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**Revisionary Models Of Heroinism In Contemporary  
Cultural Discourse**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
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Revisionary Models Of Heroinism In Contemporary Cultural Discourse.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the representation of femininity within a variety of cultural sources including the earlier novels of Jeanette Winterson and the films of Walt Disney. This juxtaposition parallels images of female development and ego formation bringing to the fore the adolescent heroine's ancient roots in mythology, horror and the fairy story. As a cultural studies project, the thesis deploys the critical techniques of poststructuralism in conjunction with psychoanalysis, feminist theory and film analysis. This is necessary to demonstrate to full potential the heterogeneous quality of the revisioned models of heroinism. My analysis is focused on both popular and literary texts, with Winterson's early fiction in particular selected as a sophisticated and developed example of the ways in which current theory can chart the evolution of a contemporary female literary voice.

This thesis carefully scrutinises traditional strategies concerned with literary discourse in order to show how phallogentric structures infiltrate and reflect postcolonial, popular culture. This is achieved through an initial concentration upon mass representation of the female form. This is a necessary analysis as one cannot demonstrate how contemporary women authors revise traditional models of heroinism without first defining what has gone before.

Building on the work of Elisabeth Bronfen, this thesis examines how contradictory narratives construct a double opposition, overlapping the dead and the feminine against the living and the masculine, to defend against the knowledge of an incommensurable difference at the origin of life. By representing the narrative of double castration, this is a thorough examination of a movement away from biologically scripted models of castration anxiety, as with Freud, relocating identity at the site of the navel. This enables the subject to move beyond the division of sexuality as presented within patriarchal, heterosexual orthodoxies and to allow for a notion of femininity which is subversive because of its very willingness to explore and inhabit abject/deject states. For the purposes of my investigations, these traditionally disturbing 'liminalities' will be understood in both psychic and cultural terms, but will focus, in particular on female adolescence.

In conclusion, the revisionary heroine marks the dissolution of the certainty once associated with the ancient constructed ideal of femininity. She does not place herself in opposition to the traditional figure, more than that, she surfaces within the broader frame of Western culture as something different, some 'thing' else in the psychoanalytical sense to the 'Other'. My analysis of the figure of the revisionary heroine demonstrates the ways in which both the creation and the interpretation of art and theory can be inflected towards an inversion of the dominant structures of knowledge and power without simply reproducing them.



## Introduction

### CUT.

(Or) Of The Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society. (1)

What a thrill -  
My thumb instead of an onion.  
The top quite gone  
Except for a sort of a hinge.

Sylvia Plath (2)

Once upon a time there was a fair young maiden ( Trust me, I'm telling you stories.(3)) She decided that she did not want to marry. She decided that she would rather like to dedicate herself to the Lord, Jesus. Her father, who loved her so much that not a day passed without him kissing her lovely hands and face was not at all pleased by his daughter's desire. In fact, he was so cross he built a tower and locked her up in it. When Christina (that was her name) still refused to abide by her father's wishes, he decided to torture her in front of all the world so they could see what a dreadfully disobedient daughter he had. Still the stubborn girl refused to give up her sacred vow of chastity so her father tied a millstone around her neck and threw her in the sea.

However, by some strange wonder the millstone turned light as a feather and Christina was saved. This miracle failed to

change the minds of the people and as further punishment Christina's breasts were cut off. Still she insisted upon remaining a virgin so she was tortured some more, bitten by serpents then tossed upon a pyre to burn. In the end her tongue was torn from her mouth, but that's not quite the end as she threw her fleshy organ like a spear and pierced her torturer in the eye.

The maiden who will not give up the word. The girl who will not do as she is told. The deviant damsel who desires her own success or demise. The woman who simply will not shut up. That mutilated, subversive tongue and my, oh my, I spy that transgressive eye that says, 'I love in you, something which exceeds you, therefore I mutilate you.'<sup>(4)</sup>

My corruption of Lacan lies quintessential to this study, with a preliminary emphasis on forms of mutilation. Woman as a representational model is more of a de-formity: an excessive spectacle functioning in a fragmentary manner, producing violent and contradictory responses within social and academic discourse, as this introductory chapter will demonstrate. Indeed any study which seeks to determine and define what a revisionary model of heroinism is must first acknowledge the prohibitive force of castration placed upon the female image as opposed to the irrevocable, biological, dis-membered castration determined by Freud. Slashed breasts, severed heads, chopped off hands and snipped out tongues: culturally woman is represented everywhere, in pieces, from Freud's allusion to fairy tale 'feet which dance by themselves'<sup>(5)</sup> to Plath's thumb which hangs like a hinge.

In order to locate the dislocated heroine and seek out her contemporary form one must look across time, weaving together her literary imagoes from varying cultural spheres. Hence, part of the challenge of this

thesis is to sustain a literary, philosophical, theoretical engagement with the reader simultaneously on multiple fronts. Therefore, one must apply the strategies of poststructuralist theory which in its present form recognises and takes into account the extent to which seemingly often opposed western academic disciplines interrelate and implicate each other. Poststructuralist techniques will make the overall project more difficult and diverse but they will also assist in illuminating the complexity which is the cultural construction of womanhood. To paraphrase Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, history itself can be construed as a process of 'epistemic violence'<sup>(6)</sup> concerned with the construction of a specific representation of a time, an area of the world, an event or object, which may, as possibly with western notions of femininity, be entirely grounded in an imperialist ideology with no existence or reality outside of its representation.

This thesis is the search for Christina's tongue, for a feminine rhyme on a feminine ending which does not follow the grammatical rule and remain mute. To locate literary and historical instances of female insurgency is once again to highlight the subversive woman whose power lies in her ability to represent herself in language and art. To find the heroine one must listen for her voices. This study will engage with contemporary cultural theory, re-presenting images of heroinism in order to challenge the governing paradigm that brings into being the crude stereotype and gives a representational shape to the world.

The full weight of the sadism/masochism which imbues stereotypes of woman can be best realised through the poststructuralist, psychoanalytical techniques available in literary criticism. For through this analysis one can reveal how deeply embedded are our own personal psychology's in prevailing cultural notions of femininity. The emphasis on

subject position draws attention to the relationship between authoritarian systems of control concerned with class, race, sex and gender which in turn creates a heterogeneous field problematizing concepts previously focused on an undifferentiated colonial subject. Therein, we can also perceive the ensuing enormity of the struggle which women writers themselves have found in defining their own ideas of what 'woman' is, and of what it means to be female. Jeanette Winterson's female character in Sexing The Cherry, for example, feels herself to be 'a monster in a carpeted egg.'<sup>(7)</sup> This sense of alienation and displacement is echoed across the western cultural world. Similarly, for the woman filmmaker, working against the dominant cultural codes by which the borders of gender representation are mapped, there is always, 'that impossible body carrying the layers of sexual connotation she cannot remove.'<sup>(8)</sup> For the female spectator too, of mainstream cinema there appear to be, 'no images either *for* her or *of* her.'<sup>(9)</sup> Perhaps, this is because woman as artist has traditionally been marginalised through phallogocentric practice, confronted predominantly with masculine ideas of femaleness. As Elisabeth Bronfen states, noting the work of Teresa de Lauretis :

Woman...is the very foundation of representation: its object and support, its telos and origin. At the same time Woman 'is nowhere' as reference to her image. Western representations work as telling 'the story of male desire by performing the absence of woman and by producing woman as text, as pure representation'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The woman artist, whether she be writer, painter or filmmaker has, in the past, been forced to confront and negotiate with the rose/lily dichotomy and the fact that she, as woman, is posited as 'other', opposite to, and therefore outside of man and patriarchal culture. As Bronfen suggests:

While western cultural discourses construct the self as masculine, they ascribe to femininity a position of Otherness. As Other, Woman serves to define the self, and the lack or excess that is located in the Other functions as an exteriorisation of the self, in respect to both gender and death. Woman comes to represent the margins or extremes of the norm - the extremely good, pure and helpless, or the extremely dangerous, chaotic and seductive. (11)

Woman in this instance becomes a concept divided into two, she, is either whore or virgin, appropriated through this crude dialectical binarism in order to uphold masculine prerogative. As Bronfen further notes woman as alien to and outside of society:

...per se, ...can also come to stand for a complete negation of the ruling norm, for the element which disrupts the bonds of normal conventions and the passage through which that threat to the norm is articulated. The construction of Woman-as-Other serves rhetorically to dynamise social order, while her death marks the end of this period of change. (12)

Woman is an ancient idea; she is the seductress Eve, deviant, sexual, and dangerous or she is Mary Immaculate, mother, innocent, followed by a steady progression of self-sacrificing literary daughters including, among the many, the hagiographic Christina of the opening story and the more famous Cinderella of the fairy tale. For Helene Cixous, the continual repetition of this binary split within phallogentric thinking is clear:

.....they riveted us between two horrifying myths; between the medusa and the abyss. (13)

Within the language of psychoanalysis Luce Irigaray describes the position of the woman within linguistic representation in quite simplistic terms:

**'I'** am not **'I'**, I *am* not, I am not **one**. As for *woman*, try and find out. (14)

Within the patriarchal structuring of language, the 'I' of Irigaray is without question masculine. Therefore, the 'I' which is taken by the woman is not true to her self, because the very essence of 'I' and 'one' is posited as central to subjectivity which is 'man' made. The consequences for the woman are clear, her living body is taken over and re-inscribed onto the cultural western hemisphere through a process of symbolic representation. She becomes named in accordance to the images appropriated to her, through language by 'him'. The cut is spoken, drawn, scribed in ink, captured upon celluloid and woman's autonomous voice is stopped short and stunted. If 'one' needed any concrete cultural example of this, 'I' need only to point to the Christian bible which is familiar to most:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... (15)

God is the word and the word is law and the law is male and 'whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.' (Genesis 2). Man names woman and he calls her Eve and Mary. In the 'name of the father' the cut is made, and the dichotomy appears throughout the cultural world showing us how as a subject for history the image of woman as split in two and defined as the 'other' always occurs simultaneously in several places. In the fairy story woman is represented as the wicked witch or the good fairy/ god mother. The child's biological mother is usually, already dead.

Within the hierarchical literary canon the Rose/ Lily opposition repetitiously falls like dominoes through the classics. Among the more celebrated examples of this, already subjected to extensive Freudian analyses, are writers such as D.H. Lawrence. Kate Millett, famously, scrutinises Lawrence's work from a psychoanalytical perspective in her book, Sexual Politics. Millett points to the irony of Lawrence's criticism of Thomas Hardy's use of the rose/lily dichotomy when it is also a significant feature of his own novel, Sons and Lovers. Within the pages of Hardy's Jude The Obscure the buxom Arabella uses her charms to trick the innocent Jude into marriage when he later finds that he'd much rather be with the soulful Sue. In D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, the chaste and repressed Miriam competes with the already married Clara Dawes for the affections of the hero Paul Morel. Kate Millett comments upon the callousness with which Paul treats his spiritual mistress and his sexual one:

The sight of Miriam suffering or humiliated (she later gives Paul her virginity in a delirium of both emotions) is the very essence of her attractiveness to him, but his response is never without an element of hostility and sadism ... The idea seems to be that the female's lower nature, here gently phrased as her 'true nature,' is incapable of objective activity and finds its only satisfactions in human relationships where she may be of service to men and to children ... As Clara [is] the woman as rose or sensuality, he invokes the double standard to get rid of her, declaring sententiously that 'after all, she was a married woman, and she had no right even to what he gave her.' (16)

Paul Morel has become within literary theory the epitome of the Oedipal hero, as he steps upon the necks of his female supporters in order to enter the great wide world of masculine privilege. Through literary technique

Lawrence reduces the initially curious minds and colourful complexions of his female characters into the pallid, inanimate, living corpses they have become at the closure of the novel. On a metaphoric level Morel's love objects are safely interred beneath the earth with his mother; as castrated figures they bring the hero new somatic fixtures which resolve and discredit the original mystery and sexual fascination their existence once held. The sacrifice of the innocent Miriam and the dangerous female figures within the novel re-establishes an order which was for a moment suspended because of 'her' presence. A presence which has transcribed itself onto the moving image, as the revisionary analyses of the history of western cinema has revealed. This visual encoding of crude stereotypes of contemporary woman is available on a mass level via the television and the filmic iconography of Hollywood, as the film theorist Laura Mulvey states:

The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world.

A paradox that will be thoroughly investigated throughout this work measured against a feminist, theoretical background which, as Mulvey goes on to demonstrate, concludes that the predominant cinematic representation of femininity posits the

body of woman as a spectacle for the erotic male gaze, at the same time rendering her as 'non-male,' so that her image may become the substitute phallus necessary to counter the castration threat to men posed by women's lack of a penis. Thus the very act of representation ipso facto involves the objectification of women and the repression of female sexuality. (17)



Woman is represented as the mad, bad, sexually powerful femme fatale, lipsticked and high heeled, she totters from reel time to real time. Her popular cinematic incarnations stretch throughout the twentieth century and include among many actresses from both sides of the Atlantic: Mae West, Lauren Bacall, Barbara Stanwyck in Double Indemnity, Lana Turner in The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946) and Margaret Lockwood in The Wicked Lady (1945). To reiterate how explicit the repetition of such a representation is the latter two of the aforementioned films were remade during the earlier part of the 1980s - this time starring Jessica Lange and Faye Dunaway respectively. More recently and famously, the femme fatale was reprised complete with psychotic tendencies by the contemporary actresses Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction (1987), Sharon Stone in Basic Instinct (1992) and Jennifer Jason Leigh in Single White Female (1995).

In counter-distinction the 'good' woman of the cinematic screen plays a less memorable role. 'She' is the little wife on the range of many a western film, waiting at home for the hero's return. Faithful, honest and industrious, she inhabits a domestic mise-en-scene taking care of the children, firmly placed indoors, as is Anne Archer in Fatal Attraction, while her man does battle with the great wide out-there protecting her from the monstrous 'other' female threat. Quiet and self-sacrificing, her literary ancestor could be compared with that Victorian creation, 'the Angel in the house'.<sup>(18)</sup> Passivity and self denial have long been construed as part of woman's quintessential nature; 'masochism, as people say, is truly feminine' - or so says Freud in his paper, 'Femininity' (1932).

The cinematic language of representation repeats and confirms for the audience through its illusionary quality of 'realness' (offering us flesh and blood moving images) the literary feminine constructs the written word

has defined; thus maintaining notions of sexual difference along patriarchal lines. The effect again is the loss of any authentic access to femininity, woman as woman remains absent from the screen as she does from the text. To paraphrase Irigaray, 'she' is not 'I' (central to the text) 'she' is not, (even in the text on her own terms), for 'she' is essentially a masculine production, a fantasy.

I will return later to the debates surrounding concepts concerned with 'authentic' representation, fantasy and the 'real' because from a critical and psychoanalytic point of view it is important to establish where, if at all anywhere, the 'real' and the 'imaginary' are located, and if it is at all possible to derive knowledge from it. Authentic could give inference to the echo of, or the recorded version of the actual, lived experience of people or a specific person, whereas representation implies a verisimilitude of life and what is accepted within a culture to be generally speaking, 'true'.

From a psychoanalytic perspective it appears that the 'true' real exists and occurs simultaneously within the semiotic chora of both personal and cultural un/consciousness and that the stereotype acts as an external agency for, or as a marker of this function. The stereotype could be construed as a signifier for the un/signifiable semiotic process, and as such can be understood as an excessive production of the drives of the permeable unconscious which are expelled from therein, into conscious cultural perception. This insight will become crucial to this thesis as I will later reveal how one can decipher an elliptic quality or a moment of revision within the figure of the female stereotype which in itself marks the production of a contemporary, different, heroine.

The concept of the semiotic chora as defined by Kristeva in her 1974 work Revolution in Poetic Language (first English translation, 1984)

corresponds on an analogous level with Quantum Physics proposition concerning wave function and the 'No Boundary Proposal' developed by Stephen Hawking <sup>(19)</sup>. Quantum Cosmology is drawn together in the late twentieth century as physics (with its well-known uncertainty principle), psychoanalysis ( intellectual uncertainty as discussed in Freud's 'Das Unheimliche') and the poststructuralist fluidity of textual multiplicity in art and literature (exemplified by writers such as Winterson) combine to create a new, revisionary understanding of human consciousness and existence.

Consider first Kristeva's proposition taken from her work Revolution in Poetic Language that the chora is a mobile and provisional articulation:

We differentiate this uncertain and indeterminate articulation from a disposition that already depends on representation, lends itself to phenomenological, spatial intuition and gives rise to a geometry. <sup>(20)</sup>

This theoretical formation applies to any thesis of academic nature, as with any psychical process the researcher (like the infant and the creative writer) can only act upon what representation and results have gone before, forcing upon it a shape in order to contain and decipher its meaning.

Now consider the attempt by literary and psychoanalytic theorists to piece together an 'authentic' model of femininity from her fragmented representation within structures of language. Woman, the stereotype becomes a metonym for the electron in Quantum Mechanics' vision of the hydrogen atom .... she could be here, or out there or even hidden within the nucleus which could correspond with the psychoanalytical chora:

The wave function, which permeates the space around the nucleus of an atom and describes the behaviour of a system of particles, is a probability wave. It indicates where the particles might be. Where the probability cloud surrounding the hydrogen atomic nucleus is dense, one is more likely to find the electron, but one can never say exactly where in the atom the electron is located at any one instant. All one can specify is the probability that it will be in various places. (21)

Woman situated in various places, a return to the dislocation of a feminine unity. However, this is not such a negative, or regressive state for consciousness, as Jeanette Winterson points out in Sexing The Cherry.

Woman, as representation, may not need to be 'one':

If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. Its dimensions will not be one of confinement but one of space. It may inhabit numerous changing decaying bodies in the future and in the past. (22)

This study will attempt to draw together the many dimensions and the many names of the contemporary heroine; already I have begun to relate her ancestors' repetitious apparitions through the centuries. The heroine oscillates between cultural forms, traces of her absence/presence remain inscribed upon the distant, decaying corpses of ancient saints, old hags, fairy tale princesses and medieval ladies. Dug up again, the revisionary process attempts to see her portrayal anew. Therefore, the first chapter will concentrate upon images and evocations of corporeal dismemberment and psychic fragmentation within a wide reaching frame of literary and cinematic references, re-applying the often debated implications of Freud's theory on castration and Julia Kristeva's work on abjection. In order to emphasise the

disparate application of Freudian propositions regarding the cultural constitution of gender roles this section will be further subdivided, into specific areas dealing with the many theoretical possibilities and conclusions to be drawn from the concept of castration. The slicing up of this chapter underscores the scopophilic tone of castration achieved through literal bodily dissection as fictional fathers mutilate disobedient daughters and incarnations of Bluebeard chop up their wives.

This analytic process will continue in the following section through a consideration of the heroine in the novels of Jeanette Winterson juxtapositioned with appropriate examples of her more 'popular' mainstream cultural counterparts highlighting how this results in moments where a revisionary model of heroinism occurs. The methodology deliberately cross-references the treatment of the female form from a variety of perspectives including the biblical, medical and legal appropriation of femininity, qualifying for the reader what is intended by the use of the term, revisionary. The use of examples derived from dominant discourses will also dispel any notions that 'woman' is a homogeneous entity.

