vain and her youth is essential to her. Also, the fact that the man acknowledges Carolina's beauty and compares it with the mother's, indicates that the mother might perceive the narrator as her rival. For the second time, the mother drives away without a hint of hesitation or remorse.

Moreover, the mother misleads her daughters upon promising a future reconciliation. Her true intentions are visible during the meeting. That she does not plan to return or send for the sisters is most clear in her own words: “You see, my dear child – she was speaking and kissing [Carolina] hastily – mummy cannot take you now, it's impossible.... Later – someday... When you are older, surely, surely – I will take you” (48).<sup>93</sup>

Contrary to the manifested intentions, she does return – as a ghost. The short story provides two interpretations of her second homecoming. Margaret emphasises the ghastliness and ugliness of the dead mother. In her vision the terrifying, lonely, vengeful spirit directs its hatred towards the father and (again) ignores the daughters. According to the maid, despite the fact that God allowed the mother to leave purgatory in order to visit her children, she exhibits more interest in seeing the father:

She... Visits the father first – she looks at him from above – leans over. Oh, she is not that gorgeous anymore. Her magnificent body has been eaten by the torment of atonement... She doesn't have lips – but she is still laughing... And it is horrible... She leans over him – her empty eyes reach his heart – and she is laughing with bare teeth, she is laughing vengefully, to terrify him to the bone. [...] [I]n her lipless mouth – the teeth always flash –

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<sup>90</sup> “ani słowem nie zapytała [...] czy [im] jest dobrze”

<sup>91</sup> “Czy Berta uczy się grać, czy [Karolina] pamięta [...] mamusię”

<sup>92</sup> “ja nic nie jestem próżna: nie wahałam się pokazać ci, że mam już takie duże córki.”

<sup>93</sup> “Widzisz dziecko moje – mówiła pospiesznie wśród pocałunków – mamusia teraz zabrać was nie może, nie może w żaden sposób... Później – kiedyś... Jak będziecie starsze, na pewno, na pewno – zabiorę.”

so although she cries, she looks like she is laughing. She is aware of her monstrousness (63-64).<sup>94</sup>

The second vision of the mother's spirit is portrayed by Bertha, who invariably idealises and presents the mother as a victim, and emphasises her attractiveness.

The ambivalent nature of the mother is also manifested in her significant contribution to the death of Margaret's baby. The father summarises the situation as follows: "[D]o you remember the baby that died of hunger because you bought its mother's milk. You killed it" (65).<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, during the course of the story, it becomes clear that she does not regret her selfish decisions. Her murderous inclinations become evident when she returns in the form of a ghost and demands her husband's death: "To live – two dead bodies... To die – I still need yours" (66)<sup>96</sup> – she says.

The ambivalent mother of "Green Shore" does not constitute an independent speaking subject, and she cannot offer autonomy and subjectivity to her daughters. She is associated with sexuality and vampirism, but her sexuality is not liberated, as in the case of Bertha Mason, Rebecca, or Jane Eyre, as she remains emotionally connected to her husband. She meets with the daughters in the village in order to prove to him her happiness; she writes a letter to him and dies as a consequence of his silence. Moreover, the fact that a man assisted her in her escape suggests that she is not an autonomous subject. Instead, she is symbolically passed from one man (husband) by another man (servant) to the third man (lover).

Furthermore, in green shore the mother becomes involved in a conventional relationship. This is mostly manifested by her behaviour during the secret meeting. She embodies the stereotypical ideal woman: beautiful, young, emotional and affectionate. Despite the fact that she is not interested in her daughters' happiness and that she leaves them behind, she demonstrates fondness and tenderness towards them. She continually kisses and hugs them, and gently presses their heads against her breast. She leaves with tears in her eyes, waving a handkerchief and sending kisses from the moving carriage. Her conventional femininity is additionally emphasised by the stereotypical masculine attributes of her companion: power, wealth and reticence.

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<sup>94</sup> "A ona... Naprzód idzie do ojca – staje nad nim – pochyla się. Och nie jest już tak piękna, jak dawniej. Męki ekspiacji wyżarły jej przecudne ciało... Nie ma już warg – a jednak śmieje się jeszcze... I to jest potworne... Pochyla się nad nim – oczy puste wpija węń aż po serce – i śmieje się nagimi zębami, śmieje się mściwie, by go najwięcej przerazić. [W] ustach jej bez warg – zawsze błyszczą zęby – i to w płaczu nawet wygląda, jak śmiech. Wie, że jest straszna."

<sup>95</sup> "[P]amiętasz małe dziecko, które umarło z głodu, boś kupiła mleko jego matki. Zabiłaś je."

<sup>96</sup> "Dla życia mego – dwa trupy... Jeszcze dla śmierci mej – potrzeba mi twego."

Carolina duplicates her mother's actions, encompasses her sexuality and enters the Symbolic realm, but she does it on her own account. She resembles Benjamin and Alla in her travel to a distant land associated with a sexual mother-figure. The protagonist escapes from her austere family home, and the father who restricts language and education. Similarly to Alla, Carolina physically replaces the father with the husband, daughterhood with wifhood, and in this capacity she enters the Symbolic realm. An additional correspondence in the circumstances of both marriages lies in the fact that Carolina hastily marries a scarcely known man. She chooses him only because of his brother, who is an adversary of her father and a priest. He is eager to help with the escape and has the ability to perform a marriage ceremony. In the words of the narrator: "I ran away with the brother of the local priest who disliked our father and eased the complicated marital formalities. We had seen each other only few times before – by coincidence" (54).<sup>97</sup>

The fact that in the scene of a spider and a fly, the protagonist does not perceive the spider in terms of an aggressor brings to mind interpretations of the spider web as representing feminine creation. In "Przędki, tkaczki i pająki" ("Spinners, Weavers and Spiders") Kazimiera Szczuka lists mythological weavers: Penelope, Moirae and Arachne. In Greco-Roman mythology the latter, whose name denotes "a spider" in Greek language, was an excellent mortar weaver very proud of her craft. After losing a weaving contest to her, Athena destroyed her tapestry and slashed the woman's face out of jealousy. Arachne hanged herself, but Athena decided to transform her into a spider.<sup>98</sup> Feminist critique modifies Roland Barthes's theory of *Hyphology* (Gr. *hyphos*, "tissue", "spider's web") presented in *The Pleasure of the Text* and arguing that "the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving" (64), and replaces it with *Arachnology*. Borkowska presents the theory in the following way:

The story of Arachne is a metaphor for female creativity – whatever you create, you always create yourself. Whatever you reveal, you always reveal yourself. Women who write (create) are rooted inside the constructed discourse, unable to distance themselves, to break free of their ties binding them to the text, incapable of concealing themselves, of veiling themselves or of running away ("Alienated Women" 9-10).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "Uciekłam z bratem miejscowego księdza, który nie lubił ojca i dlatego ułatwił nam skomplikowane formalności ślubne./ Przedtem widzieliśmy się zaledwie parę razy – przypadkowo."

<sup>98</sup> See book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, pp. 208-245.

<sup>99</sup> On the discussion of weaving and femininity, see: Barthes, *S/Z*; Daly; Heilbrun; Miller, *Arachnologies*; Weigle.

Indeed, Carolina becomes a sexual speaking subject. Firstly, she is the narrator of the story and of her father's death – she recounts the events while Bertha murders the father. Secondly, she succeeds in expressing her desire through her marriage and love affairs. Thirdly, contrary to Benjamin and Alla, she makes the choice to leave the father, and subsequently to return to him. In this capacity, she resembles Jane Eyre.

Contrary to Benjamin and Alla, the protagonist begins to assume her sexuality before reaching the sphere associated with the mother. The absent, but well-remembered, sexual mother fuels her desire for green shore: “After all, I always longed for green shore” (42)<sup>100</sup> – confesses Carolina. Moreover, the circumstances of her escape have a sexual undertone: she tempts and seduces her future husband: “I was wealthy, almost as beautiful as my mother, I told him I longed for green shore, I asked him to take me there and I was the first to kiss him on the lips. So he fell in love with me” (54).<sup>101</sup> While Alla perceives her father as the only sexual partner, Carolina becomes sexually involved with her husband and her lovers – she kisses them, “bathe[s] in wine and flowers” (56)<sup>102</sup> with them. In her marriage she reduplicates her mother's behaviour and automatically assumes a submissive, inferior position to that of her husband: she presses her body against his legs in a servile position. After the divorce, she begins to treat love in terms of a game, similarly to Rebecca and Aspasia. She describes her love affairs in the following way:

First – a marvellous, fair-haired boy, as young as me. I meant for him, what my husband meant for me. And when I got my revenge – I left. Second – a sinister, formidable lover who could not forgive me my past, although he had experienced much more than I had. Finally, the third – cheerful, ecstatic in love, optimistic in life (56).<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, despite her liberated sexuality, represented by numerous love affairs, Carolina does not liberate herself from emotional and intellectual dependency on her father. Again, she resembles Alla, who remains emotionally and sexually attached to her despotic father-figure. In the quotation below, she speaks about her two true love-objects: firstly the mother and secondly the father. The first part of her statement relates to the time before her escape. Her long plait indicates childhood and sexual innocence.

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<sup>100</sup> “Tęskniłam przecież zawsze do zielonego wybrzeża.”

<sup>101</sup> “Byłam bogata i prawie tak piękna, jak moja matka, powiedziałam mu, że tęsknię za zielonym wybrzeżem, prosiłam, by mię tam zaprowadził i pierwsza pocałowałam jego usta. Więc pokochał mię.”

<sup>102</sup> “Kąp[ie] się we winie i kwiatach”

<sup>103</sup> “Naprzód – cudny chłopiec jasnowłosy, równie młody, jak ja. Byłam dla niego tym, czym mój mąż dla mnie. A gdy już nasyciłam swą zemstę – odeszłam. Później drugi – posepny, groźny kochanek, który nigdy nie mógł mi przebaczyć mej przeszłości, jakkolwiek sam miał znacznie barwniejszą. Trzeci wreszcie – pogodny, ekstatyczny w miłości, pozytywny w życiu.”

The flowers – lilies-of-the-valley, roses and jasmine – are linked with the mother. After the disappearance or death of the mother, the protagonist transfers her feelings onto her father. In the second part of the quotation she associates her “first *lover*” (not *husband*) with paternal features: wisdom, consciousness and a powerful, controlling gaze. She claims that she was happy only with her first sexual partner:

Memories fall on me like flower rain – and it comes back. Warm, wet, scented kisses – Ah – they were never so sweet, as in this sad, lonely memory – when they belong to the past. Come back – again, once again in this same, very bizarre life, once again... White lilies-of-the-valley, cold rose petals, the scent of jasmine – once again. [...] [A]h, to gently press my sad head to your beloved legs... On my hair, done in a plait like in the past – on my silk hair I need your caressing hand. [...] - My first lover – I miss your eyes, your calm, wise, conscious eyes! Once again – this merciful reigning gaze – on my eyes, unconscious of love... (59-60).<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, during the course of the story, Carolina reinforces her emotional attachment to her father. She describes the reasons for returning home in the following way: “As a result – a great boredom – and a telegram to the solitary, grim house, to the ill sister and the evil father, saying that I want to return...” (56).<sup>105</sup> Her homecoming symbolically reverses her escape. The father never mentions her flight and return. She automatically re-assumes the position of an obedient, fearful, desexualised daughter: “Strange – over there, at a distance, the father was not dreadful for me anymore, but the moment I came back – everything has returned and is as powerful as before...” (50).<sup>106</sup> She also reverses her sexual initiation: moves back to her old room upstairs (in the “attic”) with “white walls that had seen [her] *un-kissed* lips...” (41, my emphasis)<sup>107</sup>, suggesting her subdued sexuality. The grandmother ignores her marital status, by calling her “a girl” (52).<sup>108</sup> The protagonist does not forget or regret her sexual experiences, but with her ultimate return home, she nevertheless rejects her sexual nature. She also

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<sup>104</sup> “Wspomnienia spadają na mnie, jak deszcz kwiatów – wraca tamto. Ciepłe, wilgotne, pachnące pocałunki – Ach – nigdy nie były takie słodkie, jak w tym przesmutnym, samotnym wspomnieniu – gdy są już minione. Powróćcie – jeszcze, raz jeden jeszcze w tym, w tym samym, strasznie dziwnym życiu, jeszcze raz... Konwalie białe, chłodne płatki róży, pachnące jaśminy – jeszcze raz. [...] [A]ch, głowę smutną przytulić miękko do twoich ukochanych nóg... Na włosach, spływających jak dawniej w warkoczu – na włosach moich jedwabnych ręki twej głaszczącej mi trzeba. [...] - Kochanku mój pierwszy – do oczów twoich tęsknię, do twych spokojnych, mądrych, pełnych świadomości oczu! Raz jeden jeszcze – to spojrzenie łaskawe panowania – na moich oczach, z miłości nieprzytomnych...”

<sup>105</sup> “W rezultacie ogromna nuda – i telegram do samotnego, ponurego domu, do chorej siostry i złego ojca, że chcę powrócić.”

<sup>106</sup> “To dziwne – tam, z dala, ojciec zupełnie prawie stracił dla mnie swą grozę, a z chwilą, gdy tu przyjechałam – wszystko dawne powróciło z tą samą siłą...”

<sup>107</sup> “Te ściany białe, które widziały moje nie całowane usta...”

<sup>108</sup> “dzieweczkami”

subdues her subjectivity and succumbs to the silence imposed on the sisters by the father.

However, Carolina becomes a subject *in connection* with her father. This is most clear in the fact that she perceives marriage in philosophical terms, in relation to the misogynistic ideas of her father. She espouses his pessimistic attitude towards love: “Probably the loss of his wife has changed the father into a great mocker of the world. He perceived love with Schopenhauer's eyes, women – with Strindberg's. And he held both in deep contempt. The lectures he gave us during his long talks always ordered us to defeat the woman in ourselves” (53-54).<sup>109</sup> Carolina believes in “[t]he idea of first love, exclusive, undivided” (55)<sup>110</sup>, and destroys her unsatisfying marriage with demands for true affection, devotion and fidelity. Finally, she refuses to accept social inequality in marriage represented by her husband's betrayal. She summarises the relationship with the following words: “I understood [...] this great truth: only the death of love enables one to start living” (56).<sup>111</sup>

While Carolina's subjectivity remains attached to her father, the hysterical, musical language of communication and the ability to “see” indicate that Bertha is an independent speaking subject. As stated above, in her case, music and hysteria represent creative powers translating a feminine perspective.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, in “Green Shore” gaze is not a tool of control, as in *Jane Eyre*, but an opportunity to see more:

And I raise my eyes, despite my greatest fear... And when I see this *depth* and *distance* – *eternal distance* – Carolina! - - ! [Bertha] covered her eyes with her hands in reaction to the mere image. And – the most amazing thing is – her fair, transparent, light-blue pupils capable of bearing only closed space between the four walls of our house, always had this expression as if they constantly looked at the *deepest depth* of the *furthest distance*... (57, my emphasis).<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, while the younger sister ultimately subdues her sexual self, Bertha's sexuality develops along with her neuroses and her composition on green shore. Although Carolina perceives her as unwell and feeble, Bertha has the power to murder

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<sup>109</sup> “Prawdopodobnie pod wpływem utraty żony ojciec stał się wielkim wżgardzicielem świata. Na miłość patrzył oczyma Schopenhauera, na kobietę – oczyma Strindberga. I obiema gorzko pogardzał. W naukach, które nam dawał podczas swych długich rozmów, kazał nam zawsze przewyciężyć w sobie kobietę.”

<sup>110</sup> “[p]ojęcie miłości pierwszej, wyłącznej, niepodzielnej.”

<sup>111</sup> “zrozumiałam [...] wielką prawdę, że dopiero po trupie miłości można wejść w życie.”