Once again, using a poststructuralist mechanism, this area will be split into separate sections, drawing attention to the heterogeneous nature of heroinism itself. This technique demonstrates the polysemic possibilities for female representation beyond the boundaries of conventional phallogentric understanding, 'that normative privilege of the subject-predicate form'.<sup>(23)</sup> This will also demonstrate how the woman writer negotiates with and manipulates for her own creative purposes the vast cultural figure of the stereotype. This analysis will be closely assisted by psychoanalytic notions of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. Through a combination of semiotic and symbolic semantics a different kind of heroine is born, an/other variant

to add to the layers of representation that have gone before. Winterson creates for us Villanelle in her book The Passion:

The hour of my birth coincided with an eclipse of the sun and my mother did her best to slow down the labour until it had passed. But I was as impatient then as I am now and I forced my head out while the midwife was downstairs heating some milk. A fine head with a crop of red hair and a pair of eyes that made up for the sun's eclipse.

A girl. (24)

Art and creativity has become within psychoanalytical theory, an important area of investigation. The primary theme of Freud's essay 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming' (1907) concerns the connection between children at play and the fantasies of creative writers. Interestingly, with an almost poststructuralist touch, Freud's use of the German word 'dichter' does not imply an academic focus on the traditionally, canonically, cited authors of the time, but has a broader, semantic sense, encompassing 'all' creators of fiction from the story-teller of folklore to the celebrated writer, in this instance, Zola. (25) Later, while writing his paper, 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood' (1910) Freud believed that further psychoanalytical domination of culture could be achieved through biography, which in turn would humanise the lives of the 'great' :

There is no one so great as to be disgraced by being subject to the laws which govern both normal and pathological activity with equal cogency. (26)

Although Freud considered psychoanalysis capable of determining the processes of psychological progression, he made no claims as to the source of originality and creativity. In fact, in a statement akin to the 'problem' or

'riddle' that is woman ('Femininity' 1932) Freud asserts in his paper, 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928) that:

Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms. (27)

Significantly, subsequent psychoanalytical theory has not given up on discussing either notions of femininity or the creative process.

In Julia Kristeva's work, Signifying practice and mode of production (1976) she interprets the creative achievements of the artist as a reflection of that specific contemporary society, whereby transgressive or subversive examples of creativity run parallel to changes or shifts within that particular social structure. Art and life are intertwined as the 'ruptures' or moments of 'jouissance' (excess) within a text (which is perceived to be radical in essence) are interpreted as being 'symptomatic of broader ruptures at the level of socio-economic relations; crises in the functioning of the symbolic that may also indicate points of political vulnerability' (28). Kristeva defines the literary accomplishments of Joyce, Artaud and Mallarme as 'avant-garde', pertaining to their more radical transgressions of formal structure, where the disruption of previously established literary norms occurs.

As Kristeva considers James Joyce an 'avant-garde' artist one could also consider Jeanette Winterson, and Irvine Welsh to be so in a contemporary poststructuralist sense, as their writing also de-stabilises fixed notions of the subject's access to a 'whole' identity regardless of gender. Through a subverting of formal literary technique in Joyce's Ulysses and Welsh's Trainspotting it is possible to discern Kristeva's theory that these radical signifying practices place symbolic ordering and structural prerequisites under scrutiny. Both Ulysses' Mr. Bloom and Trainspotting's

Mark Renton are working class, dysfunctional anti-heroes as is Winterson's young heroine Jeanette in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit. These characters perceive themselves to be outcasts, alien both to their families and contemporary societies. However, this place 'outside' privileges the protagonist as an observer, focused with a paradoxical objective/subjective eye upon all that appears to be false, mythologized by phallogocentric structures. The characters regard themselves as male but cannot recognise or identify their sense of masculinity within the gendered roles determined by society; a loss of self which may lead to a naming of self as is the case with Winterson's protagonists. The structure of language itself signifies their comparable dis/locations within their differing environments, as the written word and the 'act' of speaking role together in one as these examples from James Joyce's Ulysses and Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting demonstrate:

The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freelyfreckled shaggybearded widemouthed largehosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero. (29)

...A whole Begbie mythology hud been created by oor lies tae each other n oorsels.....

...Myth: Begbie is a 'hard man'.

Reality: Ah would not personally rate Begbie that highly in a square-go, without his assortment ay stanley knives, basebaw bats, knuckledusters, beer glesses, sharpened knitting needles, etc. Masel n maist cunts are too shite-scared tae test this theory, but the impression remains. (30)



The relevance of the inclusion of these two texts to a discussion of literary heroines is apparent, perpetual cultural representations of man and woman are not indicative of personal consciousness, a motif which threads together the twentieth century British author from the critically defined modernist to his or her contemporary counterpart. Gender boundaries can be interpreted as the enemy of the central protagonist; however through a dissolution of these mythical dialectics the hero can also reveal him/herself to be 'special', different from the 'norm', as Winterson's young heroine declares in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit the subject names herself:

[Mother] arranged for a foundling. That was me.  
I cannot recall a time when I did not know that  
I was special. (31)

A focus upon the creative process illuminates the connection between the texts. The extracts contain Kristeva's prerequisites for an avant-garde work - the semiotic and symbolic modalities within the signifying process that manufacture language and types of discourse; a theory which also constitutes the psychoanalytical possibility of the pre-semiotic maternal metaphor which would in turn inform the human psyche and its subsequent relationship to the world. Although Jacqueline Rose (32) suggests that Kristeva's maternal metaphor, though often written about, is ultimately of little critical use, one can discern the significance of her theory via its application to, and descriptive interpretation of the creative process.

Revolution in Poetic Language is a work of great importance when considered in relation to the construction of the female stereotype within language. If the word, and the sentence is masculine (obeying the rules

of patriarchy) then it maintains a position where the subject is also always masculine and the object is forever feminine:

Signification in literature implies the possibility of denotation. But instead of following denotative sequences, which would lead, from one judgement to another, to the knowledge of a *real object*, literary signification tends towards the exploration of grammaticality and/or towards enunciation. **Mimesis** is, precisely, the construction of an object, (in this case, woman, [my addition] ) not according to truth but to **verisimilitude**, to the extent that the object is posited as such (hence separate, noted but not denoted); it is, however, internally dependent on a subject of enunciation who is unlike the transcendental ego in that he does not suppress the semiotic **chora** but instead raises the **chora** to the status of a signifier, ( woman into stereotype, [again my addition] ) which may or may not obey the norms of grammatical locution. Such is the **connoted** mimetic object. <sup>(33)</sup>

Jeanette Winterson's work is one specific example among many contemporary woman artists including Angela Carter and Cindy Sherman where one can see in process the movement from the classical mimesis defined above to the revolution in language Kristeva is describing. For the purposes of this thesis I shall concentrate on the earlier novels written by Winterson, drawing upon specific examples taken from Carter's experimental work with the fairy tale form. Angela Carter's work has become a very popular and important subject for study within academia and as such requires a consideration which is beyond the initial intent of this particular thesis.

An analysis of the mimetic process taken from an askew angle reveals mimesis in Winterson's work as an external authorial intention focused upon the characterisation of central protagonists, for example,

Villanelle in The Passion. Villanelle's character, at times a prostitute, on occasion a thief manipulates 'truth' yet requests that you believe her :

I dressed as a boy because that's what the visitors liked to see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paint....

I'm telling you stories. Trust me. <sup>(34)</sup>

Villanelle works in a casino, a gambler, a card dealer she is also a dealer in dissemblance. Her cross-dressing episodes call forth a mimicry of sociological certainties concerning the essences of masculine and feminine nature. Within Villanelle's account of her life and experience, cultural simulation merges with dissimulation. This allows Villanelle to assume identities not her own, yet always her own and significantly of her own conscious production. Born a Venetian, she wears her French name as a disguise as easily as she dons a moustache to walk the dark alleys on festival nights, 'for my own amusement...for my own protection.'<sup>(35)</sup>

The vehicle of clothing and cross-dressing offers Villanelle a partial means of 'playing' a part, acting her way out of any potentially threatening predicament through a defensive strategy created to disguise the female genital organs in a system where feminine power is denied by patriarchy. The cross-dressing motif could also signify Lacan's formation of the ideal phallus <sup>(36)</sup> with the woman in disguise alluding to the symbolic cover veiling the illusion of a phallus, a power, neither sex will ever literally possess. Much depends on how the reader interprets Winterson's own cutting of the cloth.

The academic discourse concerning clothing and its relation to fetishism is wide ranging. Freud in his paper 'On the genesis of fetishism'

(1909) sweepingly states that all women are clothes fetishists, which is an exteriorization of their passive form of the scopic drive - their desire to be looked at by men.

Feminist analyses highlights splits concerning feminine narcissism and self decoration; hence clothing as a signifier is articulated on different levels including reform and subversion, critique, play and fantasy. Villanelle's emphasis on gender play-acting could offer a liberating, subversive perspective moving away from the biological essentialism of Freud. She can masquerade as woman or man when it suits:

You play, you win, you play, you lose. You play. (37)

Perhaps Winterson is also focusing on the instability of gender categories themselves, those ontological signifiers which indoctrinate the female subject into the social production of being a woman; a mimetic process in itself.

However, it is crucial to remember that the anti-realist motif of the mask re-iterates a world of false appearances. Villanelle's story is not a quest for truth or oedipal resolution, as she says of her countrymen, they will hold 'hands with the Devil and God. We would not wish to let go of either', for our souls 'are Siamese'. (38) After all, Villanelle's character may best correspond to the canonically cited ideas of Joan Riviere :

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it..... The reader may ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My

suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. (39)

Winterson interweaves differing authorial voices using a mix of formal, literary language, with the colloquial and the childlike voice of her young heroine in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit. She appropriates images from mythology, the fairy story, the bible, and the romance genre within all her work and uses the 'familiar' elements of the stereotype for her own purposes. This will be elaborated upon as it further illustrates Winterson's transgression of narrative conventions traditionally associated with the novel form. Via this semantic disturbance, '...the positing of the symbolic (which mimesis has always explored) finds itself subverted....', (40) in other words the literary, classical (patriarchal) order of language is disrupted. Laurie Langbauer defines the traditional structure of the novel form as masculine. Within her work she describes Romance as the novel's 'other', a process which involves the privileging of masculine ideals over those associated with femininity. Langbauer states that :

whether conceived as a mode of erotic wish-fulfilment, or as a prose form auxiliary to the novel, romance is thought somehow proper to women and usually derided accordingly. (41)

However, Langbauer goes on to stress that the novel's subordination of the romance genre is appropriate to the workings of phallogentrism, as the novel form's definition of the romance as popular 'trash' highlights its own instability:

the novel needs romance in order to give it the appearance of identity and meaning, as well as of privilege, but such identity and privilege are already sabotaged by the very problems that prompt their defensive formation.

Those problems of definition concern traditional, classical structures of the novel: boundaries the realist 'novel' writer strives not to cross. Jeanette Winterson, on the other hand, deliberately combines aspects of several genres within her work. In doing so she transgresses any notion of an integral novel form as she reminds the reader of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit that:

Walls protect and walls limit. It is in the nature of walls that they should fall. (42)

Winterson suggests within the pages of her novel Sexing The Cherry that this dissimulation of formal boundaries creates anew fiction and our ways of seeing the world:

It is certainly true that a criterion for true art as opposed to its cunning counterfeit, is its ability to take us where the artist has been, to this other place where we are free from the problems of gravity. When we are drawn into the art we are drawn out of ourselves. We are no longer bound by matter, matter has become what it is: empty space and light. (43)

Winterson takes a familiar literary figure or story and re-interprets it from the 'other' or the object's point of view. In so doing she imitates the construction of the symbolic order (which posits the single figure of the hero as male) and re-instates the *meaning* (man as the assumed epicentre of the narrative function) into the realms of the other. Those 'others' in her work include her re-telling of the fairy tale, 'Rapunzel' in 'The Story Of The Twelve Dancing Princesses'. (44) In this instance Winterson takes the traditional 'bad' character (the wicked witch) from the tale and exchanges her

place in the text with the prince making the 'witch' the desired love object of the heroine. The Prince, as symbol of masculine order, still feels the need to fulfil his traditional narrative function as the hero on a quest to save Rapunzel. In order to achieve this, he must still posit the 'older woman' as a figure of evil, as the wicked witch and therefore an obstacle to his goal: the possession of the princess. Winterson's corruption of the tale establishes that while the boys are busy looking for dragons to slay in the now critically established oedipal trajectory, the girls are busy defining their own sphere of action. In this respect Winterson's own narrative structure goes further than any classical mimesis, 'because it attacks not only denotation (the positing of the object) but meaning (the positing of the enunciating subject) as well.' (45)

You may have heard of Rapunzel.

Against the wishes of her family...she went to live in  
a tower with an older woman.

Her family were so incensed by her refusal to marry  
the prince next door that they vilified the couple, calling one  
a witch and the other a little girl. Not content with names, they  
ceaselessly tried to break into the tower ....the happy pair had  
to seal up any entrance that was not on a level with the sky.  
The lover got in by climbing up Rapunzel's hair.....(they)  
could have used a ladder, but they were in love.

One day the prince, who had always liked to borrow his  
mother's frocks, dressed up as Rapunzel's lover and dragged  
himself into the tower. Once inside he tied her up and waited  
for the wicked witch to arrive. The moment she leaped through  
the window.....the prince hit her over the head and threw her  
out again. Then he carried Rapunzel down the rope he had  
brought and forced her to watch as he blinded her broken lover  
in a field of thorns.

After that they lived happily ever after of course.  
As for me, my body healed, though my eyes never did,  
and eventually I was found by my sisters.....

My own husband?

Oh well, the first time I kissed him he turned into a frog.  
There he is, just by your foot. His name is Anton. (46)

Winterson establishes how powerful the act of 'naming' is; like the biblical Adam it is the hero who decides who is what and transforms (along with Rapunzel's family) the fifth of the twelve dancing princesses from the 'older woman' into the 'wicked witch'. The prince has inscribed her body with his authorial, patriarchal signature. This act marks her social and psychological castration. The result is twofold: firstly he punishes her for her transgression, blinding her as Oedipus was before her and secondly the physical scar serves to define her, to publicly name her as a certain type of unacceptable Other within the overall societal structure. As Winterson points out in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit:

Naming is a difficult and time consuming process; it concerns essences, and it means power. (47)

For the prince (the hero) it is all about occupation, phallogocentric occupation of the literal, and visual word and world. He needs to establish difference in order to stay in control, and that difference defines the binary opposition that is man and woman, good and bad, fair and foul, masculine and feminine, the crude stereotype. This relationship of contrariety can then serve:

The defining distinction, which (the dominant) narrative (structure) establishes is one of sexual difference; predicated on the single figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In doing so the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being, and as 'male'.

[ my words in the parentheses (48) ]



However, it must again be stressed that the resulting image of woman, which becomes and is that psychoanalytic 'space', is originally a masculine form. Therefore all difference becomes determined through the male logic of 'sameness' as best expressed through Irigaray's analysis of Freud's own theory of sexual difference :

Sexual difference is a deviation from the problematics of sameness; it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation of the same. The differentiation into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological - attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction - specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman. (49)

'The little man that the girl is' (50) initially designates desire in the female infant as masculine, (the same as the little boy's) not distinguishing between male and female love objects (assumed to be mother and father). In Freudian terms this bi-sexual state is transformed in the Oedipus complex where the child identifies itself with 'one' or the 'other' parent proposing two possibilities of satisfaction: this 'double orientation' is structured as a duplicit split forming an active and passive arena for the boy and girl to play out their desires. The little boy through his active fantasy to have sole possession of his mother perceives the father to be a rival for her affections and desires to take his place. The little girl regards herself as the 'love object' of the father, his 'small lover' and desires to replace her mother culminating in the Oedipal progression with 'the fact' of her wish to have a baby of her own. When no

satisfaction ensues both sexes are forced to seek alternative identifications and the dissolution of the Oedipus Complex results in the acceptance of this initial loss via the threat of castration.

The m/other figure becomes the negative, the binary opposite when the boy and girl are suddenly confronted with her 'lack' of the penis. Freud asserts that 'anatomy is destiny', however the biological penis in the Lacanian sense equates with phallic power of which the m/other as female and other is perceived to have none.

The little boy in fear that the father or the m/other will cut off his tail to make him like her, aligns himself with the father (patriarchal power) and is catapulted into the phallic active arena (his position as hero). The castration complex where loss of the penis would mean his loss of phallogocentrism carries a twofold threat, the threat of the father as a bearer of punishment and the fear of the feminine anatomical state as a precondition:

Usually it is from the woman that the threat emanates; very often they seek to strengthen their authority by a reference to the father or the doctor, who, so they say, will carry out the punishment. <sup>(51)</sup>

The mother, once the original object of desire, is abandoned, the sight of the feminine lack producing in the 'normal' boy a 'horror of the mutilated creature'. <sup>(52)</sup> She is to be eventually replaced by the super-ego, the little boy's 'heir'.

The little girl, on the other hand, is forced to confront her own physical lack of the penis, and to come to terms with 'the discovery of the inferiority of the clitoris' as Freud defines it in 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' (1925). Faced with her

'humiliation' the 'normal' girl will accept her fate and realise she 'cannot compete with boys' because of her 'wound', her 'injury' (Freud) and she is capitulated within the passive, domestic sphere of existence.

Gender conditioning begins as each child by cultural example 'learns' of the characteristics applicable to each sex.

Boy rules the world. Girl makes the lunch.

Whilst acknowledging the simplicity of my Freudian interpretation I wish to point out that this model of childhood development is descriptive of, as opposed to a prescription for, conventional, cultural ideas of childrearing. Indeed, despite Freud's own testimony that the woman who does not successfully transform from activity to passivity, clitoris to vagina, m/other to phallic father, will, 'fall ill'<sup>(53)</sup> he also conceded in his famous essay, 'Female Sexuality'<sup>(54)</sup> that the 'riddle' that is woman continued to elude him.

Psychoanalytic discourse has become one of the few critical arenas within our contemporary culture where it is recognised as more than a fact of individual refusal to conform that most women do not slip easily into their designated roles as women, if they ever do or did at all: which in part informs the cultural diversity of this overall project.

Where Freud's 'ill', 'hysterical' female was deemed 'diseased' we now find her contemporary replicant diagnosed 'dysfunctional'. Both are categorised as dejects, freaks of society who fail to fit within the bounds of their culturally determined place. As curiosities these particular women were and still are put on display. The Victorian photographs of asylum lunatics taken by Hugh Diamond in Surrey serve as one particular example of this, as does the work of the nineteenth century psychiatrist, Jean-Martin Charcot. <sup>(55)</sup>

Contemporary confirmation is evident via the endless procession of women-with-problems who roll across the television screen from talk show (Oprah Winfrey) to talk show (Ricki Lake). There is always an audience: the psychiatrist and the public anticipating the thrill of the horror, poised to judge. Woman is a spectator sport. The stagnant imagery of the hysterical face caught and framed by Diamond breathes new life on the studio stage of the American 'Jerry Springer Show'. With apparent postmodern irony Springer suggests this format gives the working class of America the opportunity to speak out against injustice: providing the masses with a public voice. Springer, like Charcot before him, has sovereignty over the presentation, over what we see. The spectacle performed by Charcot's hysterical patient within the Victorian hospital lecture theatre is reprised for the entertainment of the twentieth century, global television viewer. Springer encourages the audience to participate with the studio debate, manipulating events in order to fulfil the beholder's expectations. Charcot, during his lifetime, was accused of coaching the female patients he placed on display, deliberately inducing their convulsive seizures. Springer unashamedly prompts his cast of dysfunctional characters, producing a form of Charcot's 'grande hysteric' specifically for the 1990s. In a retrospective show, broadcast in Britain during January 1999, Springer celebrated the output of 1200 individual shows - among the titles repeated and re-appraised by Jerry and his television crew were: 'I worked as a side-show freak', 'You're too fat to dress like that', 'Behind the scenes of an adult film', 'Klanfrontation' and 'Prostitute moms get help'. The hysterical figure unbound: within minutes, often seconds an unhappy woman can be moved from speaking to screaming, from tears to physical assault upon another person (usually female) - all to the delight of the studio congregation. The audience in turn become greedy

voyeurs actively seeking our compliance in observing this sadistic, ritualistic drama from the safety of our homes. All the while this theatre of the absurd is completely stripped of poignancy as 'real' women are reduced to gladiatorial rivals with hair and nails flying.

The pernicious effects of such a spectacle upon the female psyche are evident: as with 'le theatre et son double' the drama may have the effect that it disturbs the spectator profoundly; however any insights into human behaviour are reliant upon pseudo psychoanalytical talk of 'sub' conscious processes which merely serve to regurgitate ancient mythologies concerned with human behaviour. Woman is offered to woman once more as irrational and over-emotional: a hysterical creature. Part of the purpose of the literary Theatres of the Absurd, of Cruelty, of Panic are to shock the individual in such a way that it frees the unconscious enabling man/woman to see themselves as they really are. In this instance the message is more concerned with the perpetual re-enactment of Freud's 'repetition-compulsion' as each episode has Springer playing the part of the Grand Guignol with the subject of debate objectified - placed in a chair upon a stage open to ridicule from the studio audience. The scopophilic, fetishistic tone is finally justified and grounded in spurious referrals to psychiatry as Springer closes each episode with a 'final thought'.

My own final thought on 'The Jerry Springer Show' is concerned with jouissance. If Oprah Winfrey's own talkshow has successfully and consistently foregrounded issues concerned with race and women's rights over the past fifteen years (in spite of television moments where Winfrey could be accused of sensationalism or melodramatic sentimentality) then the Springer Show could be understood as the complete antithesis of that original, liberating and radical format. Winfrey's own personal ambitions

concerning education, women's rights and race awareness are in danger of being undermined by the extreme stretches of the talkshow structure because in the final instance one is left with the overwhelming impression of the Springer programme's visual excess: a parody and a mockery of all those others who find themselves defined as black, homosexual, working class or female. 'Real' human pain is replaced by an insatiable desire to screen hysterical phantasms where one participant after another attempts to outdo the theatrical outrageousness of the former: anguish made visible through a choreographed dance of violence - the price of the ordinary woman's fifteen minutes of fame. This observation is in close proximity to Elisabeth Bronfen's commentary upon Salpêtrière's photographic images of Charcot's own hysterical subjects:

A paradoxical situation emerged out of this scene of mutual representative complicity, with the physician requiring the poses of the patient to confirm his scientific text and the patient, accepting this desire, performing the symptoms the physicians sought to discover so as to remain in the asylum. (56)

The same mechanisms of power are at play on 'The Jerry Springer Show' requiring the patient participant to comply with the programme format and the demands of the ever aggressive audience. Taking part in this particular 'talk' show requires, ironically, a giving up of the autonomous voice in favour of the spectacle. Hence, the original desire to be heard and understood is replaced by a comical masquerade which ultimately inspires mockery not sympathy. It would appear that the poststructuralist penchant for writing about popular forms of art may hit a critical impasse when Trash television manages to mimic itself to full jouissance effect. However, this could also

simply add to the challenge to an academic establishment yet to prove adept at providing adequate critiques of fashionable Trash and the figure of the female within.

Psychoanalysis can be understood through its appropriation of the 'question of feminine sexuality'. Jacqueline Rose notes that Freud started with the analysis of the hysterical patient in 'Studies on Hysteria' (1893-95) where he also states that the hysteric can be male. It was then his inability to analyse one such patient - Dora - in terms of a normative concept of what a woman should be, or want, that led him to recognise the fragmented and aberrant nature of sexuality itself. Normal sexuality is, therefore, strictly an ordering, one which the hysteric refuses (falls ill). The rest of Freud's work can then be read as a description of how that ordering takes place, which led him back, necessarily, to the question of femininity, because its persistence as a difficulty revealed the cost of that order. <sup>(57)</sup> What women lose on account of this ordering, rather than what they 'lack'.

Dutiful daughters, silent, obedient wives, hysterical females and self-sacrificial mothers do not imbue the 'essence' of woman, as this introduction has shown; they are mythological images defined through phallogocentric practice with that 'essence' or 'clue' to female desire CUT like the tongue from Saint Christina's mouth, blinded like the eyes of Winterson's witch, mutilated because language and patriarchy fail to contain or explain what woman is. As the following chapter will investigate we are left on a Lacanian level with the mutilation of the 'other's not-allness', a castration, denying her the right to speak in her own way. As Jeanette's fairy tale alter-ego says in, Oranges Are Not Only Fruit :

The woman tried to teach Winnet her language, and Winnet

learned the words but not the language. Certain constructions baffled her, and in an argument they could always be turned against her, because she could not use them in return. (58)



## Introduction      CUT

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- 2 Plath, S., pg.66. Selected Poems, (1962) 1989.
- 3 Winterson, J., pg.40. The Passion, (1987) 1988.
- 4 Lacan, J., pg. 181. Lacan in Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, 1992.  
The full translation reads:  
'Everything longs for what it lacks. Desiring to secure something to oneself forever may be described as loving something which is yet not to hand. I love you, but because inexplicably I love in you something more than you - the object petit a - I mutilate you!'
- 5 Freud, S., 'Das Unheimliche,' 1919, pg.368-405 in Applied Psychoanalysis. SE 17  
It is important to stress at this early juncture that whereas I acknowledge the theoretical contribution made to the psychoanalytical discipline by academics such as Judith Butler and the concepts surrounding Queer Theory, I feel that to incorporate the said theories within this specific work would change the overall nature of the thesis, which is concerned in the first instance with female representation in literature and popular culture.
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- 30 Welsh, I., pg.82. Trainspotting 1993.
- 31 Winterson, J., pg.4. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, (1985) 1991.
- 32 Rose, J., pg.154. Sexuality In The Field Of Vision, 1988
- 33 Kristeva, J., pg.109. Kristeva Reader, 1993.
- 34 Winterson, J., pg.54 & 69. The Passion, 1988.
- 35 Winterson, J., pg.55. The Passion,1988.
- 36 Rose, J., pg.61-66. Sexuality In The field Of Vision,1988.
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SE 21
- 51 Freud, S., 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex,' (1924) SE 19
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## Castrating Form/s

Throughout this section the significance of psychoanalytical theory upon cultural discourse and its representation of women will be further scrutinised. The intertextual premise of this thesis, exemplified by the diversity of cultural illustrations and by the methodology employed, explicitly reveals the historical specificity and the universality of the ever-present, not-all-there enigma that is the phallogentric concept of femininity. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the mythology that creates this image of womanhood permeates western art: from literature to cinema, from 'classic' novel to 'trash' film she remains the same, fragmented and displaced.

A poststructuralist, psychoanalytical approach to the varying interpretations of Freud's theories on castration are pivotal to an understanding of this phallogentric figure. As the little girl was 'forced' to come to terms with her physical castration, her lack of that important 'member', the penis, at the resolution of the Freudian Oedipus Complex, she finds throughout adulthood that the initial 'injury' is recalled, repeated through the images appropriated from her, and redistributed to her through the mechanics of cultural production. This section will demonstrate how that castration has little to do with biology, being more concerned with perpetuating cultural mythologies actively seeking to contain and manage the 'threat' purported to emanate from woman. Castration is not an inherent aspect of natural or genetic force. It is a concept applied by dominant

discourse to the female form. No God slices off a part of the infant girl in order to reveal her as inferior to the infant boy: it is man alone, who assumes for himself a divine right to name the species, 'in the name of the father'. As woman is chopped into pieces textually and visually, I also must cut to provide an autopsy of the autopsy that defines the representations of woman. Consequently this particular area of investigation is sub-divided into sections to reveal her body - all over the place.

## Castrating Form/s

### 1: Penetrate / Dismember

...as she approached he drew forth his sword  
which had lain concealed beside him in the bed,  
and with a single blow cleft her wicked body in  
twain.

The Story Of The King Of The Ebony Isles (1)

Now one must look to what is lost through the cultural castration of the female body and at what price to woman. One must look particularly to the more sadistic side of the 'pernicious effects which arise from the unnatural distinctions established in society'. (2) Marina Warner has noted in her analysis of the fairy tale and the cultural correlation it bears to society (3) how our late twentieth century obsession with the serial killer and his victims corresponds with the mythological evil characters of the wonder tale. Demons, devils, beasts, wolves and Bluebeards threaten untold horrors upon innocent wives and red-cloaked girls who become just a little too curious. Rape and cannibalism await the young Red Riding Hood who strays from the patriarchal path: an implicit reference to castration reveals itself within the text as the metaphor of devouring stands in for sex:

'My what big teeth you have!  
'All the better to eat you with my dear.' (4)

Mutilation and decapitation lie behind the door should the youngest and seventh wife of Bluebeard dare to enter the forbidden chamber as Warner's examples show:

She found herself amidst the severed limbs and mutilated bodies of her husband's former wives. (5)

Oh fie! Oh fie!  
There they all were hanging up to dry! (6)

The narrative focus of the text is much more concerned with the wife's disobedience and preventing her access to knowledge than it is with Bluebeard's appetite for murder. Sex and murder in a fairy story become sanctioned by the state of matrimony. Penetration signifies loss of innocence swiftly followed by loss of life at the sharp point of the knife as this Victorian verse demonstrates:

[She] looked within, and fainted straight the horrid sight to see,  
For there upon the floor was blood and on the walls were wives  
For Bluebeard first had married them, then cut their  
throats with knives. (7)

In her refusal to obey the authority of her husband the young wife like her sisters before her, crosses the threshold from 'good' girl to 'bad'. Impelled by overwhelming curiosity she trespasses into a male domain, an offence, the fairy tale warns, punishable by death. As a caution to young maidens with an independent streak, an early nineteenth century subtitle to the tale places special emphasis on the gender of the reader: 'The Fatal Effects Of (Female) Curiosity.'<sup>(8)</sup> Bluebeard himself expects the complete submission of his wives: a refusal to comply with his demands flouts the strict religious law that requires them to honour and obey that man regardless of his psychopathic tendencies.

The inner structure of the Bluebeard text underlines this warning to women. It reads like a version of the Fall, with the wife playing

the part of Eve and Bluebeard cast in the role of God the Father, prohibiting the potential for enlightenment connoted by the forbidden fruit of this most famous of biblical gardens. The room and the key indicate the singular knowledge contained within that pulpy seed pod: that hidden, forbidden sexuality. If the marriage bed cannot satisfy her then her sublimation through her death will satisfy him.

The gruesome history of the fairy tale continues with another instance of a 'bloody chamber' in Fitcher's Bird (Fitcher's Vogel <sup>(9)</sup>).

This time the third bride of a wizard ventures into the forbidden room only to discover:

a large bloody basin.... filled with dead people who had been chopped to pieces.

She drops her magic egg into the bowl in fright (an explicit symbol of feminine sexuality and fertility) but escapes the bloody destiny before her by tarring and feathering herself, using honey and a split eiderdown, and escapes the wizard's eye by disguising herself as a bird. This metamorphosis provides the young girl with a means of acquiring her liberty, an option which would not be open to her otherwise. The fairy tale form, in this instance, plays upon the mythology that equates woman with nature - it uses the very device that defines woman's nature as lustful or animalistic and consequently inferior to man to provide her with the resources she needs to escape her narrowly defined future role: the dead or silenced wife and mother.

No such escape for the majority of her contemporary counterparts though. The ogre of the fairy story has metamorphosed in modern culture into the nasty serial killer of the 'slasher' movie. His appetite

for sweet young flesh is for the adult audience only. Warner cites by way of exemplar the man-eating Doctor Hannibal Lecter of the Hollywood film, The Silence Of the Lambs - a main stream cinematic example born of a long tradition of low budget and largely crass exploitation movies. ( This particular area of contemporary popular culture is alluded to throughout this chapter and elaborated upon at a later stage of this thesis.) The excessive, sadistic side to the fairy tale enthrals the twentieth century audience within celluloid gore suggestive of a cultural shift which Marina Warner believes is much to the defeat of the female protagonist herself:

[The] dominance of imagery over word in storytelling today has pushed verbal agility into the background..... Violence [has] replaced cunning and high spirits in the most popular vehicles for revenge fantasies. (10)

The wit and intelligence displayed by the wonder tale's lone, escaping heroine is overshadowed by the bloody axe, knife and chainsaw as countless 'scream queens' (11) end up strewn across the silver screen as examples of castrated objects par excellence. The lethal punishments bestowed upon sexually active American teenage girls (who are, for the most part, financially well-off and white) by mask wearing psychopaths has become well documented over three decades of slasher movie history. That is, thirty years, if the reader agrees with the generally accepted dictum among film critics, that John Carpenter's slasher movie Halloween (1978) signals the entry into cinema of the wily and witty last-girl-left-standing played in this instance by Jamie Lee Curtis. There are prior examples, most notably the Canadian shocker Black Christmas (1974) where all of the young female students sharing a house on a college campus over the holiday period are slain one by one, leaving the



anonymous murderer, whose own dwelling place is in the attic, free to do more harm at the closure of the film. There is also, of course, the notorious Texas Chainsaw Massacre, where the echoes of the aforementioned bloody chambers are made crudely visual as young white limbs litter the house of 'Leatherface' the killer and teenage victims are 'hung up to dry', displayed like trophies as hunters string up deer. The roots of the schlock film genre are considered to be located in Alfred Hitchcock's very famous and much discussed (academically and otherwise) film Psycho (1960) where it is possible to discern the blueprint for the figure of the 'Final Girl'. (12) Her early incarnation is suggested by the determined behaviour of the curious sister (Lila) of the murdered woman, Marion Crane. Lila Crane, chaste and virginal in traditional fairy tale style (unlike her sister) enters the forbidden motel against the wishes of the law (in this instance represented by a policeman) hoping to seek out the appropriate evidence which will prove Norman Bates is the killer. Finally, the 1959 French film Les Yeux Sans Visage [ also known as Eyes Without A Face ] is also thought to influence the splatter genre with its scenes of a scalpel bearing surgeon murdering young women in a vain attempt to restore the former beauty of his own scar ridden daughter.

Bluebeard's castle complete with bloody chamber re-appears within this particular cinematic horror genre as large lonely properties in the midst of the countryside or detached suburban houses, brightly lit and devoid of curtains (highlighting the exploitative and voyeuristic intentions of this particular format) set against a dark sky and a backdrop of endless forest. A Nightmare On Elm Street, Black Christmas, Friday The Thirteenth, Halloween H20, Scream and Scream 2, and The Faculty are but a few examples among many of the so-called slasher or splatter or stalker film genre wherein corruption's of this particular landscape can be observed. (13) As

with Little Red Riding Hood and the youngest wife of Bluebeard the virginal protagonists of the schlock horror movie are left without parental protection but unwittingly open to patriarchal subjugation in its most malicious form as the ogre's appetite will only be appeased by, in old testament style, unpolluted, chaste flesh.

One particular cinematic example useful in illustrating the theories advanced so far is Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer. Whilst not strictly speaking a 'slasher' movie, in so far as the killer is immediately revealed to the audience and the narrative progression is less predictable, nevertheless in this quite chilling American tale of life on the road there remains, once more, no salvation for the girl. After a procession of gruesome rapes, mutilation and murder, the young woman, Becky, despite her loyalty to the perpetrator of these crimes, ends her life chopped into pieces and dumped in a suitcase by the side of a road. This is Henry's hallmark, his authorial signature. This is what he, (like Bluebeard) likes to do to curious, lusty young women who ask too many questions and offer themselves up for sexual pleasure. If he cannot govern his own sphere of existence, if he cannot have complete control over his own mortality, he can at least determine an/other's. Threatened with castration, his own inevitable death, he turns his attention upon a desire for an indisputable certainty he can manipulate: he can stop your life, he can cut your throat.

The emphasis of the narrative structure is on the power of fear and loathing over the individual and the extremities of psychical and physical disturbances that this fear can release. If you were a sweet, young, all-round American gal would you fall for the quiet, secretive Henry? You still maintain like Little Red Riding Hood or Sade's Constance (that most abused but still obedient wife <sup>(14)</sup>) a feminine naiveté, an innocence appropriate to the

characteristics delineated proper for your sex: yet your brother fucks you and shares a flat with a man who thinks matricide is a necessary step into adult maturation. You don't seem to mind and you'll cook breakfast for these guys because the murdering Henry smacked your disrespectful relative for sticking his hand in your pants and punching you in the face when you had the audacity to complain. Henry did make him apologise and later he does save you, slaying your brother when he finds him with his dick up your arse and your bra wrapped tightly around your neck. Henry, broody, moody, cold and silent meets violence with violence turning his attention (and knife) onto the competition for a change before redirecting his focus back onto you. He rescues 'white trash' little sister from the incestuous mess she'd got herself into, freeing her from her consanguineous ties. What better reason for falling in love with someone. However else could the story go? Poor pretty woman saved by inimical but daring hero. I have chosen to write in this particular style at this point in order to demonstrate the philosophical perspective which determines that the process of consuming information is in itself an act of submission in that to have seen this imagery or to have read these words is to have had these thoughts which were not your own. Simply stated: it is to have images and language forced upon you, and it is this aspect of intersubjectivity which causes me to introduce this momentary shift in style. The sentence structure is intended to remind the reader of the little sister's psychical impotency - she is bereft of the capabilities to change her circumstances as, for example, the wise maiden from Fitcher's Bird would or the determined teenager of Nightmare On Elm Street fame does; therefore she remains a victim, contained within that specific cinematic moment to be recalled only in this way. What we see at work here is the Oedipal trajectory at it's most pernicious and lethal: at it's most damaging to womankind. Like

the traditional prince in the fairy tale romance, he, Henry saved you and now you belong to him, for better or worse, till death do you part. Perhaps little sister was deluded by the romance myth wherein:

women have a vision of love that includes men as human too. These visions of a humane sensuality based in equality are in the aspirations of women and even the nightmare of 'sexual inferiority' does not seem to kill them. They are not searching analyses into the nature of intercourse; instead they are deep humane dreams that repudiate the rapist as the final arbiter of reality. (15)

Or could it be as simple, as Villanelle says in Jeanette Winterson's novel The Passion that:

Men are violent. That's all there is to it. (16)

In Winterson's earlier work, Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, the young heroine, Jeanette, stresses the desire of woman to be loved and respected by another person:

I want someone who is fierce and will love me until death and know that love is as strong as death, and be on my side for ever and ever. (17)

Perhaps this is what the young protagonist from Henry, Portrait of A Serial Killer desires too, but unlike Jeanette she fails to see that Henry, who happens to be fierce and deadly, is certainly not on her side. For Jeanette 'man' in his present form has become incapable of 'real' love and notions of romantic love have become:

diluted into paperback form and [have] sold thousands and millions of copies. Somewhere it is still in the original, written on tablets of stone. I would cross seas and suffer sunstroke and

give away all I have, but not for a man, because they want to be the destroyer and never the destroyed.