See also the section “(No) Education”, pp. 192-200 below.

<sup>112</sup> See the section “Hysteria and Music”, p. 145 above.

<sup>113</sup> “I podnoszę oczy, chociaż tak strasznie się boję... A z chwilą, kiedy ujrzę tę głęb i tę dal – nieskończoną dal – Karolino --! Na samo wyobrażenie oczy zakryła rękami. I – co najdziwniejsze – jej jasne, przezroczyste źrenice błękitne, kóre spokojnie znieść mogą tylko przestrzeń zamkniętą czterema ścianami domu, w każdej chwili mają taki wyraz, jakby zawsze patrzyły w nagłębszą głęb najdalszej dali...”

the father. Her language of expression – music – serves as the murder weapon, while the younger sister can only narrate the events. In this regard, Carolina's and Bertha's attitude towards their mother – Carolina's "mourning" and Bertha's music – bring to mind Irigaray's description of the acquisition of language by a girl: "Girls do not enter language in the same way as boys. If they are too overcome by mourning [after their mother], they do not enter language at all. Otherwise, they make their entry by producing a space, a track, a river, a dance, a rhythm, a song" (Irigaray, "Gesture" 133). As was shown in the previous section, Bertha produces a melody.

In "Miss Florentine" Mrs Brońska associates with church beggars and neighbours, and believes that her daughter should also maintain contacts with others. She attempts to persuade her to reject pride, to start interacting with people from her own social class and to break their relationship of exclusivity:

Daughter, stop telling me about these pompous things! They are not for us! - she says – We are simple! We are poor. We should think about the ways to avoid hunger, to avoid cold... [...] Why should I hide my poverty from people? Why should I be ashamed? Did I invent poverty? You – she says – daughter, you should forget your ambition and pride, you should live as you can, as you are allowed to. Are we poor? Yes, we are! People should know, they should hear about it, sooner or later someone will speak up, offer help, and even if he does not help, it will be easier anyway! (123-124).<sup>114</sup>

Conversations with other people, spending time together, sharing food with others represent sexual relations, and as such indicate the acquisition of subjectivity. Therefore, contrary to the situation in "Green Shore" and "On Father and his Daughter", here motherlessness has a positive undertone. Mrs Brońska decides to leave her daughter in order to liberate her from their dual relationship and to allow her to establish relations with other people. While the ambivalent mothers of Alla, Bertha and Carolina abandon their daughters out of fear or in the pursuit of happiness, she intends to help Florentine to constitute herself as an independent subject.

Nonetheless, differently from Benjamin, Alla, Carolina and Bertha, Miss Florentine suppresses her sexuality. As it is represented by contacts with "the rabble", the act of speaking, and metaphors of heat, the protagonist battles it with seclusion, silence, and coldness. Instead of establishing contacts with others, she attempts to (re)create the

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<sup>114</sup> "Co ty mi, córko, o takich górnych rzeczach powiadasz! To nie dla nas! – mówi. – My prości ludzie! My biedacy. Nam o tym myśleć, żeby głodu nie było, żeby z zimna nie drzeć... [...] A czegoż ja się będę z moją nędzą przed ludźmi kryć? Czego się wstydzić? Czy to ja biedę wymyśliłam? Ty się – mówi – córko, od tych ambicji, od tych honorów raz odżegnaj i żyj, jak można, jak się da. Jest bieda? Owszem! Niechaj ludzie widzą, niech słyszą, prędzej się jeden drugiemu uzali, wspomóże, a choćby nie pomógł, lżej zawsze!"

intimate, universalising bond with her mother, in isolation from the outside world, and to reverse the natural order. When she supposes Mrs Brońska to be dead, she makes an impossible pledge. She promises obedience and transformation, but she also declares that she will not leave the mother:

Mummy, mummy! Never again I will let you leave me! Be what you like, do what you like, I will stay with you forever, I will not cross you! There is no more pride in me, no haughtiness, mummy! [...] I will do everything, everything that you desire, I will serve you like a dog!... My precious mummy...only...my own!... (139).<sup>115</sup>

She consequently avoids relationships with other people – neighbours, servants and church beggars, and limits her social relationships to her mother and her cultured employers. Florentine shuns visual, tactile and verbal contact with “the rabble”. She imposes silence and immobility, and locks Mrs Brońska in a room. Finally, she desires to install the mother in an empty, isolated, quiet building. Florentine resembles Rochester and de Winter who imprison their sexually demanding first wives/mother-figures and separate them from the public sphere of life. For this reason, she attempts to substitute the crowded, noisy building for a silent, solitary, cloister-like tenancy. She enthusiastically describes the new location indicating its a-sexual character: “[the landlord is] a sedate, old man, a widower, the building is completely empty, there are only offices, beautiful stairs, silence, stillness, like in a cloister. [...] There are no tenants there [...] not a single soul. [...] The building is like a cloister” (132).<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, the protagonist continually behaves like a protective mother-figure and infantilises her mother: she feeds, dresses, combs, supports her financially, reprimands and temporarily incapacitates the mother. Although she does not eat, she constantly thinks about nourishment and centres her life on it. Moreover, she forbids Mrs Brońska to acquire food by herself. As a result, Florentine’s life comprises acquiring foodstuffs, preparing meals for the mother and discussing food. The protagonist passionately lists all collected ingredients:

We still have two sausages, there's bread, there's tea, mother, heat them up and eat them.

I bought [...] some grained coffee, some sugar, half a pound of meat, a loaf of bread, I wrapped it all nicely, so it resembled a bakery parcel. [...] Here's

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<sup>115</sup> “Mamo, mamo! Nigdy już, nigdy nie puszcę cię od siebie! Bądź, czym chcesz, rób, co chcesz, zawsze z tobą zostanę, nic ci się przeciwieć nie będę! Już we mnie żadnej dumy nie ma, żadnej pychy, mamo! [...] Wszystko, wszystko, co chcesz, zrobię, jak pies służyć ci będę!... Mamo droga... jedyna... rodzona!...”

<sup>116</sup> “człowiek stateczny, stary już, wdowiec, w całym domu nikogo, same biura, schody piękne, cicho, sza, jak w klasztorze. [...] tam żadnych lokatorów nie ma. [...] Żywej duszy. [...] Dom jak klasztor.”

coffee, here's sugar, I am going to boil the water in a minute (122 and 127-128).<sup>117</sup>

At the same time, the protagonist starves herself: “no sleep, no food, not a drop of water” (137).<sup>118</sup> She refuses a cup of tea for herself, but secretly puts sugar and a cracker in her pocket, in order to feed it to the mother. This negligence of corporeal needs aims at further desexualisation. It is also an embodiment of a mother sacrificing herself for her child's well-being. Interestingly, Florentine's appetite is fully satisfied when the mother is pampered and protected from the sexual rabble:

I am not sure if I had a single bun on that day. [...] I just boiled water for my mother's tea, I bought sausages and bread. But when [...] I saw in the evening that my mother was laying in bed in white linen, that everything was shut, no one was looking through my window or door, the lamp was on, I felt like I had had my best dinner (121).<sup>119</sup>

Florentine resembles a little girl playing with a doll. She dresses her mother in her own likeness: “[A]s soon as I woke up I nicely combed my mother's hair, I dressed her in clean clothes, I gave her my warm skirt, a cap with a ribbon, a fresh, clean collar” (121-122).<sup>120</sup> Similarly to Rebecca, Aspasia and Carolina, who perceive (physical) love as a game, Miss Florentine “plays” with her mother-doll and treats her household like a playground. Instead of searching to establish a sexual relationship outside, she creates an illusion of maternity out of fear of becoming a sexual subject and a mother.

Additionally, Florentine disregards and desexualises her own appearance. She does not want her body to become an object of the gaze or touch. She treats her clothes like black armour comprising dress, gloves and hat, concealing her entire body and separating it from the (sexual) touch of “the rabble” (in the church and in the hospital). The appearance of the black dress defines Miss Florentine's personality. It is constantly clean, in spite of being worn around the clock, because the protagonist persistently washes and stitches it. This always-neat “second skin” symbolises the desired sexual cleanliness, virginity. The protagonist hides her body under the black dress and her hair

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<sup>117</sup> “Dwa serdelki jeszcze są, chleb jest, herbata jest, niechże mama sobie zagrzeje, zje.”

“Kupiłam [...] trochę mielonej kawy, trochę cukru, pół funta mięsa, bochenek chleba, ładnie to wszystko zawinęłam, tak że wyglądało jak paczka z cukierni. [...] Tu jest kawa, tu cukier, zaraz zagotuję.”

<sup>118</sup> “bez snu, bez jadła, bez kropli wody”

<sup>119</sup> “Nie wiem nawet, czym tego dnia jedną bułkę zjadła. [...] Matce tylko zagotowałam herbaty, kupiłam serdelków, chleba. Ale kiedyś [...] wieczorem spojrzała, tu matka w łóżku biało zasłanym, tu wszystko pozatykane, nikt mi w okno ani we drzwi nie patrzy, tu lampka się świeci, to jakby po najlepszym obiedzie.”

<sup>120</sup> “[L]edwo dzień, wycesałam matkę ładnie, oblekłam czysto, spódniczkę jej swoją ciepłą dałam, czepek ze szlarczką, kołnierzyk świeży, czysty.”

(a sexual symbol) under a white cap (a symbol of virginity), and additionally shields the dress from the despised rabble: “She collected the pleats of her simple, black dress intuitively, like she was afraid to brush against her neighbours” (121)<sup>121</sup>; she “guarded [her]self with her hand against [the] touch” (129)<sup>122</sup> of the beggar coming to visit the mother. Also her choice of widowhood bespeaks the rejection of sexuality. Florentine pretends to be a widow because she associates this state with sexual inactivity. This is most clear in the fact that she connects it with decency contrasted with shame: “Why [...] should people know that I am a Miss! [...] I presented myself as a widow after a clerk. [It is] more decent! [...], much more decent!” (115).<sup>123</sup>

The protagonist manifests pride, aloofness and superiority towards others: “I slowly entered the hospital building, holding my head up high. The rabble parted before me” (139).<sup>124</sup> She pretends that Mrs Brońska is not her mother, when the nurse does not acknowledge her nobility and calls her a beggar in front of the people gathered in the hospital. In psychoanalytic terms, she refuses to accept her mother’s death and the necessity of parting. Although she decides to share her personal experiences with another person, she chooses an interlocutor from a higher class. She does not confess to a neighbour or a fellow worker, but to her well-educated, wealthy, former employer.

In her struggle with sexuality, Florentine associates herself with cold stones and walls. They symbolise emotionlessness, callousness and sexual indifference. She frequently reassures herself by leaning against a wall, gradually begins to resemble a stone and substitutes her mother for a wall. From the beginning of the story the protagonist is stiff, pale, reserved and reticent. “[Her face] *fossilise[s]* into a mask” (116, my emphasis).<sup>125</sup> When Mrs Brońska begins to associate with other people, Florentine becomes stony: “[her] legs [...] turned into stones, grew into the ground, so [she] couldn't move in any direction. Like a pole” (119).<sup>126</sup> As the story unfolds, the protagonist gradually unites with walls, and blends into them. At some point, she cannot distinguish herself from the wall behind her. Upon feeling “heavy, cold drops”

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<sup>121</sup> “mimowolnym ruchem zbierała fałdy ubogiej, czarnej sukni, jakby się jeszcze teraz bała otrzeć o swoich sąsiadów.”

<sup>122</sup> “Zastawiłam się ręką, żeby mnie nie tknęła”

<sup>123</sup> By registering herself as a widow, Florentine unintentionally associates herself with her father in a sexual manner.

“Co tam [...] ma kto wiedzieć, że ja panna! [...] Ja się tu za wdowę podałam. [...] porządniej! [...] Dużo porządniej, dużo!”

<sup>124</sup> “weszłam do szpitalnego gmachu wolnym krokiem, z wysoko podniesioną głową. Rozstąpiła się gawiedź.”

<sup>125</sup> “skamieniała w maskę”

<sup>126</sup> “[t]o mi te nogi [...] tak skamieniały, tak w ziemię wrosły, że ani w tę stronę, ani w tę. Jak słup.”

(126)<sup>127</sup> on her face, she confesses: “I don't know [...] if the tears were mine, or did the wall cry over me...” (126).<sup>128</sup>

The cold walls represent the protective mother-figure and substitute for Mrs Brońska in this regard. They provide mental and physical support and stability unattainable from the biological mother. The protagonist leans on walls when she feels lonely, sad or exhausted due to Mrs Brońska's sexual behaviour. When she discovers that her mother has become a beggar: “[she] hit the stones with her forehead” and “cuddled up to a wall” (120).<sup>129</sup> Upon hearing her mother's intimate conversation with a washerwoman and her complaints about her daughter, Florentine declares: “I rushed towards the stairs, into darkness, my legs were shaking, I was only searching for a wall, to support myself a little. [...] I couldn't listen and I couldn't walk anymore. I pressed my back against this damp wall” (126).<sup>130</sup> Another time, the protagonist rests her head against the wall after a long, exhausting argument with Brońska. Also, while secretly observing the begging mother, she leans against the church wall. Although Mrs Brońska embraces her daughter on one night, the next night the protagonist sleeps alone feeling like an orphan, cries and presses her body against a wall. Finally, when she discovers that her mother is dead, she staggers and automatically reaches towards a wall.

The actions undertaken by Miss Florentine – resignation from contact with other people, desexualisation and infantilisation of her mother, self-desexualisation, establishing associations with coldness – result in rejection of the mother's experience and the possibility of acquiring feminine sexuality. Similarly to Carolina, the protagonist assumes her subjectivity in connection with her father – a noble and dead clerk.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> “ciężkie, zimne krople”

<sup>128</sup> “To ani nie wiem [...] czy to łzy moje były, czy ten mur zapłakał nade mną.”

<sup>129</sup> “uderzę czołem o kamienie”, “przytuliłam do ściany”

<sup>130</sup> “Rzucę ja się na schody, ciemno, nogi mi się trzęsą, tylko ściany szukam, żeby się zaprzeć trochę. [...] ani słuchać, ani iść dłużej nie mogłam. Oparłam się plecami o tę wilgotną ścianę.”

<sup>131</sup> See the section “(No) Education” below, pp. 195-196.

# Chapter VI: The Role of Fathers

## 1 Fear of Feminine Sexuality

One of the presuppositions underlying this thesis can be formulated in the following way: in the texts analysed the mother-figures are involved in a conflict with the father-figures, and this conflict oscillates around the problem of feminine sexuality. Let us begin with an interrogation of the theme in *Jane Eye* and *Rebecca*. On the one hand, Edward Rochester wants Jane to become his second wife, because she is Bertha Mason's polar opposite. He is not interested in the flirtatious Blanche Ingram. He ties his first wife with a cord and compares her with the protagonist:

“This is *my wife* [...]. And *this* is what I wished to have” (laying his hand on [Jane's] shoulder): “this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. [...] [L]ook at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this form with that bulk” (259, original emphasis).

On the other hand, Rochester forces sexuality on his second wife in order to transform her into the liberated Bertha. He has symbolically imprisoned female sexuality in the attic along with his first wife, but now he attempts to retrieve it in his second marriage. Furthermore, the threat of rape is evident in his attitude towards Jane, when he says to the narrator:

“Jane! will you hear reason?” (he stopped and approached his lips to my ear); “because, if you won't, I'll try violence.” His voice was hoarse; his look that of a man who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild license. I saw that in another moment, and with one impetus of frenzy more, I should be able to do nothing with him (267).