That is why they are unfit for romantic love. (18)

The destroyer and the destroyed. Why must woman be stopped, cut, killed, physically and textually? What is eliminated, and what is gained by her death? A return to psychoanalytical discourse and the crude representations of the stereotypes which structure the cultural world describe the process of destroyer and the destroyed at work. Having established that the 'self' within language is masculine, subsuming femininity into an exterior place of 'otherness', one can move forward into the pathological consequences of this differentiation. The saint Christina and the prostitute Villanelle, as representative of the split dyad of the cultural sign of femininity, exist outside of society and as such can also act as a complete negation of conventional patriarchy; for the danger implicit within the sexual elements of her stereotype threatens to disrupt the bounds of normative conventional patterns of existence. Hence, the banal sexism explicit within the cliché 'a woman's place is in the home' thinly veils the phallogocentric concern that the woman will not only voice disagreement with this statement but actively usurp the limiting role she may feel is being forced upon her by patriarchal culture. This highlights how the rigid structuring of 'woman' as 'other' underpins social order on the one hand and threatens to subvert it on the other.

The cultural production of stereotypes within any literary genre, from 'high' art to mainstream culture (and those aspects of popular art also defined as 'trash' (19)), serves the developing self, allowing the individual to distinguish itself from the great wide world. Through this process the 'self' can separate the good from the bad through transforming it into objects of love and hate. When considering the sadistic violence of men like Henry and

Bluebeard these objects come to function as reflections or distortions of the self. As Elisabeth Bronfen suggests :

Signifying that which eludes the order of the self, because it is lacking or excessive, the stereotype of the Other is used to control the ambivalent and to create boundaries. Stereotypes are a way of dealing with the instabilities arising from the division between self and non-self by preserving an illusion of control and order. (20)

Figures of masculinity such as the monstrous Bluebeard act from the perverse position of maintaining their own ideas of control and order via the total and violent subjection of their chosen female partners. However, even though female stereotypes can appear to be functioning as patriarchal absolutes confirming social order within cultural discourse, on another level they can also be perceived as a mask for phallogentric fears concerning boundary disintegration and the ultimate collapse of the masculine/feminine opposition. As Bronfen notes, the stereotype is an inconstant variable:

the site on to which difference, as a tension between the security of control and a fear of its loss has been projected - be this in respect to the difference of self and other, of the masculine and the feminine, of the living and the dead. Even as it is constructed to exteriorise anxiety outside the self or the community, the Other functions as the body at which the anxiety produced out of the tension between control and loss of power or distinction takes shape and continues to be preserved. (21)

The actual power of the stereotype is enhanced through historical repetition; paradoxically this duplex form is both a castrated figure threatening castration and a castrating form requiring castration in order to secure the subject's position which is of course, never obtainable. As

Elisabeth Bronfen suggests, the duplication of the stereotype 'often embodies an interrelationship of images of difference, as is the case when femininity and death coalesce in representations of feminine sacrifice,' (22) exemplified by female figures of martyrdom (Christina, Joan of Arc) and other unwitting victims of extreme violence such as Bluebeard's wives and Henry's girlfriend. Cultural discourses repeat and re-duplicate the story of female annihilation: consequently images of her death re-affirm phallogentric power and male survival.

Patriarchal discourse constitutes the mythology of femininity within narrative structure through which it determines to reveal the 'essence' or 'nature' of woman, be that her innate wickedness or her purity of heart. In the Old Testament the biological reality of the menses and childbirth for women are classified as abomination in Deuteronomy and Leviticus demanding the expulsion of such females from the community at those times. Dictates which tell man what to eat (Leviticus 11:1-4) and where to excrete if he wants to be holy precede the exclusion of the 'impure' state of woman, and the repulsion towards the bloody and often painful reality of woman's corporeal existence (Leviticus 12-14). The interpretations of this reality are closely studied by Kristeva:

Biblical abjection thus translates a crucial semantics in which the dietary, when it departs from the conformity that can be demanded by the logic of separation, blends with the maternal as unclean and improper coalescence, as undifferentiated power and threat, a defilement to be cut off. (23)

The psychoanalytical process as applied to the patriarchal text by Kristeva and Bronfen reveals the relationship between femininity and social order and

their correlation to castration anxiety and the death drive. Femininity as associated with death inspires fear within the masculine protagonist as it highlights [his] mortality and ultimate loss of control over the world via his own inevitable, organic demise. The woman and the dead threaten a disruption of the boundaries between self and other, they threaten the end of an ordered and hierarchical society.

For the ogre ( be he the fairy tale demon or the 'slasher' movie maniac) preservation of self comes to demand the complete annihilation of all those who he believes are a threat to his privileged place. The king of the castle maintains his authoritative role: he must be the 'destroyer' and woman must be 'destroyed':

The destruction of the feminine at the merciless hands of the violent 'hero' maintains the connection between narrative structure, desire and oedipal pleasure distinguishing the 'inherent maleness of all narrative'. (24)

In Henry, Portrait Of A Serial Killer, the protagonist's pleasure does not derive from the sexual act itself but from the containment and destruction of the threat posed to his sense of wholeness by female sexuality. Satisfaction for Henry comes via the clinical precision of the knife as he dissects his victim's bodies and literally contains them by placing their remains inside something: boxes and suitcases. The 'bloody chamber' of the fairy tale genre is transferred to the cinematic screen as the audience watch Henry perform his own personal autopsy. Dismemberment is no longer to be found in the hidden rooms of mysterious faraway castles. Rather it takes place in the full glare of dirty bathrooms and bland motel rooms of North America's lonely highways.



As an excessive example of the cinematic horror genre, verging on Lacanian jouissance, Henry, Portrait Of A Serial Killer gratuitously revises an American film tradition spawned by Hitchcock's Psycho. The psychological fear of, and curiosity about the ogre, together with the opportunity of escape for the clever heroine offered by the archaic folk tale has been replaced by vicious mutilation, a cinematic signified nothingness for female representation which culminates in an exercise in voyeurism loosely defined as entertainment.

Henry's way of seeing suggests a pathological form of a purification ritual, one ultimately concerned with control and expelling the threat, the alien, that defined by Kristeva as a 'defilement to be cut off'. Henry's sadistic behaviour is a psychotic extremity which follows a ruthless patriarchal pattern concerned with the treatment of women. Consider the perverse motivations Henry uses as justification for murder: 'his mother was a dirty whore and he hated her', which alludes to the biblical 'unclean' and 'improper' maternal function cited by Kristeva. Henry's psychotic rationality is analogous to Kristeva's critical observations of the Old Testament where taboo and sacrifice share the logic that structures the symbolic order:

The killed object, from which I am separated through sacrifice, while it links me to God it also sets itself up, in the very act of being destroyed, as desirable, fascinating, and sacred. (25)

Woman may be gutted and strung out to dry like a deer, for she is the corpse, the once devouring mother now castrated and 'I', Henry, am privileged once more with authority and control over my universe.

As Henry dissects his girlfriend in the bath, a macabre correlation can be drawn between his own motives and those of an early twentieth century medical practitioner 'curing' the hysteric of her disease:

Such patients....must be stripped stark naked, they must be left with not even a handkerchief to weep into, and put in a bath where they must be watched, while their room and belongings are searched with the thoroughness of a Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Norman Walker quoted in The Universal Home Doctor (26)

The doctor reduces the woman to a thing 'diseased' recalling echoes of the 'unclean' motif. Woman is defined as a creature in need of decontamination: Henry's 'cure' reduces the oedipal obstacle from a living being to dead flesh; death signifies an accomplished task. From a psychoanalytical point of view this equation of woman with death induces a moment of 'eroticism' (in the figure of the female) that becomes synonymous and interchangeable with that of death, and by implication the female object of desire is likened in her supposed partner's fantasies to a corpse. For Henry, the text suggests that in order to fuck one must kill, mocking and making literal the full sense of the Lacanian statement:

Desiring to secure something to oneself forever may be described as loving something which is yet not to hand. I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you - the object petit a - I mutilate you. (27)

It has been suggested that Henry's psychotic streak is merely a 'relief of tension...a daily masturbatory act'. (28) Rather, it could be argued that Henry becomes more akin to de Sade's libertine who, to obtain his orgasm,

must hunt it down, forced each time he comes (in this instance, murders) to hunt harder:

His rituals become more elaborate....the structure of his own invented reality hardens around him and imprisons him. (29)

Henry is trapped through fear of loss, loss of his own status as the 'feminine body produces an irritation in her lover that can move either in the direction of masochistic self destruction or of sadistic violence directed outward.'<sup>(30)</sup> Woman embodies all that is opposite to himself. She fascinates him because she is 'other' to him, yet she also threatens to absorb him, destroying his sense of a whole identity and the conventional, 'normative' society to which he believes he belongs. The cultural prohibition of incest is followed through to its most extreme logical conclusion. For Henry it all begins with a moment of matricide which he then continues to repeat as he murders woman after woman. The initial guilt Henry may have felt in killing his mother is subsumed by fear and reduced to loathing grounded in what Helene Cixous has described as:

[The] phantasm of the man buried alive: his textual head shoved back into the maternal body, a horrible pleasure. (31)

This ancient fear of castration via re-absorption reiterates throughout the history of cultural artefacts. In Euripides' play Electra cutting the knot of the semiotic, umbilical cord restores Orestes, the male protagonist into the symbolic realm:

I held my cloak over my eyes,  
While with my sword I performed sacrifice,

Orestes' moment of matricide removes the implicit instability and threat of castration which the motif of cloaking the eyes signifies: a necessary crime for the oedipal hero. He penetrates her, commits a symbolic act of incest whilst 'blinding' his conscious vision to that action, taking away the life that brought about his life. Her semiotic act of creation is foreclosed with his symbolic act of castration. The logic of the symbolic order's insistence on binary division is implicated in the justification of murder: man equates with law and woman equates with chaos. Elisabeth Bronfen defines the resolution for the oedipal protagonist through the body of a woman as:

....a figure of death both in the sense of being a trope for a dead body and for an experience of self-dissolution, as well as in the sense of being a source or carrier of disruption to the surveying lover and the normative order he represents. The former can be seen as expressing the desire for a return to the static pre-natal condition of a non-differentiated unity, the latter to a breaking of existing unities in the service of dynamic generation of new entities. The feminine body promises narcissistic gratification even as it also poses as the source of annoyance to the illusion. Death eliminates the irritation by effacing its object or cause and re-affirming the fantasy of self-stability and security. (33)

For the woman who refuses to obey the rules there is only one fitting punishment, death as is the case with Bluebeard's wives, Saint Christina, Henry's mother, girlfriend and various 'other' prostitutes.

Ultimately the function of the 'loved' object is to reflect the lover (or the father, both biological and patriarchal) in a stable, secure manner,

translating the woman into a signifier for masculine wholeness or completion. Where she fails to do this, or more importantly refuses to do as she is told (as do Christina and the curious young wives of Bluebeard ) she is severely dealt with for her transgression. This phallogentric dictate has a historical universality which reiterates across cultural genres regardless of academic critical worth as I have demonstrated here through the juxtapositioning of a low budget contemporary American horror film with examples from classical and serious literature. Whether hagiography, fairy story, cinema, Greek tragedy or classical comedy, narrative conventions can often be shown to repeat and confirm the workings of the symbolic order. The diversity of cultural examples highlights a significant, specific threat to female aspirations to power and identity: woman beware!

In Shakespeare's comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream the young woman, Hermia is warned by Theseus that if she continues to refuse her father's choice of husband she will be put to death or forced to live life as a nun:

.....be advis'd fair maid.  
To you your father should be as a god;  
One that compos'd your beauties; yea and one  
To whom you are but as a form in wax  
By him imprinted: and within his power,  
To leave the figure, or disfigure it: <sup>(34)</sup>

Through a mythical reversal of biology the father creates (gives birth to) the daughter. She is 'compos'd' and 'imprinted' upon by him, repeating the Christian doctrine where man, as God, is maker and woman is made. The text concentrates on unions made by law, shifting the emphasis away from the mother figure, shaping the continuation of the family within

the legalistic patriarchal system, placing the power of creation in the masculine hand. This is how the symbolic order functions within western monotheistic culture: it travels through time via a system of kinship which involves the transmission of the name of the father and a rigorous prohibition of incest.

Julia Kristeva defines patriarchal monotheism as relating on one level to human symbolism (religious doctrines and iconography) which provide a vehicle for communication and understanding despite the fact that it works through, '...interdiction and division ( body/speech, pleasure/law, incest/procreation).' In parallel to this, it also stands as representative of the paternal function as:

....patrilinear descent with transmission of the name of the father centralizes eroticism, giving it the single goal of procreation. It is thus caught in the grip of an abstract symbolic authority which refuses to recognise the growth of the child in the mother's body. (35)

The ideology is that expressed by Egeus, the Shakespearean father who creates the daughter: '.....a form in wax by him imprinted, and within his power to leave the figure or disfigure it.' Masculine creation and mutilation persistently recur throughout historical, cultural time and space producing an ultimately castrating effect on feminine representation. As one example of a castrated form we find the body of a woman 'imprinted' by him from the chilling authorial signature of Bluebeard's axe and Henry's knife to the penetration motif inscribed within the curious doctor's examination of the hysteric patient:

The extraordinary thing about this loss of feeling is, that a patient ....will allow a large pin to be stuck right through her

arm, and even to be left sticking in, whilst she declares she feels nothing at all and to all intents and purposes she does not feel that sensation *we* call pain. ....suggesting that she will not feel pain if a pin is inserted in her flesh at [any] certain spot. (36)

Femininity equates with masochism once more as the body of a woman is stripped of autonomy, her value correlating with the status of a laboratory rat. The sustaining of this system requires that woman be excluded from the single, legislative principle, namely the Word, as well as from the inherently paternal element that gives procreation a social value. She, as daughter, is excluded like her mother before her from making her own choices (in marriage, in life). She is denied access to a legal voice: she exists only through her father, stressing the negative consequences of monotheism for women, who find themselves reduced, and exiled into the position of 'silent' Other in the symbolic order. She may speak, she may desire, but the consequences of achieving her own goals are often dire, as the next chapter will show.

## Part One    Castrating Form/s

### 1: Penetrate / Dismember

- 1 Scheherazade., pg.28. Arabian Nights , re-told by Laurence Houseman, 1907. This edition, 1985.
- 2 Wollstonecraft, M., pg.252. Vindication Of The Rights Of Women, (1792)1983.
- 3 Warner, M., pg. 269. The Beast to The Blonde, 1995.
- 4 Warner, M., Little Red Riding Hood... for the purposes of this chapter I will refer to the Grimm Brother's version of the tale as cited in Warner. 1995.
- 5 Warner, M., pg.246. (anonymous Victorian author)1995.
- 6 Warner, M., pg.246. quotes F.W.N. Bayley. 1995.
- 7 Warner, M., pg.245. Victorian verse, anonymous author. 1995.
- 8 Warner, M., pg.244. Victorian sub-title. 1995.
- 9 Warner, M., pg.255. A tale transcribed by the Grimm Brothers from varied sources, including a woman referred to by Marina Warner called Dortchen Wild.
- 10 Warner, M., pg.270. 'The Ogre's Appetite,'1995.
- 11 'Scream Queens' is a popular contemporary slang term (American in origin) first used to describe Jamie Lee Curtis's performance as the 'final girl' [see Clover, 1996] in a string of slasher / horror films beginning with John Carpenter's horror movie, Halloween, 1978 and revised by Curtis in another Carpenter film The Fog, 1979 (based on the book by the author James Herbert). Curtis also repeats the role in Terror Train, directed by Roger Spottiswoode in 1979, where the psychopathic axeweilding murderer wears a mask reminiscent of Calvino's 'Silver Nose' (*Il naso d'argento*) who instead of the distinctive blue beard sports a 'metal appendage [which] could mask a nose wasted from syphilis'. Warner, pg. 256. 1995. As Warner points out, 'Silver Nose' follows a similar narrative to nursery 'Bluebeards'.

However, as she goes on to stress, Silver Nose tales do not resemble in tone and message the didactic sermons which Perrault's versions prompted - those condemning 'female curiosity and unwifely behaviour'. It represents, as I demonstrate in the second part of this work using as example the contemporary version of the final girl in the Wes Craven films Scream and Scream 2, an alternative approach wherein 'quickwitted female double-dealing' triumphs over the threat imposed upon her mortality by the evil-doer. (Warner, pg. 257,1995.)

See also Curtis in Prom Night, (1980) where she once more unmasks the killer at the closure of the film, revealing him to be her own brother, who is strangely named 'Tough'.

Finally, see Section Two, Heroine Addicts, for a consideration of Curtis' reprieve of her initial Scream Queen role in Halloween H20 - Twenty Years Later, 1998.



- 12 See Carol Clover Men, Women And Chainsaws: Gender In the Modern Horror Film and Barbara Creed's The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, for definitive research in this area.
- 13 Further detailed analysis of this specific area of popular cultural form is undertaken in the final chapters of this thesis, entitled 'Girlz In The Hood' & 'Heroine Addict'. Therein, a discussion of the 'Final Girl' [as originally defined by Carol Clover, 1996] can be found which contradicts, in part, Marina Warner's assertions (as stated in the main body of this chapter) and seeks to determine that the central and sole remaining female protagonist from the aforementioned horror films is in fact a contemporary example of a progressive and re-visioned heroine.
- 14 Carter, A., pg. 139. The Sadeian Woman, 'The Hundred and Twenty Days at Sodom.' (1979) 1984.
- 15 Dworkin, A., pg.152. Intercourse (1986) 1988.
- 16 Winterson, J., pg.109. The Passion, 1988.
- 17 Winterson, J., pg.165. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 18 Winterson, J., pg.165. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 19 Trash as defined by the literary canon- those cultural forms inherent to mass, popular entertainment: for example, Mills and Boon and those other publishers of the romance genre, the comic book form, Hollywood cinema and the soap opera formula as watched weekly by millions of people on the television screen. See Harriet Hawkins' excellent work Classics And Trash for a distinctive and fully considered appraisal of the practices of the literary hierarchy. 1990.
- 20 Bronfen, E., pg.182. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 21 Bronfen, E., pg.182. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 22 Bronfen, E., pg.182. 1992.
- 23 Kristeva, J., pg.106. Powers Of Horror, 1980, ed., Leon S. Roudiez,1982.
- 24 De Lauretis, T., pg.119. Alice Doesn't, 1984.
- 25 Kristeva, J., pg.110. Powers Of Horror,1982.
- 26 Unknown Editor., pg.429. The Universal Home Doctor, circa,1939.
- 27 Lacan, J., as quoted in Elisabeth Bronfen, pg.181. 1992.
- 28 McKinney, D., pg.16-24. 'Violence- Strong and Weak' in Film Quarterly, Vol. 46, Summer, 1993.
- 29 Carter, A., pg.149. The Sadeian Woman, 1984.
- 30 Bronfen, E., pg.184.1992.
- 31 Cixous, H., pg.544. 'Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading Of Freud's 'Das Unheimliche'' New Literary History, 1976.
- 32 Euripides., pg.147. Electra, circa,415 B.C. Medea And Other Plays, 1963.
- 33 Bronfen, E., pg.184. 1992.
- 34 Shakespeare, W., pg.22. A Midsummer Night's Dream, 1595, this edition,1994.
- 35 Kristeva, J., pg.142. Kristeva Reader, ed., T. Moi. 1993.
- 36 Unknown Editor., pg.427-8. The Universal Home Doctor, circa, 1939.

## Castrating Form/s

### 2: TONGUE

#### Abjection: Voicing the Forbidden

stick out your little tongue so that I can cut it  
off for my payment, and then you shall have my  
powerful potion! <sup>(1)</sup> [Said the sea-witch to the little memaid.]

As the fairy tale genre warns, the daughter who leaves the home without paternal consent ( as is the case with the little mermaid in Anderson's fairy tale) risks the loss of innocence as she passes from fair maiden to bloody whore. Wrong to defy her father, the mermaid is warned by the witch in a voice rich with sadism that the crossing of the boundary from father to lover, virgin to wife, means that her

.....tail will part and shrink into what humans call nice legs but it will hurt just as if a sharp sword were passing through you...every step you take will be like treading on a knife sharp enough to cause your blood to flow. <sup>(2)</sup>

Aside from the obvious metaphor for the menstrual cycle and the breaking of the hymen - that 'thin membrane partially closing the virginal vagina'<sup>(3)</sup> lies the implicit threat that God made to Eve should she transgress and taste the fruit of the tree. If the good girl is to remain so, she must not seek out the knowledge which is her own sexuality. This section of the study on castrating forms will look closely at those good girls who do transgress. This focus will concentrate on the fluidity of desire, sexual and otherwise, revealing how desire transcends those cultural institutions designed to contain it.

Within Hagiographa it is to man's (as Adam's) shame that the serpent becomes his insatiable desire for woman (as Eve) and it is the sin/fault of woman that she did not heed the warnings of the father in the fairy tale. The daughter inhabits the enclosed space of the parental home, that psychoanalytic cave that equates with the feminine domestic role, the hidden womb and female sexuality. She becomes literally imprisoned by her own sexual metaphor: the tower, where she is, as Warner suggests, 'metonymically swallowed up'.<sup>(4)</sup> She appears to be locked within her own sexual secret by her father (seemingly unknown to her) only to leave or escape one human pen to enter another; the lover's domain:

The husband who *comes* secretly gliding into your bed at night is an enormous snake.....Remember what Apollo's oracle said: that you were destined to marry a wild savage beast...he won't pamper you much longer....when your nine months are nearly up he will eat you alive; apparently his favourite food is a woman far gone in pregnancy.<sup>(5)</sup>

The symbolic order is perpetuated through the cyclical passage of daughter from father to husband who will then be the father of her daughter, devouring the mother, erasing her from the text. The historical repetition of this narrative motif presupposes a truth value in mythology's participation in the making of the real or apparent world :

The daughter's struggle with her father is one of separation, not displacement. Its psychological dynamics thus locate the conflict inside inner family space. Father - daughter stories are full of literal houses, castles, or gardens in which fathers such as [Rapunzel's] lock up their daughters in the futile attempt to prevent some rival male from stealing them. The motif also

occurs through riddles of enclosure...which enclose the daughter in the father's verbal labyrinth and lure her suitors to compete with and lose to the pre-emptive paternal bond. (6)

The formula oedipal hero, once entangled within the symbolic rules of play, is compelled to repeat this pattern of behaviour once the maiden is in his possession. Consequently, the woman within this particular type of narrative form remains locked within the traditional oedipal trajectory.

Vladimir Propp's much cited work Morphology Of The Folktale has long been considered central to an understanding of structural form in both literary and film critical theory. This Russian formalist methodology emphasises the narrative progression from one state of equilibrium to the other. Change, or the point of the story, is brought about by either an event or a mystery that prompts the linear motion of the narrative trajectory. The daughter's symbolic struggle for separation from her father can be illustrated through the techniques devised by Propp revealing how the heroine is contained within the movement of the text.

Propp's investigations break down the mechanics of the story into a limited seven spheres of action. The significance of this analysis to the current study concerns the binary oppositions found within those areas of plot development, as they are balanced against one another in order to form a structured and consequently, familiar or phallogocentric resolution. These spheres are shown to be universal within the historical structure of narrative form, which is in turn continually repeated across cultural disciplines. Each sphere directly correlates with the differing function of the characters. They are: villain / hero / donor / helper / princess and father / dispatcher / and false hero. (7)

Structuralist theory is helpful in this analytical process as it defines through its observations of narrative construction the distinct 'lack' of the woman's autonomous place, particularly if she is a mother or a daughter. The maternal figure functions as either donor, in a supportive role, or as the villain of the piece, as is the case with the fairy tale's wicked step-mother, with no sanctioned authority over the family she has married into or given birth to.

Propp posits the figure of the adolescent heroine within the same sphere as her father, exposing in one simple analysis the patriarchal linear movement of the traditional marriage plot where the dynamics of the contract are (supposed) to be made in keeping with the father's desires. Therefore, as noted previously, the daughter appears to remain as locked within the linguistic composition as she does within the fairy tale tower. This is not to conclude that the restrictive, constructed category of woman has some unchangeable, transhistorical essence relative to female desire/s: rather it points to the inadequacy and the un/naturalness of such a representation.

Woman is not a homogeneous entity: there can be no claim to one quintessentially good or evil feminine voice. The power of mythology lies in the proposition that the listener or reader is prepared to believe in the form of the story and that the story, or the word, is in essence, 'true' and that there are good reasons (i.e. historical longevity, biblical hermeneutics) for believing that this should be the case.

The traditional evaluation of womanhood is largely dependent on having been the negation or the opposite of that which phallogocentric tradition has affirmed as good and true, as personified by the hero. Without a belief in an authentic patriarchal system to serve as a standard for human behavioural patterns neither can there be any apparent world. Through a

deciphering of one pole of the binary opposition and showing it to be an illusion the opposition itself loses its own critical force. The result is not a collapse into meaninglessness but can offer the reader a wider arena of interpretations. The application of a poststructuralist strategy, as I will show, can utilise a multiplicity of perspectives without seeking to establish one objective or correct interpretation.

The power of the father over the young daughter is central to the conventional fairy tale and to a great deal of literary tradition. The daughter remains the possession of the father until he deems fit her leaving the parental home for the marital house. If she disobeys, he by law can do to her whatever he wishes. A father who does not get his own way is a dangerous man, as we see when the disobedient Christina (of the introductory chapter) refuses to submit to her own father's desires. His 'love' for her leads to the physical mutilation of her body as it also does for the unfortunate child in The Maiden Without Hands who refuses to marry the man of her father's choice.

In a thirteenth century version of this tale it is the girl herself who chops off her own hands in order to escape an incestuous marriage to her brother. The Grimm Brothers' reworking of the story chooses to delete the incest motif and replace it with a cowardly father who sacrifices his daughter to a devil. The father cuts off her hands at the request of the devil when she rejects the demon's marriage proposal. The unhappy maiden weeps upon the stumps making them too clean for the devil to touch, saving her soul through her adversity (8). Christian monotheism places its own particular insistence on the value of female virginity and martyrdom. There is no price too high, no injury that cannot be endured in order to preserve one's chastity.

The incestuous implications of the father's desire for the daughter are difficult to determine and analyse, because as Marina Warner

has noted, once an academic interest in the psychological dimensions of the fairy tale began the transcriber or analyst of traditional folklore found the idea of father/daughter marriage difficult to accept. <sup>(9)</sup> As, for example, when the Grimm Brothers find it necessary to change the figure of the brother into a representation of the devil as the chosen betrothed in The Maiden Without Hands, (this area is explored once again in the later section of this thesis, in the chapter entitled 'Girlz In The Hood').

Following on from this, it would appear that within Victorian society sex between father/brother and daughter was simply an impossibility and as such this incomprehensible, 'unspeakable' act was too terrible to mention: yet it remained acceptable to read children tales wherein evil doers are equipped with the power to chop off innocent, young girls' hands. It is also interesting to note that just as the translator of the fairy tale took it upon himself to delete the incest motif, Freud also dismissed the social possibility of incest within middle class circles, despite Dora's claims to the contrary, in Studies On Hysteria. This collaborative study (Freud worked with Josef Breuer during 1893-5) has become much scrutinised and criticised by feminist academics, who among them one might count Jacqueline Rose, <sup>(10)</sup> Elaine Showalter <sup>(11)</sup> and Elisabeth Bronfen. <sup>(12)</sup>

Despite Propp's assimilation of the father/daughter relationship into one category, the incest motif in literature remains largely uncritically examined. Warner suggests that it was dropped initially by editors and collectors, who were predominantly male on the grounds of implausibility and fantasy - the conclusion also drawn by Freud when diagnosing 'Dora'. However as Warner also points out, the incest motif is hard to accept because it belongs to a different realm of fantasy, one where it could actually happen in lived experience:

It is when fairy tales coincide with experience that they begin to suffer from censoring, not the other way round. (13)

In the literary text incest forms one element of the structural disorder which takes place before the restoration of normative order can be achieved. As Julia Kristeva notes in her work on abjection, 'proper' conventional forms of subjectivity and sociality require the 'expulsion of the improper, the unclean and the disorderly'. (14) This perception is a variation on Freud's position in Totem and Taboo (1913) where he argues that civilisation itself is founded on the expulsion of 'impure' incestuous attachment. Kristeva's assertion that what is excluded from society 'can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the borders of our existence' culturally manifests itself within the buried subtext of the fairy tale where it threatens, as the abject does, the apparently stable unity of the subject with disruption and possible dissolution. For Kristeva it is impossible to exclude these psychically and socially threatening components with any lasting effect or absolution.

A literary rendering of this idea is exemplified in Jeanette Winterson's fairy tale within a tale, Sexing The Cherry. Here, Winterson draws together the repressed incest motif from folklore with the notion that the abject can never be totally excluded from society, creating through her re-inscription of the incest motif a twist upon the traditional implications of improper desire:

In the morning the young girl, whose name was Zillah, told me she had been locked in the tower since her birth.

'This is not a tower,' I said. 'It is a house of some stature but nothing more.'

.....I asked her what it was that kept her here.

'It is myself,' she said. 'Only myself.'



It was then I realized the room had no door.

'Is there anything for me to eat?' I asked her.

She smiled, leaned under the bed and pulled out two rats by their tails. She laughed, and walked towards me, the rats in each hand. Her eyes were clouding over, her eyes were disappearing. I could smell her breath like cheese in muslin.

I did not think of my life; I somersaulted out of the window and landed straight in the pile of radishes.

Someone....urged me to tell him where I had come from so suddenly.

'From the tower,' I said, pointing upwards.

The market stopped its bustle and all fell to the ground and made the sign of the cross. The purveyor of Holy Relics hung a set of martyr's teeth round his neck and sprinkled me with the dust of St. Anthony.

The story was a terrible one.

A young girl caught incestuously with her sister was condemned to build her own death tower. To prolong her life she built it as high as she could.....When there were no stones left she sealed the room and the village, driven mad by her death cries, evacuated to a far-off spot where no one could hear her. Many years later the tower had been demolished by a foreigner who had built the house I saw in its place. Slowly the village had returned, but not the foreigner, nor anyone else could live in the house. At night the cries were too loud. (15)

We do not find out what becomes of the sister. She remains the silent partner, her story left unsaid: indicative, perhaps, of all those other fairy tale maidens whose outcomes we never discover, whose stories remain lost.

Winterson's 'fictional' fairy tale contains the essential features which interest Kristeva, those moments of symbolic transgression, 'madness, holiness, and poetry'(16) which interrupt and subvert the psychical and signifying unity: the subjective, masculine culture, which in Winterson's story

forces the villagers to move away. In order to develop this area of discussion it is important to establish exactly what is meant by 'abjection' in psychoanalytic terms and to show how the 'abject' expresses itself within the literary text.

The abject in society is that which is cast away, base, low, servile, despicable. The abject in literal and textual understanding is dirt, faecal, bawdy, coarse, corrupt, depraved, foul, impure, indecent, lewd, licentious, obscene, smutty, and suggestive. In symbolic terms the abject is suggestive of a developed cultural gendered metaphor, woman.

The interrelationship between abjection, maternity and love is established through the pre-oedipal/semiotic phase as proposed in Kristeva's analysis The Powers of Horror. The concept of the pre-oedipal phase is pivotal to her discussion of abjection. The abject is defined as the subject's reaction to the failure of the subject/object opposition to express adequately the subject's corporeality and its fragile body boundaries. In the beginning, 'secure' subjectivity and coherent language are possible only because sexual drives and bodily processes become encoded upon, then entrenched within signification: that which allows us to recognise the stereotype... the mythical good from the bad. When images and perceptions become re-presented via these signifiers the child has the psychological prerequisites for taking up a position of enunciation (rejecting the maternal body as a site of castration/loss/lack). This means that the child can then take up a designated place in the production of patriarchal discourse.

Understanding abjection can be quite straightforward when looked at from a cultural level. It is simply the attempt by self and society to exclude from the self and the community all those elements designated as foul, dirty, obscene, indecent and worthless. It is unfortunate for the woman

in Winterson's story that she finds many of those elements inscribed upon her body by the monotheistic culture in which she exists - the most significant being her sexual deviation from the heterosexual 'norm'.

On a psychoanalytic level however, abjection involves the ways in which the inside and outside of the body are constituted, the physical spaces between the self and other. These provide the conditions under which the child is able to see 'himself as a unified whole, an illusion, an image of what is expected from him/her by society. As indicated, abjection occurs because the symbolic order is founded upon myth. In Kristeva's theorisation, the abject becomes 'an abyss at the borders of the subject's existence, a hole into which the subject may fall when it is put into question;' <sup>(17)</sup> as one can suggest is the case with Zillah as she constructs her own abyss around her. The enclosed recess which will become her coffin creates a paradox, the figure of the young woman, though expelled, cannot be forgotten because of her ghostly presence. She is life in death, death in life.

For the subject, as we understand it, to survive, it needs to contain and control the abject within; to repress and expel the 'unspeakable' condition, in this case, incest. This creates an impossible conundrum for subject stability as the apparently isolated figure of Zillah is simultaneously rejected and recalled by generations of village dwellers. Indeed the resurrection of Zillah's story both horrifies and appeals to the villagers actively inviting discussion upon that which is deemed 'unspeakable'.

Jacques Lacan posits the ego and object in correlation to one another, each providing and supporting the stability of the other. The abject is neither subject nor object; it recognises the impossible, unattainable identity the subject projects onto and derives from the other <sup>(18)</sup>.

If the object is the external cultural support for the subject (as

with notions of the feminine dyad) the abject is more the repetitious instability, hence the ever present fading of the woman's death cry in Winterson's story that remains to remind the subject of its 'precarious hold on the object':

The abject is that part of the subject it attempts to expel, but which is refused the status of object. It is the symptom, for example, of the object's failure to fill and define the subject. (19)

In Winterson's novel, Sexing The Cherry, the villagers, as representatives of society, condemn and expel the incestuous sisters for their depraved behaviour. Similarly the lone girl, forced to expel herself from society within the death tower, retreats into psychosis because she cannot physically expel herself. Thus, Winterson's Zillah becomes akin to Kristeva's 'deject', (20) the excluded figure for whom abjection exists as her only companion, in her own mind and in the minds of the villagers. From her place of banishment she is engrossed within a physical and psychical space where borders ascribed by law and religion crumble into meaninglessness and beckon her into madness, with rats for breakfast and appalling bad breath. Her death cry persists like the abject's ceaseless challenge to its subject (whether that be you, I, he or she). Kristeva describes this challenge as a 'discharge', a 'convulsion':

... to each ego its object. To each superego its abject. [The abject becomes:] Not me. Not that. But not either. A 'something'....I do not recognize..... A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates

me, There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture. (21)

Zillah and the countless literary and fairy tale girls locked up in towers before her could be construed as an external manifestation of the abject within society. Zillah, as a flesh and blood creature, lives on the edge of non-existence: her corporeal annihilation at the hands of patriarchal forces is contradicted and undermined by the hallucinations or the spectral presence of her exiled spirit.

Kristeva's theories on abjection are relevant to a discussion of Winterson's own philosophical observations on human behaviour within her work. Kristeva's psychoanalytical propositions concerning western discourses on religion correlate with Winterson's literary approach to an understanding of man's relationship to God. For Kristeva abjection attaches itself to all seemingly solid religious structures only to reappear in a new form at their inevitable collapse. Likewise, Winterson's obsessional and philosophical religious characters appear interweaved across time, throughout her work, witnessing and commenting upon the mundane and catastrophic events in human history. As with the abject these characters reform and revise themselves when the familiar world around them dissolves and dissipates. Her literature is permeated by the presence of many priests and parsons, as well as the eccentric and larger than life mother figures, such as Jeanette's in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit and the Dog-Woman of Sexing The Cherry. Indeed, in the later part of this thesis Winterson's use of religious dogma and iconography including the figure of Christ and the treatment of the Passion will be examined in great detail.

Kristeva's work posits the existence of abjection within monotheistic religions as taboo, the excluded desire, externalised, for example, as sexuality permeating through to secondary forms, most notably transgression of the Law. When the abject encounters Christian sin it becomes integrated with the (Christian) word and transcribes itself into existence as a threatening, dangerous otherness. Of paramount significance here is the concept of original sin found in the biblical tale of Eve's seduction of Adam. Monotheistic culture then demands 'an unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law', for as Kristeva determines this is

necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside. Religion, Morality, Law..... [are] obviously always arbitrary...unfailingly oppressive [and] ...laboriously prevailing. (22)

Jeanette Winterson's writing incorporates these varying theoretical perspectives within her novels, addressing them from a philosophical, subjective perspective. Winterson does not attempt to re-place or stand in full opposition to 'Religion, Morality, and Law'. Instead her subject matter responds to Kristeva's analysis of literary fiction in that it:

seems to be written out of the untenable aspects of perverse or superego positions. It acknowledges the impossibility of Religion, Morality, and Law - their power play, their necessary and absurd seeming. Like perversion, it takes advantage of them, gets round them and makes sport of them.

....The writer, fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself [herself] into it, introjects it and as a consequence perverts language, style and content. (23)

That absurdity and impossibility are highlighted in Winterson's fiction, as the following extracts illustrate. Focusing on the manner in which the message, the word of God, is delivered to the parishioners, Dog-Woman's personal reflections in Sexing The Cherry suggest that the Parson's own emphasis on denial, via a linear system of authority grounded in the threat of damnation, points to the irony and possibility for the perversion of semantics within Christian theology itself:

I wonder about love because the parson says that only God can truly love us and the rest is lust and selfishness.

In church, there are carvings of a man with his member swollen out like a marrow, rutting a woman whose teats swish the ground like a cow before milking. She has her eyes closed and he looks up to Heaven, and neither of them notice the grass is on fire.

The parson had these carvings done especially so that we could contemplate our sin and where it must lead.

There are women too, hot with lust, their mouths sucking at each other, and men grasping one another the way you would a cattle prod.