After his marriage proposal, Edward emphasises Jane's beauty and attempts to disguise her as a doll. He wants her to wear expensive jewellery and clothes, and offers her “heirlooms for the ladies of Thornfield” (227). Thus Jane is encouraged to put on the jewellery previously worn by Bertha. He desires to dress her up in a diamond chain, which is, I suggest, a luxurious equivalent of the cord around Bertha's neck, a rope in disguise:

“I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the cirlet on your forehead, [...] and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairly-like fingers with rings. [...] I will attire my Jane in satin and lace, and she shall have roses in her hair; and I will cover the head I love best with a priceless veil” (228).

Rochester plans to travel with Jane – a further association with Bertha, for she is a Creole and their marriage ceremony took place in Jamaica. When the secret about the first marriage is revealed, he wants Jane to go with him to France.

Rochester is the only father-figure to manifest his sexuality.<sup>1</sup> He remains sexually active even as a crippled, (partially) blind, symbolically castrated man – he has children with Jane.

In contrast with Rochester, who initially desires Jane to remain young and infantile but as the novel unfolds, attempts to transform her into the luscious second wife, de Winter wants his second wife to remain sexually innocent, and inactive. There is an exception to this rule: one passionate kiss and a night spend together in the locked bedroom. Maxim hopes that the nameless protagonist will behave like his daughter. He illuminates her appropriateness for this role, by saying: “I suppose you are young enough to be my daughter” (45). And Mrs Danvers confirms to the narrator: “you, a young ignorant girl, young enough to be his daughter” (274). Concomitantly, Maxim attempts to establish himself in the position of a father. He implicitly compares the institution of marriage to a relationship between a father and a daughter: “When you were a little girl, were you ever forbidden to read certain books, and did your father put those books under lock and key? [...] A husband is not so very different from a father after all” (227). There is an additional link between the biological father of the protagonist and her husband, based on the fact that they both give her a surname.

Maxim bases his second marriage on a father-daughter relationship, in order to protect himself from the female agency fuelled by sexuality. As a father-figure, he embodies the law and regains the power lost in his relationship with Rebecca. The novel hides a suggestion that Maxim used to be involved in a sexual relationship with his first wife. By bringing his second wife to Manderley he attempts to rewrite the past and recover his position of masculine speaking subject. The fact that de Winter does not love his second wife becomes most clear in the circumstances of his proposal. He does not describe marriage in terms of passion, or affection – it is a companionship similar to the narrator’s relationship with the disliked Mrs Van Hopper:

“So Mrs Van Hopper has had enough of Monte Carlo,” he said, “and now she wants to go home. So do I. She to New York and I to Manderley. Which would you prefer? You can take your choice.”[...] “I repeat to you, the choice is open to you. Either you go to America with Mrs Van Hopper or you come home to Manderley with me.”

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<sup>1</sup> Except for Aspasia who is predominantly considered a mother-figure.

“[I]nstead of being companion to Mrs Van Hopper you become mine, and your duties will be almost exactly the same. I also like new library books, and flowers in the drawing-room, and bezique after dinner. And someone to pour out my tea. The only difference is that I don't take Taxol, I prefer Eno's, and you must never let me run out of my particular brand of tooth-paste”.

“You don't want a trousseau, do you, or any of that nonsense? Because the whole thing can be arranged in a few days. Over a desk, with a license” (57, 59 and 61).

The narrator herself provides the true definition of their marriage:

Maxim was not in love with me, he had never loved me. [...] What I had thought was love for me, for myself as a person, was not love. It was just that he was a man, and I was his wife and I was young, and he was lonely. He did not belong to me at all, he belonged to Rebecca. He still thought about Rebecca. He would never love me because of Rebecca (261).

Moreover, Maxim proposes to the protagonist because he has to bring a second wife to Manderley in order to repossess his heritage. He makes an effort to rebuild his relationship with the mother – Manderley. The articulation of the word “Manderley” resembles the word “motherly” and the mansion substitutes for his mother. The childhood memory of his mother in the rose garden additionally associates her with the house. The ambivalent and ambiguous Manderley belongs to one of the essential “characters” of the book. On the one hand, Maxim detests his heritage, as it is associated with his first wife. On the other, he treats the mansion as an object of love. I would like to suggest that it is in fact his *only* love object.

In this regard, he decides not to murder Rebecca in Monte Carlo, when she discloses her true identity, because in return for personal freedom, she offers protection of his heritage and family's honour. He values the good name of Manderley more than his own happiness and dignity, and chooses marriage with the despised woman instead. Moreover, lured by her promise to promote his beloved heritage, he accepts Rebecca's sexual behaviour. Indeed, Rebecca exerts enormous influence on Manderley. Initially, as promised, she transforms it into the envied, “most famous show-place in all the country” (305). However, afterwards she begins to endanger the mansion. From Maxim's point of view, the legal heir of Manderley who might not be his, but Jack Favell's, is a threat to the residence – the first object of Maxim's love. Rebecca presents her plan to bear the child with the certainty that her husband will continue to protect his family's honour and decide not to reveal the name of the child's biological father. However, Maxim

decides to destroy the threat. He kills Rebecca – the embodiment of his mother – to allow a relationship with the narrator. In psychoanalytic terms, he also has to destroy his mother/Manderley to develop a relationship with a woman. It is important to note that Rebecca's death enables him to maintain a semi-erotic bond with Manderley endangered by his first wife. After the second wedding, de Winter rushes back to the mansion with his new wife, in order to exorcise Rebecca's ghost from the haunted house. Her love affairs, indecency and insanity – described by him to the narrator as the reasons for the murder – are troubling, because they are a threat to his honour, and he has to struggle in order to hide them. However, they do not constitute an ethical issue. Only when Rebecca becomes a threat to his heritage, does he decide to kill her. Horner and Zlosnik argue that the potential loss of Manderley is in fact the only reason for killing Rebecca:

Maxim murdered his first wife not because her infidelity broke his heart, but because it threatened the integrity of the paternal line: had she really been pregnant by Favell, both Manderley and the de Winter name would have passed to someone else's child, not his own. [...] Maxim's worst punishment is not prison or exile, but the loss of his beloved Manderley: with no estate and no heirs to inherit it [...] the security of Maxim's masculine identity within a class-based, capitalist, patriarchal society is under severe threat (106-107).

Furthermore, Manderley represents something that only men are entitled to. Maxim's grandmother and sister both had to move out of the mansion. In *The Double* Abi-Ezzi indicates that in the novel's opening dream of the destroyed heritage, the house stands inviolate. The symbol of paternal power remains untouched and unconquered.

As in the novels analysed, masculine protagonists fear feminine sexuality, it becomes a threat to women's intellectual independence, freedom and life. In Edward Rochester's terms, his first wife is perverse and unchaste. Her sexuality is stigmatised as impure and monstrous, connected with bestiality, brutality, and cruelty. Also de Winter associates Rebecca's sexuality with viciousness, indecency, rottenness and insanity. In the British works the father-figures successfully defeat, and ultimately annihilate their first wives. As a result of Rochester's decisions, Bertha Mason becomes a madwoman, a half-human creature, a vampire, excluded from the order of life, concealed in the attic, and is finally pushed towards suicide. Rebecca is punished for her sexual nature with (triple) murder.

In "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore" the situation is similar: the fathers eliminate the sexual mothers by pushing them to the peripheral, pre-linguistic spheres located between life and death, fantasy and reality; the undefined, enigmatically

dubbed green shore, or a place not named at all. In the fairytale, the father murders the mother and succeeds in erasing her “name” from his daughter’s memory. He persuades the latter, not only of the absence, but even of the nonexistence of the mother. Alla does not even know the word “mother”: “Mother? what is a mother?” (92)<sup>2</sup> – she asks. The law of the father forbids the “bodily encounter” with the mother and excludes her from the linguistic and Symbolic realm.

Although the mother returns to the castle in the form of a spirit, fairy or witch, she remains less powerful than the father. She avoids direct confrontation; instead she secretly approaches the daughter, when the father is absent. Moreover, she visits the castle in favourable circumstances associated with femininity – at night, by moonlight – and is supported by Alla’s brothers, and sisters. Despite all this, she cannot contact the daughter until the latter reaches adolescence, which lessens the power of the father. Furthermore, in order to conquer his magic, she has to rely on another man, the mysterious “Him”. Only with “His” help she can wake the protagonist from the dream evoked and heretofore controlled by the father. She explains the situation to Alla as follows: “Have no fear. I own magic than conquers his magic because He looks after us, and for Him the father has less meaning than a blue berry in the moss. Nothing bad can happen to you against His will” (91).<sup>3</sup> With “His” (God’s?) help, the mother physically separates the daughter from the father. She transfers Alla to a peripheral sphere located outside the father’s jurisdiction. However, her intervention alters the situation of the protagonist and the course of events only superficially and temporarily. Alla remains emotionally attached to her despotic father and models her marriage on their relationship. Furthermore, the father succeeds in determining his daughter’s whereabouts and approaches her in a sexual manner. The meaninglessness of the mother is manifested in the title of the fairytale, which simply omits her. She exists as a mere opposite to her husband. Alla acknowledges her presence in the sleeping chamber, when she thinks about her father: “Suddenly, a mad awe fell on her. – Father! Father! Only then she realised that a woman of great beauty was holding her in her arms” (91).<sup>4</sup> The mother is the negative reflection of the father, his Other, his mirror-image.

In “Green Shore” the mother withdraws from the engagement with the father. Instead, she escapes his jurisdiction, leaves her daughters behind and shows no interest in their subsequent lives (even during the visit). That she fears the father is most clear in the fact that she does not confront him. She arranges a *secret* escape, organises a *secret*

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<sup>2</sup> “Matka? co to jest matka?”

<sup>3</sup> “Nie lękaj się. Mam ja czary na jego czary, gdyż czuwa nad nami Ten, u którego ojciec twój mniej znaczy, niż w mchach czerwieniąca jagoda. Włos z głowy nie spadnie ci bez Jego woli.”

<sup>4</sup> “Nagle przeszła ją szalona trwoga. – Ojciec! Ojciec! Wtedy dopiero ujrzała, że trzyma ją w objęciu niewiasta wielkiej urody.”

meeting with her daughters in a nearby village, amidst people who detest her husband, and contacts him via a letter. Correspondingly to Alla's mother, in order to succeed in her undertaking, she requires manly assistance – a servant helps to organise her escape and a young, elegant, wealthy man accompanies her during the visit. Later, the sisters substitute for their mother in their relationship with the father. Bertha, who replaces the mother in the family home, finally kills the father, using the melodeon as her murder weapon. She fulfils the wish of the mother's ghost, which threatens the father with death.

To my knowledge, no one has yet interpreted the similarities between "Green Shore" and August Strindberg's play *The Father* from 1887.<sup>5</sup> There is an interesting series of parallels and shifts between the two texts. *The Father* depicts a conflict between the father – an ex-military, educated scientist, and the mother – a devious manipulator, over the education of their daughter Bertha. The father attempts to persuade his daughter to move to town, undertake studies and become a teacher, while the mother trusts in the girl's artistic talent, and wants her to stay at home. Because the law authorizes the father to decide about the future of his children, in order to win the conflict, the mother tricks the father and other respected, influential men (doctor, pastor) into believing in her husband's insanity. Strindberg victimises the father, who indeed suffers a serious mental collapse.<sup>6</sup>

In "Green Shore", after the escape of the mother, the father efficiently disposes of objects associated with her (for example, the statue of the Virgin Mary). He spares only the portrait reflected in an immense broken mirror and the murderous melodeon. The sisters are forbidden to even mention the mother.

Similarly to Rochester and de Winter, the fathers of "Green Shore" and "On Father and his Daughter" continue their attempts to repress feminine sexuality in their behaviour towards their second wives/daughter-figures. Prior to Alla's escape, the father controls and subdues his daughter's sexuality, but he does not eliminate it. He locks Alla in her bedroom – a symbol of unconsciousness – and intervenes in her most intimate sphere of dreams. He monopolizes her sexual desires and becomes her only love-object. The father uses suggestive, magical tricks to arouse and subdue his daughter's desires, however, he does not approach her in the flesh: "[H]e guessed her thoughts and made her fall asleep by looking into her eyes; his gaze awakened unbearable torments in her

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<sup>5</sup> In "Green Shore" Carolina compares her father's view on women with Strindberg's.

<sup>6</sup> Other similarities between the two texts include: a nurse Margaret – the only female supporter of the father, and a grandmother with an ability "to see".

body. But he never caressed her” (88).<sup>7</sup> “[T]he father *seduces his daughter* but [...] he refuses to recognize and live out his desire, *he lays down a law that prohibits him from doing so.*” He “wraps his desire, his penis” in “the cloak of the law” (Irigaray, “Speculum” 38, original emphasis).

The father of Carolina and Bertha manipulates the surrounding world and manages the people around him (the grandmother, the servants) in order to have control over his daughters. He schedules daily routines consisting of meals, discussions and walks, leaving no free time. “During the day he tries to be with [them] as much as possible, in the evening he accompanies [Carolina to her room] and makes sure that [she] will not return downstairs to Bertha, or that [Bertha] will not come to [Carolina] for the night” (44).<sup>8</sup> The fact that the narrator fears that “[the father’s] constant watching will bring [her] to *madness*” (45, my emphasis)<sup>9</sup> corresponds with the connection between female sexuality and madness as presented in *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*. When he cannot supervise the sisters, the father uses his informants: the blind grandmother and the foster mother, Margaret.

Additionally, the father attempts to insulate his daughters from the external world and its influences. They are separated from the social and public spheres existing outside the family home. The sisters and the father inhabit an old, solitary house located on a mountain peak, far from the village (and green shore). Although the father does not imprison his daughters, like Alla’s father, there exists an unspoken law prohibiting them from going outside without his permission (occasionally, he allows them to enter the garden). They break this rule and leave home, solely because they plan not to come back. Additionally, the father does not allow any visitors in the house. Carolina recalls this situation of extreme separation as follows: “Not once a direct gust from the world infiltrated our home. [...] We never had any guests. We spent our entire childhood and youth only with our father and the blind grandmother, amidst the old, grim, tacit servants” (43).<sup>10</sup> The father dismisses the advice of the doctor without hesitation: Bertha cannot leave, or become a wife. Carolina describes the visit as follows: “The doctor only left some prescriptions – but he made it clear that without the change of environment, the patient would not regain her health. He made a playful remark that she ought to get married. The father reacted with passionate rage. The doctor left – and didn’t come

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<sup>7</sup> “[P]atrząc w jej oczy, zgadywał jej myśli, lub wtrącał ją w sen, lub spojrzeniem wzbudzał w jej ciele nieznośne męczarnie. Ale nie pieścił jej nigdy.”

<sup>8</sup> “W dzień stara się jak najwięcej być z [nimi], wieczorem sam odprowadza [Karolinę do jej pokoju] i upewnia się, czy [ona] nie wróc[i] na dół do Berty, lub czy ona do [Karoliny] na noc nie przyjdzie.”

<sup>9</sup> “Przy takim bezustannym czuwaniu [ojca] będzie można zwariować.”

<sup>10</sup> “Żaden bezpośredni podmuch ze świata nie przeniknął do naszego domu.[...] Nigdy nie bywał u nas nikt obcy. Dzieciństwo całe i młodość spędzałyśmy jedynie z ojcem i ociemniałą babką, w otoczeniu starej, ponurej, małomównej służby.”

back” (43).<sup>11</sup> The notion of “passionate rage” and the fact that the doctor mysteriously disappears after the visit suggest that the jealous father actually murdered the medic, just as he reacted with passionate rage and murdered the servant involved in the escape of the mother.

The purpose of constant accompaniment, watching and listening, and the inability to communicate is to deprive Bertha and Carolina of privacy, and intimacy. The sisters are forbidden to lock their bedroom door: “I heard you lock the door with a key [...] and I came to check what is going on. We don't do that in my house. Please, do not create any conspiracies or secrets...” (51)<sup>12</sup> – says the father to his younger daughter. The father eliminates sexual education: “We didn't really know, what was love, marriage and life” (43)<sup>13</sup> – says Carolina.