We file past every Sunday to humble ourselves and stay clean for another week, but I have noticed a bulge here and there where all should be quiet and God-like. (24)

The juxtaposition of apparently pornographic imagery and a holy, sacred place emphasises the ambivalence of iconographic symbols necessary to the display of absurdity within extreme religious dogmatics. The carvings pervert the intention of the parson's sermon, which is to stop his flock from fornicating. Instead, the pictures reiterate the susceptibility of human desire through the fetishistic representation of the various sexual acts. Christian orthodox meaning displays the qualities of a monotint inscribed

within the symbolic. However, on a textual level, as related by the private thoughts of the Dog-Woman, this univocal perspective is left totally at the mercy of the semiotic where a multiplicity of meaning (an otherness) is embedded waiting to twist and subvert the logics of the symbolic order.

Observed within the context of twentieth century philosophy, the concept of remaining humble before God and clean of sexual sin connotes patriarchal relationships concerned with power and control rather than spirituality; an aspect much explored by feminist psychoanalysis and the work of Michel Foucault whose extensive deconstruction of the institutional nature of sexuality, particularly in the three volumes of his work, The History Of Sexuality (25) has substantially informed contemporary academic debate.

From Sexing The Cherry's fictional, historical setting of seventeenth-century England Winterson repeats her use of a seemingly irreverent religious motif in the pages of The Passion where a young Frenchman, Henri listens to the stories of an Irish priest with a voyeuristic, transgressive, telescopic eye. Here again Winterson makes use of religious artefacts, but instead of imbuing them with the mythical and god-fearing properties which, as sacred icons, they purport to embody, she emphasises the arbitrary and unstable nature of such symbolism. This is achieved through perverting the traditional connotations of religious relics without rejecting them or assuming an opposing authoritative position. Winterson turns meaning inside out, corrupting and using that which already exists, that which is familiar within western culture and rinses it of its former power to instil fear and humility. She highlights the fragility of a desire for meaning through the hero Henri's growth from boy into man. Henri, as a cook and soldier in Napoleon's army, sees first hand the plight of the prostitutes hired to serve the soldiers:



The vivandieres were runaways, strays, younger daughters of too-large families, servant girls who'd got tired of giving it away to drunken masters, and fat old dames who couldn't ply their trade anywhere else. On arrival they were each given a set of underclothes and a dress that chilled their bosoms in the icy sea-salt days. Shawls were distributed too, but any woman found covering herself on duty could be reported and fined. ....Unlike the town tarts, who protected themselves and charged what they liked...., the vivants were expected to service as many men as asked them day or night. One woman I met crawling home after an officer's party said she'd lost count at thirty-nine.

Christ lost consciousness at thirty-nine. (26)

The text makes explicit the ambiguity and paradox of the novel's title. The passion it speaks of is not inextricably tied to our late twentieth century popular understanding of passion in a sexual or paperback romantic sense. Prostitutes are paralleled with Christ's fervent, religious Passion through Henri's mind's eye because he perceives them to be figures of martyrdom: the instruments of which, the scourge, the crown of thorns, the shaft are alluded to in direct relation to the prostitutes' experiences. The brutality they endure, the excesses in suffering, 'she'd lost count at thirty-nine' mimic the movement of those human beings said to have undergone the biblical version of the Passion. That *strastotierpsty* (27) is the experience of Christ, humiliated, tortured and strung up on the cross, yet able to respond to evil with forgiveness. It is of course Henri's projected identification with the prostitutes' plight which produces this impression and not the words of the women themselves. However, Henri betrays a desire for empathy at odds with his normative place in the phallic function, suggestive of a shared psychic space which privileges humanity over notions of sexual difference.

This could lead to an understanding of the whores' complicity with and passive endurance of the soldiers' demands comparable with Henri's own disillusionment with Napoleon and repugnance to the machinations of war. Henri's identification with the prostitute acknowledges a melancholic submission to the law of the father, whether He be God, an officer or Napoleon, an acceptance masochistic in essence as pain and suffering are inflicted upon inert/feminine/Henri's flesh. The whore's broken body is inscribed with both masculine carnal excess and feminine martyrdom. Therefore, woman as spectacle in this instance destabilises the codification's concerned with gender boundaries, liberating the abject which results in Henri's transference and identification and resulting in his own active displacement from the symbolic order.

Patrick, the perversely irreverent, Irish, Catholic priest serving alongside Henri in Napoleon's army, tells the boy how, in his opinion, the Blessed Virgin, 'couldn't be relied upon, for she's a woman too, for all that's she's Holy'.<sup>(28)</sup> Once again Winterson uses comic devices to dissolve archetypal certainties into radical absurdities, creating a vision of a holy icon imbued with ordinary human qualities. Patrick's inferences are in the religious sense blasphemous, as his tale of a miraculous statue disputes the virgin birth, proposing that God did not simply impregnate Mary with the power of the word but had violated Mary as if she were a normal woman:

'We've a statue at home, so lifelike you'd think it was the Holy Mother herself. Now the women come in with their tears and flowers and I've hidden behind a pillar and I'll swear on all the saints that the statue moves. Now when the men come in, cap in hand, asking for this and that and saying their prayers, that statue's like the rock it's made of.'

'.....She'd be different if God hadn't violated her.'

What was he talking about?

'See, women like you to treat them with respect. To ask before you touch. Now I've never thought it was right or proper of God to send his angel with no by your leave and then have his way before she'd even had time to comb her hair. I don't think she ever forgave him for that. So I don't blame her that she's so haughty now.'

I had never thought of the Queen of Heaven in this way. Patrick liked the girls and was not above sneaking a look uninvited.

'But when it comes to it, I'd never take a woman without giving her time to comb her hair.'<sup>(29)</sup>

Winterson's heroes and heroines often take up the position of the 'deject' or exiled 'other' within the narrative structure, deliberately placing themselves outside the society in which they live in order to observe and achieve an understanding of where they are as opposed to who they are. In this sense they fulfil the criteria Kristeva defines for the exile, just as Dog-Woman, the heroine of Sexing The Cherry, Villanelle from The Passion and the young Jeanette of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit firmly step from the conventional path ascribed to women, as they choose to live at times in exclusion from society. As characters, they make the decision to separate themselves from the normative, symbolic order. They are not 'abjected' nor forced from their familiar world in the sense that the young girl Zillah is. Therefore they are privileged participants in cultural discourse. They are, 'situationist...and not without laughter- since laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection.'<sup>(30)</sup> Winterson's fiction in turn suggests one of the many ways of 'purifying' the abject within the dominant discourse of western culture from Kristeva's point of view:

The various means of purifying the abject - the various catharses - make up the history of religions and end up with that catharsis par excellence called art, both on the far and near side of religion. Seen from that standpoint, the artistic experience, which is rooted in the abject it utters and by the same token purifies, appears as the essential component of religiosity. This is perhaps why it is destined to survive the collapse of the historical forms of religions. (31)

As a cathartic process for the writer herself, Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit has been seen as a semi-autobiographical account of Jeanette Winterson's own evangelist upbringing and of her experiences as an adopted child, and later as a lesbian woman. On a literary level the defining of absurdities within religious doctrine through humour and reflection reinforce from a psychoanalytical point of view the instability of the patriarchal, linear system of order. For even when the subject believes itself to be in complete control it is balanced on the brink of Cixous' abyss as developed in The Laugh Of The Medusa (32). From within this abyss the abject attests to the absolute impossibility of clearly defined, rigid borders between Kristeva's proper and improper whether that be the subject/object divide between masculine order and feminine dis/order or the boundaries between what is classified as 'high' art and the trash that is conventionally deemed unfit for serious scholarly study. As for Winterson's young heroine in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, the blurring of categories was apparent, if a little nonsensical in childhood:

My mother had taught me to read from the Book of Deuteronomy because it is full of animals (mostly unclean). Whenever we read "Thou shall not eat any beast that does not chew the cud or part the hoof" she drew all the creatures mentioned. Horsies, bunnies and little ducks were

vague fabulous things, but I knew all about pelicans, rock badgers, sloths and bats.

.....Lobsters were red biro, she never drew shrimps, though, because she liked to eat them in a muffin. I think it had troubled her for a long time.

Finally after much prayer, and some consultation with a great man of the Lord in Shrewsbury, she agreed with St Paul that what God has cleansed we must not call common. After that we went to Molly's seafoods every Saturday. Deuteronomy had its drawbacks; it's full of Abominations and Unmentionables. Whenever we read about a bastard, or someone with crushed testicles, my mother turned over the page and said, 'Leave that to the Lord,' but when she'd gone, I'd sneak a look. I was glad I didn't have testicles. They sounded like intestines only on the outside, and the men in the Bible were always having them cut off and not being able to go to church. Horrid. <sup>(33)</sup>

For Jeanette's mother the distinguishing of the 'proper' from the 'improper' becomes simply a matter of personal taste as she seeks out the biblical directive which most suits her own way of being. Inadvertently, the mother points out the impossibility of boundaries, as she maps out the borders of religious constraint, in the first instance to guide the young Jeanette, only to bend and redefine them in accordance with her own desires.

The 'horror' which abjection reveals becomes a matter of power. The purpose of this power is to control the individual through fear. The horror of chopped off testicles (physical castration) mingled with the horror of not being allowed into church (cultural castration) fascinate and frighten Jeanette in much the same way a gruesome fairy tale could her contemporary playmate. The patriarchal dictates of the biblical text and the folk tale convey the same implicit threat: do not stray from the path little girl.

The child protagonist's perspective within Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit is steeped in re-memory as events are recalled from another voice -

a mature narrator reflecting on a past life. It is the inflexion of the authorial adult voice which defines for the reader the young Jeanette's sense of immortality (that 'specialness' of the opening chapter) as she recollects how she considered herself to be an outsider and observer looking in on the strange events taking place in the school yard. The grown-up protagonist is reflecting on a time before she felt bound by convention, a time when that place was still home and not the place she had to leave. It is only when some 'thing', some authority threatens to prevent access to a place that fear and anxiety are instilled. This power in turn fascinates as well as repels the subject, for it is when we are confronted with violence and that inevitable 'lack' of control we have over our own mortality that we are most afraid.

Kristeva examines how different religious cultures have imposed and defined boundaries upon the human consciousness through the physical control of bodily functions, ( for example, procreation). Winterson's novels consider those same biblical dictates from a personal perspective (for example, mastication). However, both psychoanalytic theorist and creative writer draw similar conclusions. Whereas the subject seeks to deny the previously mentioned abyss, the abject continues to insist upon one's certain relationship to death and corporeality:

Abjection involves the paradoxically necessary but impossible desire to transcend corporeality. <sup>(34)</sup>

Corporeality is traditionally transcribed as the opposite to the philosophical mind. It is the body as associated with a succession of negative terms within the realms of binary oppositions. The mind, as a 'reasoning' one, correlates with the conscious / subject who is active (socially/academically)

and masculine. The body, as a 'passionate' emotive place, corresponds with the non /conscious /object, which has no powers of reasoning and is marked out as passive, subsumed femininity: hence the ease with which patriarchy dis/members that inert figure. Whereas mind is the domain of the masculine intellectual in philosophy and psychology, the body is adjudged to be the object of appropriate biological and medical investigation. This can be taken to violent extremes, as demonstrated in the previous chapter's discussion of Henry, Portrait Of A Serial Killer.

The mind like the subject is constituted as 'male' and 'human', as an engine for the progression of the civilised world as opposed to the body which is encoded as female, animalistic, base and outside of this process, and subsequently becoming alien to it. The body as female and as an appropriate form from which students can learn as great minds in the pursuit of progress, is historically documented in a variety of forms - as art objects or as medical specimens or as the following example illustrates, a combination of the two. As Elisabeth Bronfen points out, wax anatomical models of women were used originally in order to spare the sensitive 'male' medical student the initial horror of the bloody operating theatre. (35) The bloody chamber of the literary world is transposed upon the medical; instead of evil Bluebeards we have legitimised behaviour in the name of progress. Aesthetically pleasing to the tastes of the day, the model was crafted, head tilted modestly back, the long wax neck often wearing a string of costume pearls as well as a long braid of hair to connote its most definite femininity. The student could insert his blade into an already cut and split body to reveal the interior organs (without fear of hitting a vein and spilling blood). He could also reveal, from within the manufactured womb, a wax foetus for the inspection of his peer group. The medical student inscribes his signature upon that which represents woman,

just as the serial killer forces his mark upon the un/suspecting victim, except here, the body is not 'real' or alive and his behaviour is legitimised by the authority of the medical establishment. At once, the wax anatomical figure represents a denial of the death drive and the fetishistic fantasy of an idealised feminine body; one that can be totally controlled by virtue of its unreality unlike the actual (female) body itself, as Kristeva states:

The corpse (or cadaver; cadere, to fall) is cesspool and death; ..... A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death - a flat encephalograph, for instance - I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. (36)

Abjection is thus not caused by the un/clean un/healthy body but by that aspect of the process which disrupts (masculine) identity and order. The 'improper' is not the dissected body but that which refuses or disregards rules and symbolic b/orders: '...the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life' (37).

In Europe, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century wax 'Venus's' were put on general display in museums proving to be a popular attraction with the public. The models themselves were reproductions of representations of the saints and martyrs of Christian tradition corresponding to the cultural fascination with religious stories and icons as I have begun to demonstrate within the stratagems of the then contemporary fairy tales. As Elisabeth Bronfen states:



...the fascination engendered when the wax cast depicts a feminine body has to do with the fact that the two enigmas of western culture, death and female sexuality, are here 'contained' in a way that exposes these two conditions to a sustained and indefinite view, but does so in such a way that the real threat of both, their disruptive and indeterminate quality, has been put under erasure. <sup>(38)</sup> [Abjected.]

From this perspective, abjection can be seen as the mind's refusal to accept the unpredictable materiality of its own embodied existence. For if the mind as the privileged possession of the male protagonist was to confront this unpredictability he would be 'castrated' in the psychoanalytical sense, immediately stripped of power and control over his environment. When the subject (man) cannot control the object (woman/fear) a gaping hole appears in conscious understanding and the subject is propelled into this abyss. He becomes like Irvine Welsh's Renton, as will be discussed in the next chapter: <sup>(34)</sup> impotent, passive, unable to move in the face of his own fears. He becomes akin to the wax venus, an inanimate object at the mercy of his surfacing unconscious psychosis. He now suffers a lack as in Freudian terms masochism is purported to be 'truly feminine.'<sup>(39)</sup>

The price for fulfilling forbidden, socially unacceptable desires is the same for Renton as it was for the little mermaid, the loss of one's voice, a mutilated tongue. This punishment is executed in both cases by a castrating figure of monstrous femininity: the sea witch rips out the mermaid's tongue, just as Renton's mother transforms from a nurturing care-giver into a domineering, threatening fairy tale witch herself. Such a transformation recalls the phantasm of being swallowed back up into the maternal body, the

'horrible pleasure' of intra-uterine existence. Woman as the abyss into which you might fall:

'...If ah move, ah'll swallow ma tongue. Nice bit ay tongue. That's what ah cannae wait for ma Ma giein us, just like in the old days. Tongue salad. Poison your children. Ye'll eat that tongue. That's a nice, tasty bit ay tongue thair son. YE'LL EAT THAT TONGUE.' <sup>(40)</sup>

## 2: Tongue Abjection: Voicing The Forbidden.

- 1 Warner, M., pg.369. 1995. The sea-witch's speech to the little mermaid in Hans C. Anderson taken from The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories of Hans C. Anderson, translated by Erik Haugaard, London. 1975.
- 2 Warner, M., pg.398. 1995.
- 3 Chambers twentieth Century Dictionary, pg.642. 1978.
- 4 Warner, M., pg.259-60. 1995.
- 5 Warner, M., pg.259-60. 1995. Lucius Apuleius; The transformation of Lucius, otherwise known as the golden ass. (translated by Robert Graves.)
- 6 Boose, Lynda E., 'The Father's House and The Daughter in it.' in Warner, pg.333.1995.
- 7 Warner, M., pg.238. Vladimir Propp, Morphology Of The Folktale, trans. L. Scott.
- 8 Warner, M., pg.348. 1995. The Maiden Without Hands , Brothers Grimm.
- 9 Warner, M., pg.349. 1995.
- 10 Rose, J., Sexuality in The Field Of Vision, 1988.
- 11 Showalter, E., The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1991.
- 12 Bronfen, E., The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents, 1998.
- 13 Warner, M., pg.349. 1995.
- 14 Kristeva, J., in Grosz, pg. 71. Sexual Subversions,1989.
- 15 Winterson, J., pg.36-38. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 16 Kristeva, J., in Grosz, pg.70. Sexual Subversions,1989.
- 17 Kristeva, J., in Grosz, pg.71. 1989.
- 18 Lacan, J., in Rose, pg.184-196. Sexuality In The Field Of Vision, 1988.
- 19 Grosz, E., pg.71. 1989.
- 20 Kristeva, J., pg.8. 'An Essay On Abjection.' Powers Of Horror, 1982.
- 21 Kristeva, J., pg.2. 1982.
- 22 Kristeva, J., pg.16. 1982.
- 23 Kristeva, J., pg.16. 1982.
- 24 Winterson, J., pg.34. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 25 Foucault, M., The History Of Sexuality: An Introduction, 1984.
- 26 Winterson, J., pg.38. The Passion, 1988.
- 27 Kristeva, J., pg. 214. Black Sun, 1989. The use of the term, 'strastotierptsy' relates to Russian Orthodox Catholicism, which stresses on yet another level Winterson's play on 'the passion' motif. In this instance it relates to the passion of the Russian peasants and soldiers who prefer to burn down their villages, making themselves homeless in the midst of a harsh, freezing winter, rather than allow Napoleon's army to capture and defeat them.
- 28 Winterson, J., pg.40-1. The Passion,1988.
- 29 Kristeva, J., pg.8. Powers Of Horror,1982.
- 30 Kristeva, J., pg. 17. 1982.
- 31 Cixous, H., pg.883. The Body And The Text, 1990.
- 32 Winterson, J., pg.41. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 33 Grosz, E., pg.71. Sexual Subversions,1989.
- 34 Bronfen, E., pg.99. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.

- 35 Kristeva, J., pg.3.1982.
- 36 Kriseva, J., pg. 3. 1982.
- 37 Bronfen, E., pg.99.1992.
- 38 Welsh, I., Trainspotting, 1993.
- 39 Freud, S., pg.312 in Wright, Feminism and Psychoanalysis, 1993.
- 40 Welsh, I., pg.195. Trainspotting,1993. It is also interesting to note the existence of the character Renfield in Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897). He, like his twentieth century incarnation finds himself impotent, impassive, unable and initially unwilling to free himself from his physical environment and psychical state. Stoker's Renfield is locked up in a Victorian lunatic asylum whereas Welsh's Renton is locked in the bedroom of his childhood home by his parents in an attempt to cure him of his drug addiction. Both characters are governed by forces external to them (Dracula / heroin), which pollute their respective bloodstream's inducing forms of madness/hysteria, which result in a physical and psychological dependency on the very thing that will/may eventually bring about their death. The bite of Stoker's vampire is alluded to in the Trainspotting text by the fangs of the spectral / hallucinogenically produced Dawn. The points of the teeth and the points of the needle visible on the body of the two characters act as death's signature re-affirming the inevitability of human mortality onto corporeality. This scarring on the skin also emphasises the ambivalence at play as the drug or the bite of the vampire serves to simultaneously poison and deplete the bloodstream whilst rejuvenating the psychical processes and physical look of well-being in an otherwise dying body.