In *The Heathen* and “Miss Florentine” the situation is the reverse: the mother-figures and daughter-figures eliminate the father-figures. Benjamin's protective mother-figure succeeds in eliminating both her/his father-figures. Despite her associations with the submissive model of femininity based on obedience, servility and silence, she is the pivotal figure in the house. She is in charge of the domestic sphere – she organises the life of her family, while the solitary father disappears inside the house – however, she is also the most important and the most esteemed figure in the house. Her sons show her the utmost respect and she is the central figure at the Christmas table. Borkowska reminds us that “[i]n the family system the mother is portrayed as the permanent element, unchangeable and irreducible, and her loss is shown to be irrevocable. The father belongs to a completely different order. His absence is not a wound, but a hole that can be patched up” (“Alienated Women” 162). Referring to Phillips's indication that “[w]hen father dies, Benjamin's mother assumes the role of matriarch, as the brothers are either dead or away from home, but continues to impose the patriarchal model” (“Femme Fatale” 33), I would argue that the mother has always been “the patriarch” of the house.

However, the biological mother struggles with Benjamin's second father-figure, Aspasia, as the latter embodies a powerful, fully independent, significant father-figure – contrasted with the feeble figure of the biological father. The first battle between the mother and Aspasia, when the mother quietly, unnoticeably walks into the attic and

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<sup>11</sup> “Doktor pozostawił jedynie jakieś recepty – zaznaczając jednak, że bez zmiany warunków życia chora do zdrowia nie przyjdzie. W formie żartu zauważył, że najlepiej byłoby ją wydać za męża. Na to ojciec wpadł w pasję. Doktor odjechał – i nie wrócił więcej.”

<sup>12</sup> “- Słyszałem, jak zamykasz drzwi na klucz [...] i przyszedłem zobaczyć, co się dzieje. W moim domu, nie ma tego zwyczaju. W ogóle proszę, byś nie urządzała tu żadnych spisków i tajemnic...”

<sup>13</sup> “Nie wiedzieliśmy właściwie bliżej, co to jest miłość, małżeństwo, życie.”

interrupts the presentation of the painting indicates that she is a phallic mother associated with the Imaginary. Her agency is associated with the phallic symbol of a seductive snake. She transforms Aspasia into a serpent – it appears as soon as the mother enters the room – and wins the battle using this embodiment. The mother is an ambiguous figure: she becomes silent in the presence of the father, but speaks at the Christmas table; she is submissive but powerful; associated with the domestic sphere but phallic.

Although the mother loses the second, hallucinatory battle with Aspasia, and finally dies, she also defeats the second father-figure. That Benjamin chooses the protective model of motherhood over “the heathen” is most evident in the fact that (s)he loves the “imaginary” Aspasia who resembles her/his nurturing, biological mother. Aspasia tempts her/him, but (s)he remains with her/his biological mother. After her death, (s)he stays at home, with Ludwika, who resembles the mother. In *The Heathen* protective motherhood and femininity conquer fatherhood and sexual motherhood.

In the case of “Miss Florentine”, the father is a negligible figure. The mother mentions him only once, with disgust and disrespect. She suggests that it was a silly whim to send their daughter to school. Moreover, it encumbered Florentine’s life with unnecessary pride and overstated self-esteem, which prevent her from establishing relationships with other people – highly valued by the mother. Neither does the protagonist perceive his absence as lack. She “reduces” the father to the attributes attractive to her. As a result, we have only three pieces of information about him: that he was a clerk, that he sent his daughter to school and that he is dead. Florentine frequently hyperbolically emphasises these three properties, but she does not inform her listener about her father’s appearance, character, or any other features. Moreover, her father’s death is valuable to her, as it allows her to function within society as a desexualized “widow”.

### **3 (No) Education**

In the Polish texts the father-figures attempt to oppose feminine sexuality with control over their daughters’ education. They are associated with the Symbolic order, language, knowledge, and society. But despite their interrelations do they constitute powerful, Symbolic father-figures?

In the course of the story, the protagonist of *The Heathen* transforms from a simple Polish villager into a cultured, well-educated, literate person, who reads the ancient Greek alphabet and spends time in antiquarian bookshops. In order to discuss

this shift, we should consider Benjamin's associations with her/his two father-figures. Her/his biological father is evidently associated with language, literature, bookish knowledge, the act of writing and the act of reading. In the following quotation he is contrasted with the silent, almost mute mother and the rest of the family:

[M]y father [...] was so serious, so learned, so kind and mild. In our frugal little home there was no separate study for his books and papers, yet whenever he sat down to read everything would fall so silent you could hear a fly buzzing – through no command of his own, through no sense of compulsion, but through the simple agreement of things and habits. This was the atmosphere in which I grew up. I do not even remember anyone ever ordering me to be quiet. Whenever my father spread open the pages of a book, my mother would cross the room on tiptoe, my sisters and brothers would usually go outside or some of my sisters would sit still in a corner with their needlework (41).

However, the above fragment also indicates his connection with silence and the order of the Imaginary. Although the father is associated with language and knowledge, he does not allow Benjamin to embrace the Symbolic realm. Instead of introducing her/him into language and culture (through history), he takes away her/his ABC – the metaphor of Symbolic language. Moreover, instead of separating her/him from the mother, the father redirects the protagonist to the Imaginary. By teaching her/him the words “Mummy” and “love”, he forces Benjamin back to the cosy cocoon of the dual, pre-Symbolic relationship with the mother. Furthermore, he silences the narrator and orders her/him to envisage motherly love and tenderness, with her/his eyes closed. Hence, the father perceives the word as “an image” and “a feeling”. This is not Symbolic language as regarded as a set of conventional signs:

[M]y father showed me a page on which various little signs were written and he told me that one day, with the aid of those little signs, I would be able to learn what the dead had accomplished, hear what people had spoken of the longest and from the earliest times, see to the far corners of the earth and sky and into the depths of the human soul. I learnt the little signs as fast as I could, my father himself indicating their use to me in a quite specific way. I remember him making me put together for the first time the following words: “Mummy loves you”. Then he took away my ABC and told me to *close my eyes* and *imagine Mummy* in the moment when she stooped over my bed in the morning and woke me with a kiss, wishing me a good day. Later on he promised me that I would see in some letters flowers, trees, fruit - and then he gave me the word “garden” to read. Later still, he reminded me

when he gave me the word “star” of how it twinkled somewhere high up in the heavens as a tiny trembling point of light, and he told me that a star is also a world. And in that way he taught me to read each word as *an image, feeling, thought* (42, my emphasis).

The agency of the father can be understood in two ways: he fails to fulfil the role of a Symbolic father and does not separate his son from the mother; or he treats the protagonist, as a daughter and a feminine subject.

However, Benjamin has another father-figure – Aspasia. There is a series of parallels between Aspasia and the father based on physical resemblance, and indicating “the heathen’s” fatherliness.<sup>14</sup> Firstly, both characters are very attractive. Aspasia’s beauty is emphasised several times; the narrator even calls her “the beautiful woman” (95, my trans.).<sup>15</sup> The father is also “an astoundingly handsome man” (42). Further correspondence of their looks is manifested in the colour of skin, and the appearance of eyes, lips and hair. The father has a “little pale and yellowish” (42) face; Aspasia’s skin has a “creamy yellow whiteness of marble”, (72) there is “white on her bosom – the white that was neither the cold whiteness of snow nor of lifeless alabaster, but whiteness where you could feel the warm beam of the sun upon it and see the young healthy blood coursing beneath it” (90). Moreover, their eyes are contrasted with the appearance of their lips, which are similar. Benjamin’s father has serious eyes, possibly frightening to his children, were it not for his tender, large lips:

His eyes, half covered by protuberant lids, usually expressed a grave thoughtfulness and a kind of strictness. On the other hand, there was so much affectionate sweetness in the outline of his mouth, so much tenderness almost that we children were never in the slightest afraid of the sternness of his stare (42).

Aspasia’s dark green, dead eyes are opposed to “the passionate” (90), tender, big, innocent lips: “What a contrast, what an amazing contrast to her lips in particular! to those delicate yet protruding lips! lips fresh as sweet innocence, as the caresses of passion! Such eyes and such lips! Death and life!” (72). Father’s very pronounced, “black eyebrows” (42) resemble her dark eyelashes. Their hair is shimmering and glittering. Benjamin describes Aspasia’s:

I have no knowledge or recollection of the true colour of her hair. In the first moment, I would have called her fair but that may only be because the coils of golden ringlets formed such a brilliant aureole around her face,

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<sup>14</sup> The theme of physical resemblance has been taken up extensively by Małgorzata Pieczara in her analysis of the book.

<sup>15</sup> “piękną kobietą”

shimmering as though with all the shades of amber, all the shimmering lights of topaz (72).

Father's hair's "raven glossiness [is] already specked with silver" (42).

In the course of the story, Benjamin replaces her/his deficient father with Aspasia from the castle – an embodiment of the powerful and Symbolic father-figure. As was already shown, she is the independent speaking subject characterized by beauty and sexuality – similarly to Rebecca. This becomes most clear in her association with knowledge and education. Aspasia is a lettered polyglot, an intelligent and knowledgeable cosmopolitan. Thanks to her, during the course of the story, Benjamin significantly transcends her/his status of an impoverished, simple, modest, uneducated villager, and becomes an erudite with an extensive knowledge.

Florentine's father resembles Benjamin's father in respect of, first, their association with education, and second, their inability to introduce their "daughters" to the Symbolic. Florentine glorifies the properties "inherited" from her father: education and position in society. Although, the protagonist assumes her subjectivity on her father's behalf and enters the Symbolic by employing his attributes related with his social status, she does it by herself. The father cannot perform this act because he is dead.

Florentine attempts to exist within society as a well-to-do widow of a clerk. She confesses to her former employer: "I registered myself [at the tenancy]: a widow after a clerk. Yet my late father was a clerk in the town hall..." (116).<sup>16</sup> The protagonist believes that her place within society (and the Symbolic) is unique and superior. She accentuates it in order to distinguish herself from other people, "the rabble": "[W]e are of good breeding! Of a gentle breeding! Father was a clerk! You, mother, belong to the gentry!" (123).<sup>17</sup> Florentine is very proud: "[Her face] fossilise[s] into a mask of adamant pride" (116)<sup>18</sup> and "[she battles] the years of hunger [...] with adamant pride" (118).<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the protagonist overstates and embellishes her uniqueness and superiority. In reality, she only attended *pensja* for a mere year, her father is no longer alive and her family is disennobled. Furthermore, Florentine and her mother are greatly impoverished. The daughter toils as a seamstress but nevertheless she is forced to sell her own clothes in order to earn money. However, she continually pretends to be cultured and wealthier. She hides her unprofitable profession and poverty. On one occasion, she refuses to accept money from her employer out of dignity and subsequently secretly

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<sup>16</sup> "Do meldunku podałam: wdowa po urzędniku. Przecie i ojciec nieboszczyk urzędnikiem w magistracie był..."

<sup>17</sup> "[D]o dobrego rodu się liczym! Do wyższego! Toć ojciec urzędnikiem był! Toć mama ze szlachty!"

<sup>18</sup> "skamieniała w maskę nieugiętej dumy"

<sup>19</sup> "Lata głodu zwalczanego nieugiętą dumą"

disposes of her own clothes in order to acquire food. Another time, she pretends to be educated and cultured, and talks about grandiloquent subjects discussed in her employer's house, such as books, paintings and foreign journeys. In reality, she merely repeats other people's opinions.

"Miss Florentine" constitutes a conversation between two women: the protagonist and her unnamed employer. Magnone states that "[t]he subject of Konopnicka's novellas are the circumstances of a conversation; speaking and listening are most important. [...] The subject of the novella ["Miss Florentine"] are the circumstances of a confession" ("Lustra" 195-196). The condition of a conversation, confession, or recounting of experiences engaging two women, introduces a feminine perspective. Importantly, the second woman listens to the confession about Florentine's behaviour towards her late mother and, as a narrator, retells it to the reader. The employer substitutes for the protagonist in the act of speaking, because the latter does not exist within language and the public sphere. Magnone interprets the situation in the following way:

Seeing that Florentine [...] will not write down her story, because she remains outside the discourse, the author, as the one allowed to speak publicly, the one granted with a voice, attempts express the experiences of her heroines. She does not aim to replace them in speaking, or to subordinate their voice to her voice. She would like to create for them equal chances to exist within the language, to tell their truth ("Lustra" 204).

While the reading presented in this thesis does not identify the narrator with Konopnicka, I agree that Miss Florentine does not have a public voice and is not a speaking subject. She deprives herself of it upon rejecting contact with her mother and other people ("the rabble"), and entering the Symbolic order by usurping the place of her dead father.

The father-figures of "Green Shore" and "On Father and his Daughter" resemble the Superego, the Lacanian Symbolic Father, the embodiment of the Name-of-the-Father and the Jewish God from the Old Testament, and this is most clear in their legislative and prohibitive function. Contrary to Benjamin's and Florentine's powerless, dead fathers, they have the power to supervise, restrain and prevent, and are able to exercise authoritative influence over language and education.

Interestingly, the Symbolic father-figures of "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore" create Imaginary, dreamy, silent, pre-linguistic realms for their daughters. The father of Komornicka's fairytale attempts to substitute for the mother by

incorporating her features. As “the superior creature and the creator of all things” (88)<sup>20</sup> he constitutes himself as a life-giver. In this capacity, he attempts to restore and reconstitute the primal wholeness bonding the daughter and the mother, with himself instead of the latter. His solitary, silent, dark castle resembles a motherly womb. He (re)creates this realm, through separation from the outside world; he imprisons his daughter within it, silences her and lulls her into a deep sleep. “He decided to be everything for her, to reign exclusively over her feelings and thoughts. [...] Jealous of her since the day she was born, he did not allow anyone to approach her, never stepped away from her – only at nights, after locking the sleeping [daughter] inside the chamber, he sneaked out for lonely wanderings” (88).<sup>21</sup> This situation can be productively interpreted by means of the following concept of Irigaray’s theory that the father attempts to replace the umbilical cord with the phallus. Kralkowska-Gątkowska approaches the assumption that the father desires to substitute for the mother, with socio-historical background and Komornicka’s biography. Although her analysis pursues interpretations which often lead to conclusions significantly different from mine, the scholar draws from psychoanalytic theories, and I find her interrogation very inspiring. She suggests that the source of father’s behaviour lies in a complex, which compels him to try to have the power to create and give life:

The reason for masculine domination over women, described by psychologists and anthropologists questioning Freudism, was men’s primal jealousy of the gift to give life associated with women. This affect, much stronger than the little girls’ alleged penis envy mythologized by Freud, constitutes the lifeblood of culture, created by men as compensation. To women’s life bearing (connecting them with nature) they oppose their civilisation achievements: architecture, life-facilitating inventions, works of intellect and art.

Jealousy of mysterious feminine abilities pushes the father towards secondary and unnatural creation marked by Satan (“Cień twarzy” 101-102 and 103).

The father attempts to prove his mightiness and superiority over the world by demonstrating his craftsmanship before Alla. His magical powers suggest that he created the world and the protagonist, and implies the dependency of everything on him.

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<sup>20</sup> “istota najwyższa i stwórca wszechrzeczy”

<sup>21</sup> “postanowił być dla niej wszystkim w życiu, panować wyłącznie nad jej uczuciami i myślami. [...] Zazdrosny o nią od dnia jej urodzin, - nie dopuszczał do niej nikogo, nie odstępował jej na krok, - nocami tylko, zamknąwszy komnatę ze śpiącą; wymyślał się na samotne wędrówki.”

In addition, the father aims at separating his daughter from all kinds of information. The protagonist becomes an analphabetic, who does not know how to read, write or pray (speak?): “He did not teach her how to read – because books explain life; or how to write – because writing conceals betrayal; or how to pray – because a praying soul flies to the sky, and because of his haughtiness he desired to be for Alla the greatest creature and the creator of all things” (88).<sup>22</sup> The father isolates his daughter from the outside world, by triply imprisoning her: in the castle, in her bedroom and – with the use of magic – in her sleep. Additionally, he does not allow anyone to enter the castle and becomes his daughter’s only companion. Before her escape from the castle, the protagonist feels constantly watched, controlled and supervised. The thought of her father constantly accompanies Alla. He is not present in the flesh, but through objects and emotions:

[Alla] felt his presence everywhere – in the silent empty rooms, in the hum of the forest and the uproar of the creek, in the sky with its dark, billowy rushing clouds. Everything that wasn't him was his creation and play. She was sure that the world existed because her father wanted it to exist – and if he ordered it – it would disappear (89).<sup>23</sup>

In the course of the story, the mother interrupts the order designated by the father and causes his transformation from an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and terrifying Superego, or Lacanian father-figure, into someone unhappy, lonely and defective. This change is manifested by the appearance of the dirty, dusty, miserable messengers of the father contrasted with the appearance of the wedding guests.

The father of “Green Shore” monopolises information by fully controlling the type of wisdom his daughters receive. His behaviour suggests that he perceives knowledge as a means of manipulation. He allows the sisters access only to philosophical books and foreign scientific magazines preselected by him. He also chooses topics for discussions from the philosophic repertoire of the three famous misogynists: Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and August Strindberg.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Nie uczył jej czytać – bo książki tłumaczą życie; ani pisać – bo w piśmie łatwo ukryje się zdrada; ani modlić się – gdyż w modlitwie duch ulata w niebiosy, on zaś w pysze swojej chciał, by Alla w nim widziała istotę najwyższą i stwórcę wszechrzeczy.”

<sup>23</sup> “Obecność jego czuła wszędzie – w ciszy komnat bezludnych, w szumie puszcy i wrzawie potoków, w niebie, po którym skłębione pędziły chmury czarne. Wszystko, co nie było nim samym, było jego dziełem i zabawą. Była pewna, że z woli ojca istnieje cały świat – i że za jego rozkazem – znikłby nagle.”

<sup>24</sup> Schopenhauer differentiated men from women and claimed that the latter are subordinate, submissive, and weaker. In his early years Nietzsche was vastly influenced by Schopenhauer’s philosophy. He wrote an essay *Schopenhauer as Educator* and even considered him to be his mentor. Nietzsche is the author of the

Furthermore, the father excludes the sisters from the linguistic sphere. He gradually silences them by creating situations that exclude private verbal or written communication. They are never by themselves and he “does not let [them] speak with each other” (44)<sup>25</sup>. He reacts with silent violence, and intrusive behaviour upon discovering secret information (about the servant involved in his wife’s escape, a meeting with the mother and a note written by Bertha). When he cannot supervise the sisters, he is substituted by the *blind* grandmother with perfect hearing, who is able to hear distant whispers and immediately interrupt all conversations:

The grandmother sat stiffly in the armchair, her static head raised high and her hands dangling symmetrically from both handrails. Obviously, she paid careful attention to our every word. We fell silent – ill at ease – for a long while. Afterwards, Bertha began to whisper very quietly.

- What did father want of you yesterday evening? I heard him...

In his moment the grandmother blinked anxiously with her white statue-like eyes and interrupted:

What are you saying, dear girls? You know that father doesn’t tolerate any secrets. This proves that you don’t trust him.

Bertha had forgotten that the blind have very sensitive hearing (52).<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, the sisters are forced into daily, silent promenades. These obligatory walks in the garden fuel Bertha’s agoraphobia. She becomes paralysed by fear, unable to speak, unable to look (she covers her eyes). The fact that these promenades are mute and dumb is emphasised by the simultaneous intellectual activity undertaken by the father who is reading a book.

Although Carolina initially repeats her mother’s actions – escapes to green shore and engages in a conventional, sexually-based relationship with a man, afterwards, disappointed with her marriage, she alters her attitude and adopts her father’s

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infamous sentence: “You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!” In his works he emphasised the male intellect, while picturing women as ignorant, subordinate baby-making machines. In turn, Nietzsche’s theories strongly influenced Strindberg. The two men even exchanged cryptic correspondence. Although initially sympathetic to the women’s suffrage movement, Strindberg later expressed misogynistic opinions, criticised emancipation and compared women to apes, animals and criminals.

<sup>25</sup> “nie daje [im] rozmawiać ze sobą.”

<sup>26</sup> “Babka siedziała sztywno w fotelu z nieruchomą, podniesioną głową, rękami, zwisającymi symetrycznie z obu poręczy. Widać było, że jej bacznej uwadze nie uchodzi ani jedno słowo. Zamilkłyśmy – skrępowane – na dłuższą chwilę. Potem Berta zaczęła bardzo cicho szeptać./ - Co ojciec chciał od ciebie wieczorem? Słyszałam, jak.../ W tej chwili babka mrugnęła niespokojnie swymi białymi, jak u posągów, oczyma i przerwała:/ - Co tam mówicie, kochane dziewczeczki? Wiecie, jak ojciec nie lubi tajemnic wszelkich. Dowodzi to braku ufności z waszej strony./ Berta zapomniała, że ociemniali mają taki wysublimowany słuch.”

philosophical approach. The fact that the narrator admires her well-educated father is most clear when she reveals amazement and agitation in connection with his library:

It makes an astonishing impression... It is pre-eternal – and indestructible – This heavy, black furniture with gothic sculptures on the backrest, immense bookcases with rows of volumes bound in leather... Nothing ever changes in here... Only to me – after my return from there – it seems even more majestic (52).<sup>27</sup>

Carolina assumes her father's attitude towards marriage and love as result of her upbringing. He not only controls his daughters' education, but also adjusts it to certain purposes. He intends to rear the sisters as women incapable of finding happiness with other men, outside the family home. He behaves as if he was sure of Carolina's failure on green shore and of her subsequent return: he does not chase her after her escape, and he is not surprised at her homecoming. Furthermore, he does not ask about the length of her stay, because he is certain of its permanence. The protagonist describes the situation as follows: "And father has not asked me even once – not with a word, not with a look. He has not even been interested in the duration of my stay. As if I had returned with groceries from a trip to a neighbouring town" (44).<sup>28</sup>

### 3 Blindness, Castration, Destruction

The visible caresses the eye.  
One sees and hears like one touches.  
EMMANUEL LEVINAS

In Brontë's novel the gaze is an instrument of power and control. Pauline Nestor suggests that Jane and Rochester are involved in a visual contest, which is a part of the sexual dynamic between them: "Possession and power are the currency of the relationship between Jane and Rochester" (57). The latter continually attempts to usurp control of the narration and tries to regain power over Jane's story. Dressed as a gypsy, he describes Jane's "real" feelings to her, simultaneously enforcing them. After Bertha's

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<sup>27</sup> "Takie zdumiewające robi to wszystko wrażenie... Coś, co jest przedwieczne – i niezniszczalne – Te ciężkie, czarne meble z gotyckimi rzeźbami na oparciach, ogromne szafy z rzędami oprawnych w skórę tomów... Nic się tu nigdy nie zmienia... Tylko mnie – po powrocie stamtąd – wydaje się jeszcze bardziej majestatyczne."

Carolina requires her father's permission to enter the library. Virginia Woolf describes a similar situation in her *A Room of One's Own*. As a woman, she was prohibited to enter the university's famous library.

<sup>28</sup> "A ojciec nie pytał mnie dotąd ani razu – ani słowem, ani spojrzeniem. Nie zainteresował się nawet, na jak długo przyjechałam. Zupełnie jakbym wróciła z wycieczki do pobliskiego miasteczka za zakupami."

assault on Mason, Rochester initially orders Jane to remain silent. Afterwards he wants her to imagine that she is a little boy. "You will not speak. [...] No conversation [...] [S]uppose you were no longer a girl well reared and disciplined, but a wild boy" (184-190). He wants her to substitute her own subjective point of view, with his perspective. Through her lips he desires to become the narrator.<sup>29</sup>

Upon breaking off her marriage with Rochester, Jane returns to purity and puritanism. She refuses to accept the informal erotic relationship offered her by Edward, and decides to leave him. Only two months later Bertha escapes the attic for the last time and sets fire to Thornfield. She attempts to kill its master, but instead, injures him seriously. Edward becomes blind and crippled. Hence, the previously powerful and sturdy male character becomes dependent and insecure, and is forced to leave his burned-out mansion. Bertha ushers in fire to perform a symbolic castration, equivalent to her imprisonment in the attic. Culturally, blindness is associated with lust. In Greek mythology and in the Bible it serves as punishment for the lustful. Oedipus, the mythical Greek king of Thebes, does not know his origin. He unconsciously kills his father, marries his mother and has four children with her. At the moment of recognition he punishes himself by gouging out his eyes.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in the Bible, God decides to destroy the lustful city of Sodom and punish its citizens with blindness. In her "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being" Sabina Spielrein interrogates the theme of Adam and Eve, and the connection between punishment with sexuality, suffering and sexual pleasure:

They wanted the forbidden fruit, but this was denied them because one was permitted the fruit only on the penalty of death. Therefore, when God ordained that Adam and Eve should die, he held the forbidden delight out to them. [...] What is punishment in reality? It is an injury to the individual; because the reproductive drive requires destruction of the individual, it is entirely natural that images of punishment so readily incorporate a sexual colouring (179).

As Rochester's eyes represent sexual passion, the blinded character is sexually inactive. His disability allows Jane to remain a speaking subject. He ceases to threaten her autonomy as a narrator and does not force his sexuality on her. Indeed, his blindness assigns Jane absolute power over him. She becomes "his vision [and] his right hand, [...]"

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<sup>29</sup> For an interesting interrogation of the contest between Jane and Rochester, see also Godfrey, pp. 860-869.

<sup>30</sup> Carter compares the relationship between the blind Rochester and Jane to the situation of Oedipus and Antigone, p. 166.

the apple of his eye. He saw nature – he saw books through [her]” (Brontë 399). In one of the closing scenes, upon finding the crippled Rochester in Ferndean, the protagonist secretly watches him for a while:

I stayed my step, almost my breath, and stood to watch him – to examine him, myself unseen and alas! to him invisible. [...] I had no difficulty in restraining my voice from exclamation, my step from hasty advance. [...] [I]n his countenance I saw a change: that looked desperate and brooding. [...] And, reader, do you think I feared him in his blind ferocity? – if you do, you little know me. [...] He lifted his hand and opened his eyelids; gazed blank, and with a straining effort, on the sky, and toward the amphitheatre of trees: one saw that all to him was void darkness. [...] [H]e stood quiet and mute in the rain (382).

Rochester’s castration is in fact a necessary condition for Jane to marry him. She gains a symbolic power over the castration and manages to partly reverse it. Significantly, he regains sight in one eye before his first child is born.

Also the nameless protagonist of *Rebecca* enters the relationship with a partially blind and symbolically castrated man – she reads to him aloud and they do not have any children. However, she does not benefit from Maxim’s emblematic castration. She simply chooses a childless, boring life with a crippled man in the position of his protective mother:

Granted that our little hotel is dull, and the food indifferent, and that day after day dawns very much the same, yet we would not have it otherwise. [...] We both appreciate simplicity, and we are sometimes bored – well, boredom is a pleasing antidote to fear. We live very much by routine, and I – I have developed a genius for reading aloud. [...] [T]he result of a cricket match played many days ago means much to us. [And] I [...] enjoy [...] the little ritual of pouring tea (6-8).

In “Green Shore” the situation resembles that of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* where the ability to see represents control, and power. The keen-sighted father and Carolina are knowledgeable, and independent. On the contrary, Bertha, with her “not-looking at anything, elusive gaze” (44)<sup>31</sup>, and the blind grandmother, are vulnerable and dependent. Bertha cannot walk by herself; and when she uncovers her eyes while in the garden, she faints immediately. Although observation is a significant tool of control, the father prefers silencing and concealed listening. He puts an emphasis on verbal

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<sup>31</sup> “[N]ie patrzących na nic, niepochwytnych spojrzeniu”.

communication. Hence, unlike Edward Rochester, who neglects other senses, he finds hearing an equally powerful tool of control.

Loss of sight in Komornicka's fairytale corresponds with the situation of Rochester and de Winter, and represents symbolic castration. Alla's father is subject to a transformation resembling that of Oedipus. However, while the mythical king of Thebes blinds himself in reaction to the discovery of the terrible facts, the father from "On Father and his Daughter" allows it, in order to find out the truth. Initially, he attempts to trigger visions with meditation, and fasting from food and drink. This practice brings about blurry images, so he begins to flagellate himself and hurt himself with thorns.<sup>32</sup> Finally, he allows the crows to peck his eyes out. His sightlessness enables him to "see" his daughter in the mother's land. In "On Father and his Daughter" sightlessness is not a punishment for incest; on the contrary, it improves the situation of the father. As the embodiment of the Superego, the father cannot become sexually engaged with his daughter. However, as defective, blinded and symbolically castrated, he succeeds in discovering his daughter's whereabouts after fasting from food and drink, flagellation, applying pain from thorns, *and* after allowing the crows to peck his eyes out. Thus he becomes capable of engaging in an incestuous relationship with Alla. The father reappears in the form of a deadly ghost, eliminates the groom and approaches the protagonist in her marital bedroom, similarly to Rochester who finally forms an erotic relationship with Jane, and de Winter who spends a night behind locked doors with his second wife.

Furthermore, as the result of the intervention of her mother, Alla's attitude towards her father changes from hatred to love. In the field of sexuality, she rejects the groom and wants to rejoin her father. Alla recreates the father in her imagination. The phantom, which visits her in the bedroom, is not blinded and powerless. She does not accept his symbolic castration. The father reincarnated is an omnipotent, terrifying and sexually threatening father-figure. This shift escapes the protagonist's notice, because this is how she desires him to be and this is how she revives him.<sup>33</sup>

While Rochester and de Winter become crippled, blinded and symbolically castrated, all the father-figures appearing in the Polish texts discussed in this dissertation are annihilated. Benjamin, Alla, and Bertha and Carolina directly contribute to their fathers' deaths. The first ignores her/his father's cry for help and indirectly leads to his

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<sup>32</sup> His practice of fasting for many days and the indication of "thorns" bring to mind Jesus.

<sup>33</sup> Alla's powerful image of her dead father corresponds with Bertha's impression of her ever-beautiful dead mother of "Green Shore", see pp. 65-66 in "Zielone wybrzeże".

death. Afterward, (s)he also causes the destruction of her/his substitute father-figure, Aspasia, by burning the painting. Alla's decision to leave home and reject her father's love results in the latter's physical malformation, and, finally in his death. The sisters of "Green Shore" collaboratively murder their father. Bertha produces her deathly musical composition, while Carolina narrates the terrible events. Florentine "reduces" her father to the attributes attractive to her: his profession, the fact that he sent her to school and *his death*. Her father's death is valuable to her, as it allows her to function within society as "a widow".

## Chapter VII: Metaphors

### 1 Hair, Serpents, Medusa

The metaphor of hair in connection with feminine sexuality returns in all texts analysed in this dissertation. Long, rampant, loose hair associated with beauty symbolizes sexuality.<sup>1</sup> Short, uninteresting and ugly hair, or hair arranged in braids and plaits represents childishness, immaturity and sexual innocence. In the description of Bertha Mason – a sexually liberated wild beast – “thick and dark hair [is] hanging long down her back” (250), and “a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, [is] hid[ing] its head and face” (259). The appearance of Rebecca’s hair plays a pivotal part in the descriptions of her magnificent beauty. She has “[a] cloud of dark hair” (139), “dark hair, [...] dark hair against a white face” (141), “the cloud of dark hair” (262). Aspasia’s hair is beautiful, mysterious (Benjamin experiences problems with describing its colour), “the coils of golden ringlets form[...] such a brilliant aureole around her face, shimmering as though with all the shades of amber, all the shimmering lights of topaz” (72). Additionally, she enjoys wearing flowers in her hair.