## Castrating Form/s

### 3: BITE

#### Uncannily Castrating: Abjection continued.

Those deeply buried secrets, the lies we tell ourselves, that which ought to have stayed 'dead', repressed, denied, but did not: this is the 'uncanny', you knew it was there but pretended it wasn't and now it has resurfaced, manifested into being, into conscious perception - it has returned to haunt you and to master you. Uncanny because she is familiar: the dead baby crawls across the ceiling and she demands to be heard:

'Yefuckinkilledme litmefuckindie junkedupootyirfuckinheids watchinthefuckinwaws ya fuckindopeyjunkycunt ah'llfuckinrip-yefuckinopen n feedoanyirfuckinmiserablesickgreyjunkyflesh startinwiyirjunkycockcauseahdiedafuckinvirginahllnivirgitafuck-inridenivirgittaewearfuckinmakeupncoolclathesnivirgittaebanythin causeyoufuckinjunkycuntsnivircheckedus yisletusfuckindie fuckinsuffocatetaefuckindeath yiskenwhitthatfeelslikeyacunts-causeahvegoatafuckinsoulnahkinstillknowfuckinpainnyouse-cuntsyouseselfishfuckinjunkycuntswiryirfuckinskagtookitawayfiussoahmguanychewyourfuckindiseasedprickoafWANT AFUCKINBLOWJOBWANTAFUCKINBLOWJOBWANTA FAAAAAAAAAACKIN.'

It springs fae the ceiling doon oan top ay us. Ma fingers rip and tear at the soft, plasticine flesh and messy gunge but the ugly shrill voice is still screamin n mockin n ah jerk n jolt n feel like the bed's sprung vertical n ah'm fawn through the fuckin flair.....

Is this sssllllleeeeeeeepppppp.

Irvine Welsh, Trainspotting. (1)

Irvine Welsh's literary rendering of the uncanny as an experience or delusional fantasy of extreme castration anxiety is quite explicit as this particular extract makes clear. The text reveals the source of the uncanny in three places at once: in the madness of Renton, the ghostly apparition of the dead child Dawn, and in the semiotic space they inhabit, connoting a return to a maternal realm outside of symbolic ordering which produces a castrating effect. Put simply: he feels uncanny, she is uncanny and they are in an uncanny place which is frightening yet familiar, sensations described by Freud in his 'Das Unheimliche' in the following manner:

...male patients declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This Unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time and in the beginning. (2)

The experience of the uncanny in the Trainspotting extract connects the motif of castration with the motif of seeing the inanimate become animate: the dead come 'alive'. With her 'vampire teeth'<sup>(3)</sup> and powerful, vengeful speech the dead baby embodies both the fear and the threat of death and femininity through her ironically, perverse pre-oedipal animate corpse. Here, on one level, the infant girl produces an uncanny effect where instead of serving as a mirror image of masculine sovereignty and reflecting what the male gaze intends, that is his sense of 'wholeness', she reflects the desire of an/other: woman and the life and identity which she feels Renton has stolen from her.

This psychoanalytical interpretation is based essentially on the Freudian model as articulated in his essay, 'The Uncanny' (also known as and referred to as 'Das Unheimliche' 1919) and the subsequent feminist examinations of this piece. Helene Cixous<sup>(4)</sup> for example, focuses upon what Freud reduces to a footnote in his reading of Hoffman's, The Sandman, notably, Olympia the doll (this particular observation is discussed in great length in the next section, expanded upon and applied to cultural discourse more generally in the chapter 'Girlz In The Hood'). Constructed by two fathers; Spalanzani the mechanic and Giuseppe Coppola, the optician Olympia is literally born of man; her wooden body becoming 'alive' and acting as a contingent agency for the uncanny. Cixous' critical observations are as pertinent to Welsh's protagonist as they are to her analysis of Freud, as Renton's initial impression of the dead child reminds him of 'a discarded wee doll at the bottom ay some kids wardrobe'<sup>(5)</sup>

Whereas Freud replaces or displaces the unheimliche quality of the living doll in favour of the figure of the Sand-Man (who steals the eyeballs from the heads of naughty children who will not go to sleep) she returns from her Freudian repression to haunt Welsh's text. The Sand-Man tore out her eyes, stripped her of life and she wants revenge for her loss:

....ah'llfuckinripyefuckinopen n feedonyir.....causeah  
diedafuckinvirgin....nivirgittaewearfuckinmakeup....nivirgittaebe  
anythin [because he killed her]

Renton's sense of guilt and implication in the death of the baby re-surface during his paranoiac state while withdrawing from the drug, heroin. The hallucinations he experiences as a consequence raise to the fore previously repressed emotions. He experiences acute fear as in both instances the

presence of the doll and 'plasticine flesh'<sup>(6)</sup> baby transgresses the boundary between the living and the dead, which in turn threatens his perception of and grip on reality. 'She' signifies 'he':

exposing a gap in the unity of reality where death enters into the picture as what cannot be directly represented, as what life is not - its repressed Other, the latent condition of our being: becoming inanimate, *unheimlich*. <sup>(7)</sup>

The text explicitly reveals a moment of abjection. As Kristeva states, 'It is death infecting life.' <sup>(8)</sup> Kristeva elaborates upon Freud's notion of the uncanny, evolving it into the terror of indistinguishable boundaries between the self and other as experienced by the bedridden Renton confronted by his castrated and castrating counterpart, baby Dawn. She is 'castrated' in the literal Freudian sense in that from a phallogocentric biological point of view she 'lacks' a penis. In Freud's famous and much discussed essay, 'Some Psychological Consequences of The Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' (1925) he defines this lack as a source of jealousy for the little girl:

They notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis. <sup>(9)</sup>

Freud's explicit glorification of the masculine genital organs exemplifies his own subjective, narcissistic self-validation via the privileging of the phallus over the female genitalia, as well as underpinning his theory of the castration complex. Through a concise summary of this occurrence during the pre-  
oedipal phase one can determine the castrating effect the dead baby has on



Renton as a figure of monstrous femininity. Freud's theory maintains that in order to achieve, in the future, 'normal' ( as in heterosexual) sexual maturity, prompted by the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, all subjects regardless of gender must accept the 'fact' of castration. <sup>(10)</sup> The symbolic acceptance of castration involves the renunciation of the mother (through the discovery of her biological 'lack' of the penis and the 'threat' she poses to masculine potency) in favour of the father and the patriarchal law and order he represents.

Initially, as stated in 'The Dissolution Of The Oedipus Complex' (1924), Freud works from the premise that all infants assume that all adults possess a penis:

A female child, however, does not understand her lack of a penis as being a sex character... She seems not to extend this inference from herself to other, adult females, but, entirely on the lines of the phallic phase, to regard them as possessing large and complete - that is to say, male - genitals. The essential difference thus comes about that the girl accepts castration as an accomplished fact, whereas the boy fears the possibility of its occurrence. <sup>(11)</sup>

The girl moves on to experience her mother as a castrating figure in so far as identification with the maternal object correlates with the sexual act in the primal scene during which the daughter fears she too, like the mother, will devour the father's penis during sexual intercourse. A fear also prevalent in the boy's own experience of castration anxiety as the extract from, Trainspotting shows:

'...soahmguannychewyourfuckindiseasedprickoaf..' <sup>(12)</sup>

In Freudian theory when the boy first notices the girl's biological difference it does not become important to him until some fear or threat of castration has taken hold. As the paper 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' demonstrates, for Freud the male's reaction to the reality of this danger will

permanently determine the boy's relations to women: horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her. (13)

Renton obviously experiences the former (the horror) during his hallucinatory period imbued with his own production of guilt. What was in the original pre-oedipal phase his own father's threat of punishment, as Elisabeth Bronfen describes, the castrating 'no' to the child's incestuous wish for the mother, (14) has metamorphosed into Renton's own masochistic desire for punishment as a bearer of the phallic primacy gone astray. He has exchanged the threat of the father with the threat of collapse of his own super-ego (of which baby Dawn is a product) and embraced through his own drug induced physical impotency the resulting paranoid neurotic state.

Renton is propelled into abjection's abyss where the stability of the ego is confronted with its own essentially illusionary basis, indicating that the uncanniness of castration does not necessarily depend on woman's difference but could in fact precede this psychoanalytic theoretical marker. Kaja Silverman suggests that the Freudian defined 'horror' of the boy seeing the female genitals for the first time could actually originate from some moment of castration previous to the awareness or fear of the loss of an organ:

The uncanniness of woman can be explained as the effect of

projection on to the female body from a source within, from the boy's own psychological history. (15)

The Trainspotting sequence acts as an example of Silverman's theory as the image of the dead baby girl re-surfaces as a memory and a monster through to Renton's conscious awareness from the recesses of his own psychological make-up. She is no longer exterior to him, as she once was - the corpse in a cot. She exists now like the abject, inside and out, dead and alive, a part of him yet autonomous, and threatening to devour what is left of Renton's tenuous notion of 'self' and reality. Dawn is not the 'clean and proper' body of oedipalization (16) because her own, short, physical life never reached that stage of development as a consequence of her death through physical neglect.

As a manifestation of the unheimlich, Dawn as a representation of the female body could be construed as uncanny because she exposes the Freudian termed mutilation (the vagina) from which the man averts his gaze so as not to be reminded of the terror of castration. Dawn's 'lack' of the biological penis could be understood as her lack of control over her body as a baby and the subsequent events in her life. On a further level Dawn's gaze, as representative of the female gaze, could produce an uncanny effect, as it exposes the male gaze ( of Renton) which in turn is focused on seeing what is not there. Freud privileges the male gaze making it the 'norm that male desire should find its most satisfying focus on a woman whose gaze is unilluminating, powerless, merely reflective.' (17) In this instance it is Dawn who has the privilege as her powerful and threatening eye literally determines to castrate Renton's inanimate, powerless body. Her absolute sovereignty reduces him to mere reflection, the silenced other.

The unheimlich here could also be located in Renton's own desire to be dead or to restore the loss of life he feels responsible for. Or, as Dianne Chisholm notes, citing Jane Marie Todd <sup>(18)</sup>, it could be a desire to be female (or to be re-inscribed into the maternal realm) 'resurfacing as a fear of death' <sup>(19)</sup> which produces an, 'uncannily castrating' effect. Perhaps, though, when one considers that unheimlich also infers heimlich: therefore retaining a double semantic capacity to also mean the opposite of the unknown, unfamiliar, 'familiar' aspect of the uncanny, his own lost, pre-oedipal, feminine side marking his return to a semiotic realm ...his mother.

Any consideration of the significance of psychoanalytic theory in textual study must also take into account theories concerned with the cultural construction of gender. The oedipal phase is not just simply a matter of seeing but a way of seeing that ultimately conforms to patriarchal dictates. As Bronfen notes, the castration complex serves to transmit culture, establishing through the eventual formation of the superego (at the dissolution of the oedipal stage) the paternal codes which determine and prohibit 'un/acceptable' behaviour. The maternal body, as castrated other, serves as a 'duplicat pivotal site' <sup>(20)</sup>, becoming a privileged sign for masculine prerogative and masculine fear; for what the masculine subject is not (feminine, ergo 'castrated') and for what it may become if it does not conform to the law of the father (castrated, if not careful).

Elisabeth Bronfen observes that for the infant in a strange world 'seeing' means 'learning' how to see and to comprehend the environment according to the dominant systems of meaning and value. The distinctions between the sexes are not grounded in biological determinism in so far as nature cannot determine one's role in society: the mythology involved in the cultural construction of a people imbues that.

Through a focus on the interwoven connection between a fear of castration and a fear of death, regardless of the subject's gender, Bronfen rejects the Freudian notions rooted in biological destinies that were founded upon anatomical differences, in preference for a concept of castration relating specifically to the fact of human mortality. Castration always implies a loss, whether that be paternal prohibition (taboo) in favour of taking up a place in the symbolic order or the experience of loss when a loved one dies:

from birth onwards, existence is coterminous with the actual threat of dying. Hence, the subject is also castrated in the real sense that growing means degeneration. (21)

The fear of death is a universal anxiety permeating all human existence. Psychoanalysis locates death in various aspects of the psyche: in the realms of corporeality when the body becomes a corpse, through the articulations of the unconscious processes, and at the heart of guilt - the death drive where the subject relates to cultural law. The universality of this anxiety for all is expressed through Bronfen's relocation of the bodily site signifying lack away from the genital region to the mark or scar of the navel; a notion which is of greater relevance to the discussion of heroinism in contemporary literature and culture than the original Freudian implications of the castration complex. An initial connection between psychoanalysis and literature can be understood through the juxtapositioning of Bronfen's theoretical insight alongside a brief extract from Jeanette Winterson's, Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit. The umbilical semantic cord that links them concerns Kristeva's semiotic chora; the 'knot' or place within the psyche that attempts to make sense of the world. Bronfen, the theorist, states that:

Were the navel rather than the genitals to become the anatomical sign of lack (in the sense of losing the primordial mother at birth and the sense that each living body is inscribed with mortality), this would allow for the theoretical primacy of a non-gendered moment of loss: it would represent death's ubiquitous castrating threat to the subject, over and above the lack of an organ and any alienation in language. Notions of domination and inferiority based on gender difference can then be shown to be secondary to a more global and nonindividuated disempowerment before death. (22)

In Winterson's text this is transformed into a narrative poetics:

Of course that is not the whole story, but that is the way with stories; we make of them what we will. It's a way of explaining the universe while leaving the universe unexplained..... The best you can do is admire the cat's cradle and maybe knot it up a bit more.

History should be a hammock for swinging and a game for playing..... Claw it, chew it, rearrange it and at bedtime it's still a ball full of knots.

.....The dead don't shout. There is a certain seductiveness about what is dead..... You can auction it, museum it, collect it. ....we have to know what we are doing, pretending an order that doesn't exist, to make a security that cannot exist.

There is an order and a balance to be found in stories.

History is St George.

....Here is some advice. If you want to keep your own teeth, make your own sandwiches... (23)

From a poststructuralist point of view the adjacency of these two texts highlights the theoretical proposition that the 'irrepressible literariness of psychoanalysis' cannot help but be haunted by literature in turn 'being the uncanny double of theory and discourse.' (24) Winterson focuses on the instability of the symbolic function, that Lacanian notion of the 'law of the

father' which pretends 'an order that doesn't exist, to make a security that cannot exist.'<sup>(25)</sup> 'His' story is 'St. George' - a myth, a legend, a glorification and a privileging of masculinity through the construction of phallogocentric discourse. Winterson's emphasis on the 'order' and 'balance' which she suggests can be found in stories foregrounds the appeal of mythology as a staple production of structural repetition, those frameworks of the 'familiar' (in the 'uncanny' sense <sup>(26)</sup>) which provide a coherence to the reader and a basis for the writer determined to twist and subvert conventional forms.

Through a transformation of literary forms, fiction, akin to its post-structuralist, psychoanalytic counterpart, questions notions of normative subject development, exceeding the previously defined boundaries of sexual identity and understanding. This is expressed in the experiences of Winterson's literary protagonists; from the cross-dressing escapades of Villanelle, in The Passion, and Jordan, in Sexing The Cherry, to the search for a 'true' to oneself, sexual orientation in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit. The formation of identity is also prevalent in the extract from Bronfen's work, where she shifts the concept of castration away from a biologically determined, gender differentiated moment to an 'all' encompassing, universal fear of loss or death. To reiterate both Bronfen and Winterson, that fear exposes our total 'disempowerment before death', the certainty of 'lack' of life. Castration anxiety is the knowledge of the inevitable, inexorable time when we will lose all control and power over our bodies and voices, because, of course, 'the dead don't shout', leaving the memory of the one that died entirely at the mercy of others. Such a memory can be 'auctioned', sold off and re-written by future peoples, 'collected', put on display, dissected, 'museumed' and eventually forgotten. The only relief for the subject from the

inevitable process of mortality lies, as Winterson suggests, in the power of discourse, where one can define identity, and ideas of the self in one's own terms. Writing becomes a political act for the author, as Winterson states in the extract quoted above:

'If you want to keep your own teeth, make your own sandwiches.'

From a feminist perspective these political concerns centre upon defining a structure of femaleness that does not simply oppose patriarchy's contrived images of femininity but which creates aspects of womanhood inspite of phallogentrism. There is a dangerous paradox here: on one level the woman author could be construed as pushing back the limits of writing as a masculine territory; however, from a contrary perspective, she could still find herself as a (woman) writer defined through the terms of the sexual, binary opposition she originally opposed, as Marina Warner notes:

It is uncomfortable to list[en] to the iambic distych, to know you are identifying yourself as an outsider by what you say, that all the disguises in the wardrobe will never fix identity, all the voices in the repertory will not tell the complete story. (27)

Virginia Woolf's famous condemnation of the Angel in the House, as defined by Coventry Patmore, makes clear the difficulties facing the woman writer who can only inscribe her notion of femininity through a masculine constructed language:

There were two adventures of my professional life. The first -



killing the Angel in the House - I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. (28)

If Woolf's ambition was the killing of the rose/lily dichotomy, then Winterson's can be interpreted as being an attempt to 'kill off' the 'law of the father' in the psychoanalytic as well as the semantic sense. As the Dog Woman from Sexing The Cherry declares:

...my father tried to steal me and sell me.....  
They had a barrel ready to put me in, but....I  
burst the bonds...and came flying out at my  
father's throat.  
This was my first murder. (29)

'My father tried to steal me...' could serve as an analogy for the attempt by patriarchal discourse to control and contain female sexuality and identity within the phallogentric structure of language. The evident failure of structuralist techniques to determine femininity could lie in the imposition of a single invariant (masculine) unconscious, that has denied the historical and material shift and process of time.

Winterson's Dog woman bursts the bonds of conventional female representation, as do many of her characters. Yet, rather than attempting to write the female body/experience onto one single character, in one particular text, Winterson splits notions of femininity and relocates her in an uncanny sense through many different protagonists regardless of sex, as she does with Henri in The Passion and Jordan in Sexing The Cherry:

The most prosaic of us betray a belief in the inward life every time we talk about 'my body' rather than 'I'. We feel it as

absolutely part but not at all part of who we are. Language always betrays us, tells the truth when we want to lie, and dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise. (30)

In effect Winterson is 'telling the truth' about female experience in a post-structuralist sense, describing a polycyclic world where there are no longer any 'truthful' absolutes, in an atmosphere of *unheimliche* / familiarity blurring the distinction between fantasy and reality. She, in this instance, 'he', Jordan, describes life in terms comparable to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic chora:

- an imaginative impulse cutting through the dictates of daily time, and leaving us free to ignore the boundaries of here and now and pass like lightning along the coil of pure time, that is, the circle of the universe and whatever it does or does not contain. (31)

In another respect Winterson echoes the work of Monique Wittig (32), creating what could be defined as a form of lesbian tautology where the narrative movement of the text is spherical: Les Guerilleres (Wittig, 1969) and Sexing The Cherry (1989) both begin with the ending.