On the contrary, Miss Florentine, who throughout the story protects her virginity, identifies the connection between hair and sexuality, and, in addition to covering her body with an armour-like set of clothing, she conceals her hair under a white cap (a symbol of virginity). In the story, the sexual symbolism of hair is enriched with the symbolism of punishment. The protagonist suggests that an external force commands her actions. On one occasion, she is “pulled by the hair” by “someone” (119)<sup>2</sup> towards the mother when sitting in the church. Another time, after the separation, she “pulls herself by the hair and drags herself back into the flat” (137).<sup>3</sup>

Jane Eyre and the second Mrs de Winter own plain, uninteresting hair matching their looks. The narrator of *Rebecca* has “straight, bobbed hair” (10), “hair hanging lank and straight” (187). When Edward Rochester attempts to enforce sexuality on Jane, by transforming her into his first wife, he imagines her during the wedding ceremony in the following way: “I will attire my Jane in satin and lace, and she shall have roses in her hair; and I will cover the head I love best with a priceless veil” (228). First, he sexualizes the appearance of her hair, by covering it with flowers. Second, he suggests that during the wedding ceremony, she is going to trade her sexual innocence for his material possessions. He wants her to wear expensive jewellery (a diamond chain) and clothes,

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the connection between feminine sexuality and beauty, see the section “Beauty, Madness and Vampirism” above, pp. 122-131.

<sup>2</sup> “za włosy pociągnął”, “ktos”

<sup>3</sup> “chwyciłam się za włosy i do stancji”

and offers her “heirlooms for the ladies of Thornfield” (227). As pointed out by Nicky Hallet, the second Mrs de Winter “is constantly anxious about how her hair looks in contrast to what she is told about the beauty of Rebecca’s hair” (37). Therefore, when she imagines herself as the perfect wife and hostess of the magnificent Manderley, and when she identifies her mirror image with Rebecca, she emphasises the appearance of her hair. Similarly to Rochester imagining Jane, she portrays herself with a flower in her hair. When she dresses for Caroline de Winter (and unintentionally for Rebecca): “The curls stood away from the head in a little cloud” (237), and after the divulgence of truth: her face is “framed in a cloud of dark hair” (426).

Also in “On Father and his Daughter”, in the course of the transformation from a daughter incarcerated in a lonely castle to a wife enjoying her wedding feast, Alla experiences a change in appearance. Initially, the protagonist is sitting by the table and her hair is arranged in braids. However, after the groom kisses it, when the feast transforms into an orgiastic *bakkheia*, and when the protagonist begins her wild, eroticised dance, her hair becomes loose. It remains unrestrained when she searches for the absent husband (or father), and when she lies in bed waiting for a sexual partner. Similarly in “Green Shore”, the change from hair arranged in a plait to loose hair indicates a sexual initiation. The protagonist differentiates her childhood years spent in the room with “white walls that had seen [her] un-kissed lips...” (41)<sup>4</sup> from the time spent on the green shore. Upon reminiscing on her sexual pleasures, she states: “[o]n my hair, [...] on my silk hair I need your caressing hand (59).<sup>5</sup>

In *Rebecca* and “Miss Florentine” an act of brushing the hair of the sexual mother-figure is described. On the one hand, for Maxim de Winter at the beginning of his marriage, and Mrs Danvers, obsessed and in love with her beloved mistress, the everyday habit of brushing Rebecca’s luscious hair has a sexual undertone. The maid describes the “hair-drill” in the following way:

It came down below the waist, when she was first married. Mr de Winter used to brush it for her then. I’ve come into this room time and time again and seen him, in his shirt sleeves, with the two brushes in his hand.

“Harder, Max, harder,” she would say, laughing up at him, and he would do as she told him. [...] He was always laughing and gay then (190).

On the other hand, when Maxim de Winter and Florentine perform the activity on Rebecca and Mrs Brońska, respectively, it is aimed at desexualisation. By continually brushing their hair, they attempt to take control over the sexuality of the mother-figures, and restrain it. Florentine additionally arranges her mother’s hair in braids. On the other

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<sup>4</sup> “Te ściany białe, które widziały moje nie całowane usta...”

<sup>5</sup> “[n]a włosach, [...] na włosach moich jedwabnych ręki twej głaszczącej mi trzeba”.

hand, Du Maurier's novel ends with the narrator's dream about Rebecca, linking the metaphor of hair with snakes: "Maxim was brushing her hair. He held her hair in his hands, and as he brushed it he wound it slowly into a thick rope. It twisted like a snake" (426). The representation of a snake is associated with the biblical Eden and the forbidden knowledge about sexuality.

The image of feminine hair morphing into snakes is connected with the figure of Medusa. In Hesiod's account, she had serpents instead of locks and had the ability to turn men into stone with her gaze. Perseus conquered Medusa and decapitated her. According to Freud, Medusa's head represents the threatening female reproductive organs. Maria Janion gives this interpretation: "Medusa's head has been treated as the image of the Other, as the absolute and baleful otherness, [...] as the sign of the alarming female otherness, fascinating and threatening at the same time" ("Duch inności" 76). Rebecca can be interpreted in terms of Freud's, as well as Cixous's positive, creative Medusa. Maxim perceives her in Freudian terms. He feels threatened by her diverse sexuality and replaces her with the child-like, sexually uninitiated narrator. From this point of view, Rebecca possesses monstrous, castrating sexual powers. She effortlessly seduces Maxim, Frank Crawley, Giles, Jack Favell, Mrs Danvers and the narrator. Basically everyone who surrounds her, sooner or later, becomes spellbound. Underneath she is unmerciful, cruel and demanding. She does not follow any rules. Rebecca symbolically castrates Maxim – he does not have any children with her, or the narrator. However, the first wife embodies also Cixous's laughing Medusa. Rebecca explores her sexuality. She creates and defines herself with it. Her sexual identity is connected with her agency. Rebecca symbolically communicates with the narrator and Maxim after her death, because she succeeds in remaining a speaking subject.

Aspasia's sexual agency is associated with the phallic symbol of the seductive snake. Here the snake is culturally linked to the Bible and Eve's behaviour towards Adam, and symbolises temptation. It is also connected with the figure of the female vampire, Lilith. Ana Castillo portrays Adam's first wife as a winged serpent:

As late as medieval Europe, the serpent in paradise is pictured with a woman's head and breasts. Lilith portrayed as a snake, as in various pre-Christian sources, represents goddess worship. In patriarchy, the snake goddess begins to connote death and destruction rather than the regeneration of life (107-108).

Aspasia, embodied as a serpent, also seduces Benjamin into leaving her/his modest family for a hedonistic, wealthy life with her. The symbol of the snake is introduced upon the presentation of the painting. The sudden appearance of Benjamin's mother interrupts Cyprian in his demonstration of his work and causes him to drop the canvas,

which rolls on the floor resembling a serpent. In this scene Aspasia awakes Benjamin's sexuality. She uses a masculine messenger – Cyprian – to seduce the protagonist. The narrator recognises the situation and calls her/his brother "The seducer!" (54, my trans.).<sup>6</sup> The process of seduction initiated by the serpent-canvas continues with the symbolic thunder which accompanies Benjamin's first meeting with "the heathen". The protagonist recalls: "the sky was split asunder by a long snake of fire" (65).

## 2 Fire and Heat

While the representation of the snake is unambiguous, fire is a dual and ambivalent symbol. It can represent burning desire, the safety and cosiness of a family home, or knowledge.

The sexual mother-figures – Bertha Mason, Rebecca, Aspasia and Mrs Brońska are associated with fire. In *Jane Eyre*, the attic cell is extremely intimate and the burning fire represents sexuality: "In a room without a window, there burnt a fire" (258). Bertha uses fire – this symbol of desire, which had brought unhappiness on her, as a weapon *vis-à-vis* Rochester. Upon escaping from the attic, Bertha sets fire to Jane's bed first and foremost. Finally, she ushers in fire to perform a symbolic castration, equivalent to her imprisonment in the attic. She burns down the mansion, blinds and cripples her husband. Bertha Mason, Rebecca and Aspasia die in the aftermath of a fire. The association between fire and destruction suggests that sexual liberation is punished with death. In du Maurier's novel, the first wife, like a vampire, has to be killed more than once. Cancer, the bullet in the heart, and drowning in the sea are insufficient – she has to be burned and morph into dust. Also the destruction of Manderley – the mother, the first wife, the heritage – is a consequence of a fire. On the one hand, it is analogous with the abandonment of the mother-figure and it enables Maxim to establish a relationship with his second wife. However, it also leaves him homeless, confused and symbolically blinded – the narrator reads to him aloud – and castrated. After the destruction of this symbolic mother, his relationship with the protagonist is dull and childless.

Apropos of Aspasia, the fire also stands for desire. The sexual "heathen" appears before the protagonist in the flash of a thunderbolt. The narrator recalls: "the sky was split asunder by a long snake of fire – a thunderbolt, a roaring crash, a blinding flash of light!" (65). Also her castle reminds her/him of an erupting volcano and later of a building in flames. It is important to note that Aspasia's death is linked with fire. When Benjamin burns the painting, "[i]n the company of her serving women who had been dressing her for a ball, Aspasia fell into the most terrible convulsions and in the course of

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<sup>6</sup> "Kusicielu!"

fifteen minutes ended her life: in the same moment her body turned black as coal. [...] Aspasia must have died at the time as [Benjamin] was burning her picture..." (121).

In "Miss Florentine" the theme of fire and heat corresponds with the symbolism of fire present in *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* and *The Heathen*, and is associated with the sexual mothers: Bertha Mason, Rebecca and Aspasia. Her connection with fire and heat manifest the sexual nature of Mrs Brońska. Initially, Florentine describes the tenancy shared with the mother in the following way: "There was warmth!... The fire burnt in the laundry room all day, and it was felt through the walls" (116).<sup>7</sup> The intimate relationships between the mother and the neighbours, or "the rabble" are symbolized by heat. The laundry room is very warm, and the hands of the washerwoman are hot, even smoking. The protagonist develops a connection with heat and fire when Mrs Brońska socializes with other people (the washerwoman, the beggar), encourages Florentine to establish relationships with neighbours or to beg for food, or when she talks about her desire to become a beggar in the church. The daughter experiences the following sensations: "as if something had spilt scalding water on me", "as if something had poured scalding water on me!", "I experienced roasting flushes", "[I felt] as if my head was in flames" (122, 125, 125 and 128).<sup>8</sup> When the mother decides to leave Florentine to become a beggar: "[T]he roasting water fired in my lungs... [...] My lips were burned, my throat dry, my eyes on fire" (137)<sup>9</sup>, and when the protagonist observes her mother begging in the church: "I stand there, looking, my tears are hot and boiling, like boiling water" (138).<sup>10</sup>

The fire and heat are contrasted with coldness associated with the father, and chosen by Florentine. When the protagonist describes the tenancy where she lives as a widow after a clerk, she emphasises the fact that "it is very cold in the house, the fire isn't burning" (116).<sup>11</sup> Afterwards, she frequently touches cold walls or develops an internal coldness when the mother manifests her urge for maintaining relationships with others. Upon seeing Brońska encircled by other beggars, the protagonist "felt *coldness*, [her] *teeth chattered*" (120, my emphasis)<sup>12</sup>; when the mother indicates her need for contact with others, Florentine experiences "worse and worse *frost* in [her] bones" (126, my emphasis)<sup>13</sup> and becomes feverish; in reaction to her mother's attempts to force the closed door and leave, she feels a "great and *cold* power within", and "[her] heart

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<sup>7</sup> "Tam było ciepło!... W pralni palili cały dzień, aż przez ścianę buchało."

<sup>8</sup> "jakby na mnie ukropen chlustnął", "jakby we mnie warem lunął!", "wary na mnie biją", "jakby mi się w głowie paliło"

<sup>9</sup> "[C]oś mi w piersiach warem buchnęło... [...] Usta miałam spalone, wyschnięte gardło, oczy w ogniu"

<sup>10</sup> "To nieraz stoję tak, patrzę, tu mi łzy kipią, jak ten ukrop gorące takie"

<sup>11</sup> "w domu zimno wielkie, nie pali się."

<sup>12</sup> "poczułam, że zimno, ząb mi o ząb szczykał"

<sup>13</sup> "coraz sroższy mróz mam w kościach"

suddenly turned into a *brick of ice*" (130, my emphasis)<sup>14</sup>; finally, when she cannot find the mother, "the wind blew on [her], *coldness* surrounded [her], a sudden *chill*" (138, my emphasis).<sup>15</sup> In the last example Florentine is not afraid of her mother's death, but of her intensified contacts with "the rabble" and activated sexuality. Irigaray also associates the mother-daughter relationship with coldness and immobility. There is an astonishing correspondence between her "And the One doesn't Stir without the Other" and Florentine's reaction to her mother:

With your milk, Mother, I swallowed *ice*. And here I am now, *my insides frozen*. And I walk with even more difficulty than you do, and I move even less. You flowed into me, and that hot liquid became poison, paralyzing me. My blood no longer circulates to my feet or my hands, or as far as my head. It is *immobilised, thickened by the cold*. Obstructed by *icy chunks* which resist its flow. My blood coagulates, remains in and near my heart (60, my emphasis).

In *Jane Eyre* and *The Heathen*, fire is associated not only with death and danger, but also with a maternal power, an intimate location – a womb-like, warm, cosy, safe home – and knowledge. In reference to Benjamin's protective mother, the fire represents the cosiness and safety of the family home. When the protagonist returns from Aspasia's castle, (s)he rests in front of the fireplace with her/his head on the mother's lap. The mother symbolically regains control over her/his sexuality (she installs her/his bed in the place of the cot and restores her/his name – Benjamin).

When Bertha Mason approaches Jane with a candle, she is not trying to hurt her. In fact, she appears as her forgotten mother, with a friendly, warning torch. She offers the innocent, inexperienced girl the knowledge of an older woman. She warns Jane away from the marriage, which has resulted for her in madness, incarceration and the announcement of her death. Significantly, she directs her violent attack onto the expensive veil, not at the protagonist. She extinguishes the fire and warns the narrator away from sexual desire. When Bertha openly looks at Jane, the latter loses consciousness: "<[T]he fiery eyes glared upon me – she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage *flamed over mine*, and I lost consciousness>" (250, my emphasis). In this moment the identities of the two women merge. Rochester's wives symbolically become one for the moment. In *The Double in the Fiction of R.L. Stevenson, Wilkie Collins and Daphne du Maurier*, Nathalie

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<sup>14</sup> "wielką a zimną moc w sobie", "serce w kawał lodu obróciło nagle"

<sup>15</sup> "Jakby po mnie wiatr przeszedł, taki mnie chłód objął, takie zimno nagle."

Abi-Ezzi indicates that the fire may be interpreted as the agent of rebirth, the catalyst of renewal.

After Thornfield has been burned down, Jane Eyre and Rochester seemingly find themselves in a similar situation to Maxim de Winter and his second wife. Indeed, the male character is literally blind, crippled, and symbolically castrated. However, in the case of *Jane Eyre*, the future of the female protagonist actually depends on the destruction of the house. The act of setting fire to the bed, as well as the act of suicide committed by the first wife symbolise the annihilation of sexual identity. But it does not simply mean annihilation of any sexuality. It allows Jane to choose between various sexualities and to become Rochester's wife on her own terms. This situation is in fact the polar opposite of the relationship between Maxim and his second wife. Jane hears the voice of Bertha – an avatar of a mother in her natural form – calling her to return to Thornfield, because now it is safe and she can establish an a-sexual relationship with Rochester. She gains power over the crippled man and enters a partnership without sexual demands being made on her.

Also the male characters are in different situations. When Thornfield is destroyed and Bertha dead, Rochester simply moves out to his second mansion, while de Winter loses his entire heritage and remains homeless. It is true that Jane eventually becomes a mother, but my point is that the child comes from a “castrated” father. Pauline Nestor argues that when she becomes Rochester's eyes and hands, she symbolically reverses the castration, and remains in control. I would even say that, Jane becomes Rochester's phallus and a phallic, speaking subject.

### **3 Flowers and Moon**

In *Jane Eyre* the flowers are a clear sexual symbol – Rochester imagines his second wife with flowers in her hair when he attempts to sexualize her appearance. Similarly, the narrator of *Rebecca* pictures her hair as decorated by flowers, when she dresses for Caroline de Winter or the first wife. However, in *Rebecca* the symbolism of flowers is more complex and more developed. The sexual identities of the two wives are represented by their connection with different flowers. The sexually demanding and active Rebecca is associated with the rhododendrons planted by her: the “wall of colour, blood-red, reaching above our heads [...] bewildering, even shocking [...] crimson faces [...] slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic” (72). They grow by the window of the morning-room, designed and previously occupied by Rebecca. These flowers are dominant, vivid and monstrous. They forcefully enter the room through the window and interfere with its atmosphere: “The room was filled with them, even the walls took

colour from them, becoming rich and glowing in the morning sun. They were the only flowers in the room. [They were] in profusion [and] exaggeration” (93-94). The appearance of the flowers, their rich, red, bloody colour, their mass and power are greatly contrasted with the image of rhododendrons in the narrator’s mind. She believes that they should be a “homey, domestic thing, strictly conventional, mauve or pink in colour, standing one beside the other in a neat round bed” (72). Rhododendrons growing in Manderley represent Rebecca’s charismatic, demanding sexual identity. Those from the narrator’s imagination represent her polite, calm and predictable sexuality. However, the second wife is not entirely sure whether she likes these flowers, or not. She is absolutely fascinated by them, in the same way that she is by Rebecca. Maxim, who feels threatened by his first wife’s sexuality and attempts to repress the sexuality of his second wife, smiles with pride, when they drive past the rhododendrons. In the famous opening dream they survive and [stand] “fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with the host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things” (2). Rebecca is also associated with the azaleas. They grow in the Happy Valley and influence the scent of her perfume and belongings. According to the *Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers*, azaleas and rhododendrons are in fact the same flowers.<sup>16</sup>

On the contrary, the sexuality of the second wife is associated with the delicate roses growing by her bedroom window. Maxim establishes a link between these flowers, motherhood and childhood:

“I love the rosegarden,” he said; “one of the first things I remember is walking after my mother, on a very small, unsteady legs, while she picked off the dead heads of the roses. There’s something peaceful and happy about this room, and it’s quiet too. You could never tell you were within five minutes of the sea, from this room” (84).

Throughout the novel roses are associated with the maternal, a-sexual power of the narrator. Abi-Ezzi indicates that they also appear in the connection with doctor Baker, visited by Rebecca, when she suspected she was pregnant.

In “On Father and his Daughter” and “Green Shore” the mother-figures return and meet with their daughters amidst the conventional attributes of femininity. Alla’s mother is able to wake her daughter from the powerful, enchanted sleep evoked by the father only at night, by moonlight, through the accompaniment of music and the scent of flowers. She is additionally surrounded by “an uncountable number of radiant

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<sup>16</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers*.

creatures dressed in clouds, flowers, and stars. They grabbed their hands and surrounded [Alla] with hundreds of growing circles – and rocked to the tune faster and faster – they swirled around [Alla] and threw flowers on her” (90-91)<sup>17</sup>. Interestingly, the attributes employed by the mother – moon, flowers (nature), night – overlap Cixous’s famous list of antitheses deriving from the initial pair masculine/feminine:

Activity/passivity

Sun/Moon

Culture/Nature

Day/Night

Father/Mother

Head/Heart

(“Sorties” 63).<sup>18</sup>

In the fairy tale the night symbolises the sphere of unconsciousness, intimacy and sexuality. The image of the moon is culturally opposed to the image of the masculine, “official” sun. According to Kopaliński and his *Encyklopedia “drugiej płci”*, the moon symbolises intuition, passion, sensitivity and unconsciousness. Its phases govern the rhythm of the female body and its life patterns. Flowers are an ancient sexual symbol and their exoticism is additionally connected with sexuality. The mother employs these sexual and sensual feminine representations, and emphasises the extraordinary, intimate, doubling bond connecting her with Alla in order to influence her decision to leave the castle. The protagonist acts instinctively, unconsciously, senselessly and follows her mother to the nameless land. Later, during her wedding organized by the mother “the air is saturated with [...] the scent of a thousand flowers” (94).<sup>19</sup>

Bertha Mason also contacts the protagonist with the use of the moon. The narrator hears a cry “Jane! Jane! Jane!” (371) while “the May moon [is] shining in through the uncurtained window” (369), in “the room [...] full of moonlight” (371). It is the voice of the first wife calling the protagonist to return to Rochester and Thornfield. Bertha informs the second wife-to-be that it is safe now to establish a

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<sup>17</sup> “nieprzejrzane zastępy istot promiennych, strojnych w obłoki, w kwiaty, w gwiazdy. Ująwszy się za ręce, otoczyły [Allę] setkami kręgów coraz szerszych, - a kołysząc się w takt pieśni coraz pręcej i pręcej – wirowały koło [Alli] obrzucając ją w przelocie kwiatami.”

<sup>18</sup> Compare to Irigaray’s list of oppositions: “be/become, have/not have sex (organ), phallic/nonphallic, penis/clitoris or else penis/vagina, plus/minus, clearly representable/dark continent, logos/silence or idle chatter, desire for the mother/desire to be the mother, etc.” (“Speculum” 22).

<sup>19</sup> “powietrz[e] jest przesycon[e] [...] zapachem tysiącznych kwiatów”

favourable relationship with Rochester. In her interpretation of the voice as a call towards temptation, Gilbert points out another circumstance under which it is heard:

St. John prays over [Jane], reading (tellingly) from the Book of Revelation inscribed by his namesake – a sacred text in which female sexuality, figured as the Whore of Babylon, is banished to the desert so that a new heaven and new earth can be constituted from the blood of the lamb. [...] In fact, what Jane discovers through this climax of impassioned epiphany is that the paradise for which she longs is not St. John's heaven of spiritual transcendence but rather an earthy paradise of physical fulfilment" ("Furious Lovemaking" 366-137).

Similarly, the returning mother of "Green Shore" uses a symbolic feminine repertoire in order to lure her daughters – Carolina, to escape to green shore, and Bertha, to murder the father. During the secret meeting in the village she emphasises her everlasting beauty, "[she] smell[s] wonderfully, like spring, with violets – and she ha[s] a bunch of autumn violets pinned to her breast" (47).<sup>20</sup> As a result, beauty (additionally corresponding with Carolina's attractiveness), flowers and breast reinforce the love and devotion of the sisters. In the course of the story, Carolina begins to connect her sexual pleasures experienced at green shore with flowers. She kisses her husband and "bathe[s] in wine and flowers" (56)<sup>21</sup> with him. In her reminiscences sexual pleasures are associated with various flowers (and the mother): "Warm, wet, scented kisses. [...] White lilies-of-the-valley, cold rose petals, the scent of jasmine" (59).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Pachni[e] cudnie, jak wiosna, fiołkami – i pęk fiołków jesiennych przypięty m[a] u piersi."

<sup>21</sup> "Kąp[ie] się we winie i kwiatach"

<sup>22</sup> "Ciepłe, wilgotne, pachnące pocałunki. [...] Konwalie białe, chłodne płatki róży, pachnące jaśminy."

## 4 Love and Death. Eros and Thanatos

Where love reigns,  
the ego, the ominous despot, dies.  
SABINA SPIELREIN

The following chapter interprets the manifestation of the theme of Eros and Thanatos, libido and *mortido*.<sup>23</sup> In Greek mythology, Eros (Gr. “desire”) was the god of love; Thanatos (Gr. “death”) was a daemon personification of death. Psychoanalysis has established a strong link between sexuality and death. Sexual intercourse leads to the dissolution of a separate self; marital union is associated with loss of identity and self-destruction. A Freudian psychoanalyst from the first half of the twentieth century, Sabina Spielrein devotes her controversial “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being” to the subject of the destructive component of the reproductive instinct. She begins her interrogation with the question: “Why does this most powerful drive, the reproductive instinct, harbour negative feelings in addition to the inherently anticipated positive feelings?” (155). Spielrein reaches the following conclusions:

“Where love reigns, the ego, the ominous despot, dies”. When one is in love, the blending of the ego in the beloved is the strongest affirmation of self, a new ego existence in the person of the beloved. If love fails, the image becomes one of destruction or death.

Death is horrible; yet death in the service of the sexual instinct, which includes a destructive component, is a salutary blessing since it leads to a coming into being (174 and 183).

In *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, the connection between love and death is most evident in the figures of the first wives. Although Rochester and de Winter are initially physically attracted by Bertha and Rebecca, respectively, they decide to annihilate them and remove them from their worlds. The demanding sexualities of the first wives are associated with punishment, destruction and death. Before the divulgation of truth Rochester pretends his wife is dead because of her “perverse, [...] gross, impure, depraved” (270) nature. Confinement in the pre-linguistic, pre-Symbolic sphere of the attic represents social inexistence. As a result, the intimate realm causes the further sexualisation of the first wife and induces her madness. On the one hand, death in the aftermath of a fire is a final punishment for her unrestrained sexuality. However, death

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<sup>23</sup> The term *morbido* was introduced by Paul Federn, see the collection of his writings “Ego Psychology and the Psychoses”.

caused by fire can be also interpreted as sexual liberation and the beginning of a positively valued relationship between Jane Eyre and Rochester.

The connection between feminine sexuality, love and death returns in the case of Bertha's double – Jane. The circumstances of Rochester's proposal indicate the deathliness of marriage. He proposes while the couple is sitting on the bench of a chestnut tree – trees symbolise sexuality. According to Spielrein, they are culturally associated with the tree of Knowledge in Eden, and death: "Christ dies on the Tree of Life; he is nailed to it and hangs there as though he were its fruit. As with fruit, Christ perishes and is placed in Mother Earth as a seed. This fructification leads to the formation of new life, to the resurrection of the dead" ("Destruction" 178). In *Jane Eyre* the chestnut tree is destroyed by thunder and split in half after the marriage proposal.

Although Rebecca temporarily succeeds in securing her sexual identity, she is ultimately punished for it with death. Maxim murders her because he finds her "vicious, damnable, rotten through and through, [...] incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency, [...] not even normal" (304). Also the first Mrs de Winter dies as the consequence of a fire.

In the Polish texts chosen for inclusion in this dissertation, mother-figures, father-figures and daughter-figures manifest complex feelings towards each other that constitute a blend of love, hatred, and pain. Love is the *leitmotif* of *The Heathen*. It dominates in the discussions of the circle of friends in the frame of the story, and in Benjamin's description of her/his childhood and her/his family. According to Phillips "[The] novel is an affirmation of love, including sexual love, which [Żmichowska] attempts to integrate – in a synthesis of *eros* and *agape* – into the Christian ethos, love itself being understood as the highest value" ("Femme Fatale" 51). Also Borkowska emphasises "the element of love as omnipresent in [Żmichowska's] writings, letters, and novels. It is not identical with romantic erotic love and is not confined to the feeling between man and woman [...]. Instead, it assumes the fundamental form of the prime foundation of life, without which a human being cannot breathe" ("Żmichowska versus Orzeszkowa" 86). We can find similar observations in Walczewska. In the context of the remark presented by Phillips, the protagonist attempts to integrate the two types of love, represented by the biological mother and the "real" Aspasia from the castle into one, complex mother-figure symbolised by the "imaginary" Aspasia.

Benjamin combines love with punishment, physical pain and death in her/his relationship with "the heathen". The latter's physical vampiric appearance – her dead, empty eyes and paleness are associated with death. The theme of Eros and Thanatos is

also manifested in the contrasted appearance of her lifeless, deadly eyes and the passionate lips:

It was as if her eyes were not her eyes; as if they had been lifeless for a long time, borrowed from a corpse. The most beautiful eyes, but eyes only for looking, only for her use, not to bring happiness. [...] What a contrast, what an amazing contrast to her lips in particular! to those delicate yet protruding lips! lips fresh as sweet innocence, as the caresses of passion! Such eyes and such lips! Death and life! (72).

Aspasia boldly explains to the protagonist: “God [loves] with destruction and mystery. [...] Devil and God, hatred and love, these are the two faces of infinity” (75, my trans.)<sup>24</sup>, and acts out this assumption, thereby associating affection with death. Her love for Benjamin implies pain and torment. She calls her/him “Beni” – a shortened version of the name “Benoni” associated with suffering. Phillips points out that during the hallucination about the two women, she “ask[s] [Benjamin] to bring her a series of whimsical items,

including the “lictor’s rods” or fascies – what more eloquent symbol of power and the desire to inflict pain? – [these] hardly seem those of a lover, more of a tormentor. [...] [I]t is not so much a struggle of conscience against forbidden desire, as of the *predetermined* – and hence for Benjamin *natural* – drive of his personality against the warning coming from his own subconscious that succumbing to this drive will inevitably mean his destruction (Aspasia has already warned him that she loves “as destruction”) (“Femme Fatale” 42-43, original emphasis).

Most importantly, the narrator’s love for Aspasia leads to killing and self-destruction. Encouraged by her/his lover, (s)he ignores the problems of her/his family, and indirectly causes the death of her/his father and two brothers. Moreover, (s)he murders Aspasia’s lover out of jealousy, provoked by “the heathen”. The initial description of Benjamin as old, tired and bald suggests that (s)he paid for her/his love for Aspasia with her/his happiness, and youth. Phillips interprets her/his choice in the following way: “There is [a] possibility, given the agony and destructive energy unleashed by the affair, that Benjamin’s love for Aspasia represents a kind of *negative desire*, where the erotic is closely linked to the desire for death” (30, original emphasis). I would like to suggest that suffering experienced in her/his relationship with Aspasia

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<sup>24</sup> “Bóg [kocha] zniszczeniem i tajemnicą. [...] Szatan i Bóg, nienawiść i miłość, czyż to nie dwa oblicza nieskończoności?”

corresponds with the suffering of her/his family – father, brothers, sisters and the mother.

The narrator who values the protective mother-figure over her/his sexual partner, chooses tormented love over the protective, all-forgiving, mother's affection and Arcadian childhood described in the story's opening. Phillips believes "that Benjamin regards his childhood as a paradise lost, one that can never be regained" (40). My own view is that although it cannot be restored, the narrator attempts to rebuild it, but s(he) is undermined by her own submission to the death drive.

In "On Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore" love is impossible, (self)destructive, obsessive, abusive and tyrannical. As early as in 1909, Sabina Spielrein wrote in her diary:

This demonic force, whose very essence is destruction (evil) and at the same time is the creative force, since out of the destruction (of two individuals) a new one arises. That is in fact the sexual drive which is by nature a destructive drive, an exterminating drive for the individual, and for that last reason, in my opinion, must overcome such great resistance in everyone (qtd. in Etkind 149-150).

In the Polish texts the foundation of the fathers' tyrannical behaviour is ambiguous. They combine love with torture of a mental and physical nature. The father of Komornicka's fairytale incarcerates, and tortures his wife and daughter because he longs for their love, and fears loneliness. He abuses his wife because he loves her: he "slaughtered her because of loving hatred" (87).<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, he tortures the protagonist with imprisonment and constant control. And last, he inflicts severe physical pain onto his own body in order to discover the whereabouts of his daughter. He searches for her in the castle, the forest and the abyss, but he cannot determine her whereabouts. He assumes she is dead but nevertheless "he desired to see his daughter because of great sorrow – wherever and whatever she was: a rotten corpse, or dust on a cart track, or an immortal ghost" (93).<sup>26</sup> By explaining torture with affection, the father establishes a connection between love, unhappiness and suffering. Filipiak makes a similar discovery: "This father has one longing – a desire to be loved. For what? For nothing, always, unconditionally" (334). In psychoanalytic terms, the father breaks the dyadic unity of the mother and the child, intervenes in their happiness and causes the

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<sup>25</sup> "z miłosnej nienawiści zakatowa[ł]"

<sup>26</sup> "zapra[gnął] z wielkiej tęsknoty po córce ujrzeć ją – gdziekolwiek i czymkolwiek by była: trupem robaczywym, czy kurzem gościńców, czy duchem nieśmiertelnym."

disappearance of the mother. In turn, the daughter has to discontinue her relationship with the mother-figure and bond herself with the father-figure.

The father of “Green Shore” has the same longing. He also attempts to restrain his daughters inside the house, control their decisions, knowledge, thoughts and dreams, and he constantly observes them. He raises his daughters to be mentally, emotionally and physically (agoraphobic Bertha) dependent on him, because otherwise they might leave him. He fears betrayal and abandonment because his wife has deserted him (with the help of another man), and entered a relationship with the third man. His behaviour verges on paranoia: as suggested by the grandmother, he identifies the secrecy of private conversations with lack of trust. In psychoanalytic terms, by incarcerating the sisters, he attempts to reverse the escape of the mother. The father significantly changes as a result of his wife’s flight – only then he becomes a fearsome, controlling tyrant. His transformation is suggested by Carolina in the following remark: “[s]ince then [the mother’s escape] we began to fear him... (46).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the protagonist points out that he spends a year in a lunatic asylum.

Alla, Carolina and Bertha assume from their fathers the paradigm of love associated with death, sexual desire mixed with fear, and pleasure stimulated by physical pain. Furthermore, they transfer this model onto their future relationships. Alla’s wedding feast resembles a violent sexual orgy, a *bakkheia*, or an erotic battlefield comprising exploding grenades, skyrocketing and thunder:

The feast bubbled with life. Wine inebriated heads, the band fuelled madness. Everyone forgot about their worries, they were captured by the gust of blissful freedom in the fiery worlds of rapture. In the air saturated with incenses and the scent of thousand flowers – there exploded grenades of joy, there flew skyrockets of jokes, there rolled the thunder of passionate gazes (94).<sup>28</sup>

The protagonist identifies sexual experience with fear. When she searches for her absent husband, her fright arouses her desire: “Maybe – she thought – he waits for me to lie down somewhere in the dark – to suddenly grab me into his arms? She undressed hastily and lay on the bed panting” (98).<sup>29</sup> Afterwards, she combines desire with terror: “screaming with terror, she pushed her head against the pillow” (98).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “[o]d tego czasu zaczęłyśmy się go bać...”

<sup>28</sup> “Uczta wrzała życiem. Wino oszołamiało głowy, kapela podniecała szal. Każdy zapomniał o troskach, każdego porwał w ogniste światy upojenia podmuch rozkosznej swobody. W powietrzu przesyconym kadzidłami i zapachem tysiącznych kwiatów – pękały granaty wesołości, wylatywały race dowcipu, snuły się błyskawice spojrzeń namiętnych.”

<sup>29</sup> “A może – pomyślała sobie, - gdzieś tu w mrokach czeka, aż się położę – by zniecka pochwycić mię w ramiona? I rozebrawszy się spieszenie, legła dysząca na łożu.”

<sup>30</sup> “Z okrzykiem trwogi utopiła głowę w wezłowi.”

The sisters of Nałkowska's short story fuse love with hatred and fear. Their feelings about the father are a *mélange* of contradictory thoughts and emotions. It is pleasurable to imagine his death, but they also dread this prospect. Their attitude towards the father is reflected in the childhood scene with the spider, bearing the theme of Eros and Thanatos. Carolina calmly observes the insects, because she has mistaken the cruelty of the spider and his deathly intentions towards the fly, for a sexual love act. Bertha recognises the situation and punishes the predator by brutally crushing it. She comments: "It was not love, but death" (58).<sup>31</sup>

The difference in the interpretation of the above situation is reflected in the future lives of the sisters. Bertha separates love from death, does not escape to green shore and murders the father. Carolina continues to fuse love with suffering and pain. She duplicates the paradigm of the love-hate relationship with her father in her marriage and love affairs. Firstly, she chooses a domineering father-figure for a husband. There is also no equality in her later relationships: she is alternatively superior or subordinate towards her lovers. Secondly, her sexually-based relationships oscillate between love and hatred, pleasure and pain. She espouses her father's pessimistic attitude towards love: "I understood [...] this great truth: only the death of love enables one to start living" (56)<sup>32</sup>, and summarises her experiences with the following words: "unbearable pleasure – and unbearable torment" (61).<sup>33</sup>

The relationship between Florentine and Mrs Brońska is a combination of love and hatred, tenderness and aggression, pleasure and pain. For example, the protagonist cries out of loneliness and misery throughout the night, hugs her mother passionately in the morning, yowls on the street a few minutes later. Florentine takes care of the mother, toils in order to provide food and shelter for her, and even expresses genuine feelings towards her; for example she does not want to worry Brońska when she loses her job, but her affection is invariably connected with negative thoughts, feelings and emotions. She perceives their relationship in terms of "a swamp [...] overtaking, surrounding, drowning [her]"<sup>34</sup> (135) or "a permanent war" (136)<sup>35</sup>. The mother "feeds her with bile" (123)<sup>36</sup>. Her love and longing for the mother are described as dominated by suffering of a physical nature:

To take a look, to see, to hear her voice, her whisper... I stand there,  
looking, my tears are *hot and boiling*, like boiling water, something *drags me*

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<sup>31</sup> "Nie miłość to była, tylko śmierć."

<sup>32</sup> "rozumiałam [...] wielką prawdę, że dopiero po trupie miłości można wejść w życie."

<sup>33</sup> "Rozkosz nad siły – i męka nad siły."

<sup>34</sup> "bagno [...] ogarniało, otaczało, topiło [ją]"

<sup>35</sup> "ciągn[ą] wojn[ę]"

<sup>36</sup> "mnie [...] nakarmiła żółcią"

towards the mother *by the hair*, and something *holds me as if with pincers*, so I cannot... Sometimes [...] I am *struck* with power, and it *darkens before my eyes*... I push against the church wall and remain firm, while *every vein in my body is trembling*, because the mother is few bricks away, on the other side, and so far away!... (138, my emphasis).<sup>37</sup>

Earlier, in the situation when Brońska announces her decision to leave, the protagonist experiences pain stigmatized by physical violence and death: “Like [...] nails hitting the coffin, a hammer hits and stops, these word of my mother were hitting me... [...] [L]ike a grave was digging in me... Deeper, darker, emptier...” (136).<sup>38</sup> Florentine’s ambivalent feelings towards the mother are represented by a continual mix of metaphors associated with coldness and heat. For example, upon discovering that Mrs Brońska has become a beggar, the protagonist experiences alternative hot and cold flushes. Coldness symbolises emotional aloofness and indifference, and heat stands for affection, desire and participation in life. In the case of the protagonist, the emergence of heat marks the sparse moments of genuine feeling towards the mother. When Florentine worries about the mother, her “lips burned, [her] throat dry, [her] eyes on fire” (137)<sup>39</sup>, “[her] tears are hot and boiling, like boiling water” (138)<sup>40</sup>.

In the relationship between Mrs Brońska and Florentine the two women battle over the sexuality and subjectivity of the protagonist. The mother attempts to persuade her daughter to establish (intimate) relationships with people from her own social background and begin an independent life without the mother. She should forget about her education, her father’s social status and the noble origin of her mother, and reconstitute her identity of an impoverished simple seamstress. Florentine responds with forceful attempts to alter Brońska. She continually infantilises and desexualises the mother by limiting her contacts with other people, treating her like a dependent little girl, and dragging her into cultured conversations. Although the behaviour of the protagonist is stimulated by her love of the mother, her reactions to Mrs Brońska’s suggestions and her sexual behaviour are described with metaphors of extreme pain and suffering. For instance, when the mother criticises the purpose of Florentine’s education:

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<sup>37</sup> “Aby spojrzeć, aby zobaczyć, aby głos, aby szept usłyszeć... To nieraz stoję tak, patrzę, tu mi łzy kipią, jak ten ukrop gorące takie, tu mnie aż za włosy coś ciągnie do matki, a tu znów jakby mnie co kleszczami trzymało, tak nie mogę... To nieraz aż [...] wszystkie siły na mnie uderzają, aż mi się w oczach ciemni... Zapnę się o ten mur kościelny i stoję, a każda żyłka we mnie drży, że tam matka o kilka cegieł tylko, z drugiej strony, a taka daleka!...”

<sup>38</sup> “Jak kiedy [...] gwoździe w trumnę biją, uderzy młotek i ustanie, tak te matczyne słowa uderzały we mnie... [...] [J]akby we mnie grób kopał... Coraz głębiej, coraz ciemniej, puściej...”

<sup>39</sup> “Usta miałam spalone, wyschnięte gardło, oczy w ogniu.”

<sup>40</sup> “Łzy kipią, jak ten ukrop gorące”

My soul nearly fainted! I felt as if something was ripping and stretching my veins, more and more, to another world... The mother was there and I am here... She darkened before my eyes, and seemed even smaller, I barely saw her... She was leaving me behind, disappearing... [...] Every time I looked at the mother, she seemed so strange to me, as if I had instantly become an orphan! My heart was so empty [...] so empty. [...] I only felt as if something had pushed me downwards, into a dark well!... [...] I could only hug the wall covered in tears and whisper: I am an orphan! an orphan! (124).<sup>41</sup>

And later when she suggests that the protagonist had begged for food: “[I felt] as if something had poured scalding water on me! [...] I felt as if something had hit me in the face with a whip. [...] [T]he distance between the mother and me continued to grow like fog... and divided us with a wall!” (125).<sup>42</sup> Upon seeing Brońska among their neighbours, “the rabble”: “As if something [...] had knocked me off my feet, as if something had spilt boiling water on me!” (122)<sup>43</sup>, when she hears her conversation with the washerwoman: “[M]y heart was hitting my ribs like a bird” (125)<sup>44</sup>, and when she sees her with other beggars: “[her] insides flipped” (138)<sup>45</sup>.

The conflict culminates in a brutal argument. Mrs Brońska “screams, laments, whines...” (130)<sup>46</sup> while the protagonist refuses to allow the old beggar into the room. The quarrel quickly transforms into a brawl accompanied by a chanting crowd gathered outside the door. The neighbours bang on the door and make offensive remarks about Florentine. Mrs Brońska attempts to escape and violently jerks her daughter’s arm. In response, the latter “pushed the door with great force, turned the key in the lock, squeeze[d] it in [her] hand, pushed [her] back against the door and waited” (130).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “[M]ało we mnie dusza nie omdlała! [...] To jakby we mnie kto żyły pruł, rozciągał, coraz dalej, coraz dalej, na jakiś inny świat... To matka tam, a ja tu... Już mi i w oczach ciemniej, i coraz mniejsza się zdaje, już jej mało co i widzę... Tak się oddalała ode mnie, tak precz szła... [...] A co na matkę spojrzę, to mi się taka obca jakaś zdaje, jakbym się przez tę chwilę sierotą została! Tak mi pusto na sercu [...] tak pusto. [...] Tylko czuję, jakby mnie kto w dół, w studnię ciemną pchnął!... [...] Nic, tylko się do tej ściany tulę cała we łzach i szeptach: sierota ja! sierota!”

<sup>42</sup> “[Czułam się] jakby we mnie warem lunął! [...] [T]ak mi było, jakby mnie kto biczem prze twarz uderzył. [T]a dalekość znów zaczęła między matką a mną jak mgła rość, rość... i tak mnie od niej grodzić jakby murem!”

<sup>43</sup> “Jakby mi nogi [...] podciął, jakby na mnie ukropem chlusnął!”

<sup>44</sup> “[S]erce mi się jak ptak po żebrach tłucze”.

<sup>45</sup> “targnęły się w [niej] wnętrzości”

<sup>46</sup> “wykrzykuje, lamentuje, wyrzeka...”

<sup>47</sup> “Siłą pchnęłam drzwi, klucz przekręciłam w zamku, ścisnęłam go w rękę, oparłam się plecami o futrynę i stoję.”

Florentine's love for the mother is of a masochistic nature. She seems to enjoy her suffering and cannot give it up, as after the separation, she continually "goes [to the church] and rips out her heart..." (138).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "chodziła [do kościoła] serce w sobie rwać..."

## Conclusion

The intention of the thesis has been to identify a corpus of texts that share correspondences with reference to the themes of feminine doubling, the difficulty of asserting feminine subjectivity, sexual mother-figures, Symbolic father-figures, and to provide a comparative interrogation. The research has offered a reinterpretation of the British and Polish texts through the themes of motherhood, daughterhood, and fatherhood stressing their ambivalence, a/sexuality, and their threatening or liberating character. It has identified and given voice to the unknown, stereotyped, or forgotten Polish texts. The theoretical framework of the research has enabled their comparison with the recognised British works. The use of various psychoanalytic theories and feminist concepts has allowed the accentuation of the correspondences between these works. It has unveiled the associations between mother-figures, daughter-figures and father-figures. In return, the thesis has introduced the Polish texts to Anglo-Saxon critique and enabled them to be given their appropriate position within it. The research has also introduced the pioneering “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being” written by the forgotten Russian-Jewish psychoanalyst, Sabina Spielrein, as well as fragments of her diaries.

The first part of the thesis introduced the issue of Polish women’s writing between the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. It has taken account of specifics of Polish culture and history that made women writers marginalised within this context, and within the context of the Russian imperial past. The thesis has provided a broad cultural context for the interpretation of the Polish texts chosen for inclusion in this work. It has also included a short account of the differences between Poland and Britain in this period.

In the second part, using close textual analysis, the argument rediscovered the forgotten Polish literature and mapped a new direction for further research. Despite the historical and social differences, a theoretical analysis shows that the various texts have profound structures in common. My research has focused on the literary themes of feminine doubling, feminine sexuality, motherhood, daughterhood, fatherhood. It has used recent debates in psychoanalysis and feminist criticism concerning the mother-daughter-father relationship to read the Polish author’s texts. The thesis has also provided an interrogation of the correspondences between “Green Shore” and “On Father and his Daughter”, which has not yet been taken into academic consideration.

It has additionally contributed to a new comparative reinterpretation of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*. The research has emphasised the positive qualities of the mother-figures,

Bertha Mason and Rebecca, and the possible beneficial relationship between them and the daughter-figures/second wives. It has stressed the connection between demanding feminine sexuality, madness and exclusion from the Symbolic order. A special emphasis has been placed on the shifts occurring between the protagonists, the subjective Jane and the subordinate nameless narrator of du Maurier's novel.

The comparison with *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* has enabled a new interpretation of the Polish works. The analysis has introduced new themes to Polish criticism, such as the (Female) Gothic and the Vampiric woman. On the other hand, the research of the Polish texts has reframed the reinterpretation of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, and has added new contexts to the British dimension. It has allowed an expansion of concepts of feminine creativity, sexual mother-figures, Symbolic father-figures.

The thesis has laid a solid groundwork, which can encourage further research to test the academic framework from other angles. To allow for sufficient textual analysis, the number of Polish texts has been limited to four, but there are more works, which share common ground with them. A fruitful development of the present analysis would be to test them within this theoretical framework.

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