Also of comparative significance here is Kristeva's notion of female subjectivity as expressed in Women's Time (1979). Kristeva links female subjectivity both to cyclical time (involving repetition) and to monumental time [eternity]. Linear time is historically specific, relating to language and masculine cultural dominance. Women's time relates in Kristeva to the multiplicity of female perspectives on identity and woman's role within society. She differs from Wittig in that she stresses the necessity for an acceptance of sexual difference from a psychoanalytical point of view. Kristeva cites the challenge for women as a reconciliation of maternal

time (the desire to have children) with the linear political time.\* Winterson's own literary philosophy appears to combine both the psychoanalytic and the objection to a cultural hierarchy based on gender difference:

The world is flat and round , is it not? We have dreams of moving back and forward in time, though to use the words back and forward is to make a nonsense of the dream, for it implies that time is linear, and if that were so there could be no movement, only a forward progression. But we do not move through time, time moves through us. (33)

In The Lesbian Body (1973) Wittig marks the French 'Je' with a bar, creating a split - J/e which she regards as a sign of excess, (34) a plethora of movement to the point where it can lesbianize love, gods, man and woman. One could interpret this as the psychoanalytic 'jouissance', (35) nevertheless, Wittig's initial intention is to challenge psychoanalysis' heterosexual privileging, as determined by the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, which posits heterosexuality as the necessary course for the subject toward inclusion within the symbolic order. The dissection of the 'I' (J/e) also represents the implicit schizophrenic conundrum presented by a woman / writer privileging 'herself' as 'the' subject, the hero(ine) of a literary discourse historically bent on her exclusion. Through writing the woman catapults herself into the phallic, active sphere, recognising the power that the hero \*

See Kristeva in Moi, The Kristeva Reader pg.187-213.

can have and the sham that he can sometimes be. Winterson focuses upon the absurdity of a cultural system which gives power wholly to one sex for patriarchy's sake, a consequence of symbolic ordering that classical psychoanalytical theory tends to ignore:

If you're a hero you can be an idiot, behave badly, ruin your personal life, have any number of mistresses and talk about yourself all the time, and nobody minds. Heroes are immune...  
Mostly they enjoy the company of other men, although attractive women are part of their reward.

Sexing The Cherry (36)

The evolution of psychoanalytical discourse throughout the twentieth century has run parallel to, and has intertwined with the strategic role that literary developments have played and continue to play in academic and cultural articulation. For instance, if one considers Freudian theory from a historical perspective, in relation to the early influence of modernism upon western culture - where gender has a physical, material impact on object-choice and on subsequent sexual alternatives - we can also note the importance of this in the lives and works of writers such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence. Alternatively, if Lacanian concepts are considered in an initially structural sense - where the emphasis is shifted from corporeality to language, positing gender as illustrative of symbolic functions in the imaginary (as I attempted to demonstrate through the exploration of abjection in Irvine Welsh's text), then it becomes clear that the post-Freudian and Lacanian revisionary theories of psychoanalysis are equivalent to a post-modern, post-structural updating: a process necessary in any critical consideration of the ability of literary discourse to illuminate and elaborate upon the human condition and the philosophical propositions, such as the notion of an interpolated subject, which attempts to come to terms with existence. I hasten to add that I am not suggesting that Lacan is a structuralist theorist; structuralism aims to negate the importance of the subject through the privileging of linguistic structure over subjective agency. Lacan, however, recognises that language is a structure based on a formal

system of differences, and as such does not suppose a subject. Lacanian psychoanalysis is concerned with placing the subject within a language which is essentially 'alien' to it. As Julia Kristeva states: 'Crude grammatology abdicates the subject...uninterested in symbolic and social structures, it has nothing to say in the face of their destruction or renewal.' (La Revolution du Language Poetique 1974) in Rose. <sup>(37)</sup> See also Darian Leader for an informative introduction to Lacan. <sup>(38)</sup>

Where Freud originally overlooks the significance of the doll figure in his interpretation of The Sandman one could read a denial or repression of the feminine side or maternal being, or of those qualities associated with womanliness. Irvine Welsh, on the other hand, primarily acknowledges the doll image as something exterior to his character, Renton, as 'she' is dead, inanimate, a figure formed by and contained within 'Das Unheimliche'. Yet the style of his piece suggests a recognition of the horror and the fascination of abjection and its dwelling place within processes of the human unconscious.

Winterson, however, re-inscribes the doll as analogous to the formation of the individual human psyche because it is part of our pre- and un-conscious being/s, part of the many fragile layers to the self. In doing so, she shifts the emphasis away from fear and horror (of the self and other) and the psychosis which can result from such extreme anxiety (as demonstrated by the character Renton) to an acceptance of the subject as a schizogenous being, as detailed through the representation of Jordan and his adoptive mother the Dog-Woman in her novel Sexing The Cherry. A perspective which is at play simultaneously within the analyses of the subsequent closing chapter of this section and as a theoretical aperture signifying how broad the

scope is for further interpretations of femininity and the widening possibilities for cultural representations of both the female and masculine form. As Winterson's narrator / navigator Jordan tells us himself:

The inward life tells us that we are multiple not single, and that our one existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls, but unlike the dolls never coming to an end..... (39)

### 3: Bite Uncannily Castrating: Abjection Continued.

- 1 Welsh, I., pg.196. Trainspotting, 1993.
- 2 Freud, S., pg. 398. 'Das Unheimliche', Applied Psychoanalysis, (1919) SE 17
- 3 Welsh, I., pg.196. Trainspotting, 1993. This position contrasts greatly with the experience of the female character, Clarice Starling, in Thomas Harris's novel The Silence Of The Lambs, as is demonstrated in the second major section of this thesis, in both the piece entitled 'Girlz In The Hood' and the exploration of the more mature heroine in 'Frontier Gals'.
- 4 Cixous, H., as cited in Wright, pg.439. 'Fiction and its phantoms: a reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche,' pg.525-48, New Literary History, 1976.
- 5 Welsh, I., pg.52. Trainspotting, 1993.
- 6 Welsh, I., pg.196. Trainspotting, 1993.
- 7 Cixous, H., pg.439. in Wright, 1993.
- 8 Kristeva, J., pg.3. Powers Of Horror, 1982.
- 9 Freud, S., pg.673. The Freud Reader, ed. P. Gay. 1995. SE 19
- 10 Freud, S., pg.670-678. 'Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes.' (1925) in Gay, 1995. SE 19
- 11 Freud, S., pg. 665. Gay, 1995. 'The Dissolution Of The Oedipus Complex,' SE 19
- 12 Welsh, I., pg.196. Trainspotting, 1993.
- 13 Freud, S., in Gay, pg. 675. 1995. SE 19
- 14 Bronfen, E., 'Castration Complex,' pg.41-42 in Wright, 1993.
- 15 Silverman, K., pg.17-18. The Acoustic Mirror 1988.
- 16 Kristeva, J., pg.3. 'The Improper/Unclean,' Powers Of Horror, 1982.
- 17 Chisholm, D., pg.438. in Wright. 1993.
- 18 Chisholm, D., pg.437. in Wright. Todd, 'The veiled woman in Freud's Das Unheimliche,' Signs, 2/3 pg.519-28. (1986) 1993
- 19 Chisholm, D., pg.436-440. in Wright. 1993. . The descriptions of the uncanny here are largely derivative of the explanations and perspectives offered by Dianne Chisholm in Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary.
- 20 Bronfen, E., pg. 44. in Wright. 1993.
- 21 Bronfen, E., pg. 45. in Wright. 1993.
- 22 Bronfen, E., pg. 46. in Wright. 1993. 'The lady vanishes: Sophie Freud and Beyond the Pleasure Principle,' South Atlantic Quarterly, 88 pg.961-91. 1989.
- 23 Winterson, J., pg. 91-96. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 24 Chisholm, D., pg. 437 in Wright. 1993.
- 25 Winterson, J., pg.91-93. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 26 Bronfen, E., pg. 113. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 27 Warner, M., pg. 197. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 28 Woolf, V., pg. 395 in Bronfen. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 29 Winterson, J., pg.107. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 30 Winterson, J., pg. 90. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 31 Winterson, J., pg. 89-90. 1989.
- 32 Wittig, M., Les Guerilleres (1969) The Lesbian Body (1973)
- 33 Winterson, J., pg. 90. 1989.

- 34 Still, J., pg. 232. in Wright.1993.
- 35 Bronfen, E., pg.98. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 36 Winterson, J., pg.117-18. Sexing The Cherry,1989.
- 37 Rose, J., pg. 143. Sexuality In The Field Of Vision,1988.
- 38 Leader, D., Groves, J., Lacan For Beginners, 1995.
- 39 Winterson, J., pg. 90. 1989.



## Castrating Form/s

### 4: Doppelganger: Exploring Other Selves

My account will be hard to follow: because it says something new but still has eggs shells from the old view sticking to it.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1)

Re-vision can be janus faced as it equates with both recognition and repetition in order to give birth to a new form of being or mode of understanding. This final chapter of section one will show how the re-birth and renewal of the literary heroine manifests itself through a creative manipulation of traditional philosophical, phallogocentric thinking: how the contemporary writer uses the 'egg shells' from the past to her perverse advantage.

Primarily, the revisionary lens must be like the fly's eye if it is to glimpse, to communicate the diverse possibilities open to writers and artists for transforming the image of the heroine into a culturally pervasive myriad of re-presentations. This thesis has charted and will continue to explore how that reconsideration of the female image, within the Western hemisphere, has already yielded many moments where one can say a model of revisionary heroinism occurs in both popular forms of art and film as well as within canonically cited texts.

In order to emphasise and enhance the potential for exploring gendered and sexual cultural diversity within representational form the final chapter of this section will closely follow on from the closure of the preceding one: examining in close detail the relationship between the woman writer and the heroine she creates juxtaposed alongside the manifestation of the

doppelganger within the text. In summary, this section has prepared the historical and academic basis for the detailed analysis of contemporary heroinism in the following areas of investigation.

However, it must also be remembered that a significant theme of Jeanette Winterson's work concerns the 'lack' of the matter of gender and sexuality being much more concerned with the 'knot' which ties together the signifying subject with the lost but inextricable real. Winterson's characters demonstrate how this is not strictly indissoluble ( it is possible to cite Jeanette's relationship with her mother in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit <sup>(2)</sup> by way of example) emphasising the shift away from the traditional psychoanalytical links to the anatomical differences between the sexes to a tie that is historically traceable and maternally connoted through the mark of the navel, as was explored in the previous chapter, 'Bite' <sup>(3)</sup>. One may recall Winterson's use of the knot in her philosophical meanderings concerning history and humanity's relationship to time in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit: 'History should be a hammock for swinging and a game for playing, the way cats play. Claw it, chew it, rearrange it and at bedtime it's still a ball of string full of knots.' <sup>(4)</sup> A view reiterated at a later moment with the additional comment, '...the best you can do is admire it, and maybe knot it up a bit more.'<sup>(5)</sup> Finally consider the bond to the mother signalled by the fantasy fairy/folk tale episode where the wizard metamorphosed into a mouse ties invisible string around the young Winnet's button. The button and string in this instance could be interpreted as the umbilical cord and navel. <sup>(6)</sup> A full analysis of the significance of the birth mark / scar / stigmata and how it serves to define the heroine's jouissance within Winterson's work and alternative examples from Western culture (popular and otherwise) will be carried out in the next section.

That particular area of study also necessitates an exploration of the corporeal signs which distinguish the heroine's difference from the rest of the society around her. Villanelle's webbed toes and copious amount of red hair in The Passion, and Dog-Woman's gargantuan physical size in Sexing The Cherry visibly manifest the psychoanalytical 'excess' ascribed to the heroine as well as signalling their links with the sibyls and sirens of ancient mythologies and hagiographies. (7) I will analyse how the 'monstrous' when attached to the feminine in Winterson's novels expresses a deviation from the norm (phallogentric logic) initiating both a dissipation, and on occasion as we find with the character, Villanelle a dissimulation of the paternal mark.

Through a return to the motif of castration this final chapter of the first section will reiterate how the traditionally assigned arbitrary nature of the figural double can act as both a literary motif and as a psychoanalytical agent for castration and death, or conversely, as an affirmation of survival within the conventional framework of Western patriarchal discourse.

The historical background used to develop this work will continue to emphasise the lateral approach the postmodern writer brings to the construction of literary characters. Through a consideration of Jeanette Winterson's appropriation of the uncanny we can discern how the duality of the doppelganger signifies the heterogeneity of Lacan's (8) splitting subject which according to classical psychoanalysis the masculine subject is said to fear. Winterson's characters vary in their responses to this ambivalent figure, however, for the most part fear is usurped by an overwhelming sense of curiosity, as is demonstrated when Jordan meets a version of himself from a future time in Sexing The Cherry:

The fog came towards me and the sky that had been clear was covered up. ...I began to walk with my hands stretched out in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of my own face opposite me. (9)

A significant part of this section concerns three definitive elements which participate in the construction of what a re-visionary, contemporary concept of heroinism might be. They are: authorial signature, duplicity within the text (signified in this instance by the appearance of the figure of the doppelganger) and the form of cultural representation which produces the end result: the heroine. These three elements are implicitly linked within narrative structure, and inextricably tied to the cultural construction of modern day images of femininity. For the first part, authorial signature, it must be noted that with regard to alternative or radical representations of femininity, the analysis of source material to date within this study has been more concerned with deconstructive strategies than with the gender of the author. This was demonstrated in the previous chapters through the critical examination of the work of a male writer: Irvine Welsh.

The emphasis of this particular chapter is on Jeanette Winterson's appropriation of masculine and feminine characteristics within her work. Once again, this involves an investigation into what informative, relevant interpretations can be deduced from the application of psychoanalytical formula to literary models of heroinism. Any such study has to take into account the critical contradictions implicated by the Lacanian assumptions that woman is not placed within discourse through her own means, (which paradoxically are said not to exist) creating her radical not-allness, her non-positing within the text. Does this then suggest that woman as writer creates

an ethereal doubling as far as representation is concerned because semantically speaking she may be forced to repeat laws of the father? From this perspective the equation of the female / author within masculine discourse (writing) appears locked, becoming intrinsic to phallogentric logic. This in turn creates a heroine who is a consequence of patriarchy; one who has long been interpreted within culture as a necessary by-product of societal structure, highlighting by virtue of its otherness, the absolute privileging of man made forms of discourse. (10) This binary dialectical is contrived in order to sustain the position of woman as a commodity controlled by Western patriarchal society.

Juliet Mitchell in her psychoanalytical consideration of the woman writer (Women: the Longest Revolution (11)) has famously described how the act of feminine creation can be understood as a hysterical one. This hysteria is essentially ambiguous as it oscillates between a rejection and acceptance of the mythical female construct Western culture continues to portray. From one perspective it demonstrates to woman the transgressive, subversive potential of playing the game of language and cultural acceptance by donning the disguise that mythology offers her. Mitchell rejects the concept of an authentic female voice preferring instead to consider that the woman author uses the 'hysteric's voice':

....which is the woman's masculine language ...talking about feminine experience. It's both simultaneously the woman novelist's refusal of the woman's world - after all she is a novelist - and her construction from within a masculine world of that woman's world. (12)

It is possible to discern this duality within the pages of The Passion where the reader shares in the knowledge of Villanelle's bi-sexuality. The (hetero)sexual

act, as 'performed' by Villanelle on various occasions, is proven to have more in common with economics and political negotiation than it has to do with notions of love, romance and conventional expectations of sex roles. This is demonstrated, by way of example, through her relationship with the fat meat man who becomes her husband having previously been one of her 'clients', and a regular customer of the casino in which she worked. Villanelle's understanding of herself is protected and veiled by experimentation with gendered identity, in effect she disguises and shields her supposedly vulnerable feminine persona (female genitalia) beneath codpiece and false moustache whilst simultaneously manipulating the scopophilic, fetishistic fantasies of those around her for personal, financial gain until she (chooses?) to take a gamble with her body and heart when she meets (while dressed as a boy) a mysterious, beautiful but married woman. The paradox is inscribed through Winterson's primary act of writing. She participates in a discourse which refuses her a place within its symbolic system, one which traditionally denies her sex an existence beyond the figural representations of the stereotype. However, even after access has been denied she actively writes upon and over this structure manipulating the rules of the game to the heroine Villanelle's benefit:

At the Casino, well after midnight, a soldier approached me and suggested an unusual wager. If I could beat him at billiards he would make me a present of his purse.  
.....And if I lost? I was to make him a present of my purse. There was no mistaking his meaning.  
    We played ....  
    I lost.  
We went to his room and he was a man who liked his women face

down, arms outstretched like the crucified Christ. He was able and easy and soon fell asleep. He was also about my height. I left him his shirt and boots and took the rest. (13)

Villanelle demonstrates that she can be both feminine in the terms of society's expectations of a woman of her 'type' and how she can also refuse to be made a victim of that category. In doing so she invokes the arbitrariness of the Unheimliche double: as her momentary masochistic submission signifies her apparent castration through the duplicit motif of the crucified Christ equating with sacrifice and femininity. This imagery then collapses under the weight of its own (and her) repetitious heterogeneity as signified by her already hidden (from the other players within the novel) and revealed (to the privileged reader) divided subjectivity. This in turn indicates in the final instance her actual power and control over the situation epitomised by the evident re-assertion of self. As Villanelle herself suggests: 'You play, you win, you play, you lose. You play.'<sup>(14)</sup>

Considering the significance of Mitchell's proposition raises the question is the heroine always, quintessentially a masculine product in spite of the gender of the author? What can the woman/ writer hope to do with this infinite otherness which culminates in the radical 'not-allness' of the constitution of female identity within dominant modes of discourse? Is it plausible to suggest that femininity is doubly other, creating a paradox - she *becomes* the figure of the double while at the same time assuring us of her alterity to it.

The heroine can be juxtaposed with the doppelganger, in the phenomenal sense. Both incarnations belong in the realm of fantasy, because they are not (following psychoanalytic, phallogocentric logic) meant to exist -

yet she does so in the textual sense as one of the principal products of narrative discourse. The ghost, the double and the demon are aligned alongside the figure of a woman within Freudian analogy as harbingers of death, as bearers of an implicit threat to individual ego stability and universal order (an area of study closely examined throughout the first section of this thesis- see in particular Chapter One: Penetrate/Dismember). Such imagery said to originate from an/other plane may be described as mythological in essence yet as Barthes demonstrated through its very repetitious re-presentation it can become imbued with an echo of authenticity capable of instilling a truth value to a fictitious image within the everyday practices of the actual world:

By reducing any quality to quantity, myth economizes intelligence: it understands reality more cheaply. (15)

...[mythology] cannot rest until it has obscured the ceaseless making of the world, fixated this world into an object that can forever be possessed, catalogued its riches, embalmed it, and injected into reality some purifying essence which will stop its transformation, its flight towards other forms of existence. (16)

Therefore one might suggest that the woman writer's challenge to re-present femininity from a female perspective becomes virtually impossible - a search for the un/knowable. Alternatively, following Cixous' comments upon Freud's proposition (17), that if the 'un' of 'unheimliche' acts as the mark or the signifier of the repression in Freudian analysis then the prefix 'un' of the unknown could also signal the repressive phallogocentric dictates which have so firmly established stereotypes concerned with femininity. Through



revealing and decoding the practices of an autocratic system it becomes possible to demonstrate the unstable nature of such forms of power, a methodology which has been closely examined throughout this thesis. The woman writer confronts the figure of the double from the place of the uncanny because the female like the doppelganger is already constituted within phallogentric logic as uncanny, as other, as frightening because she and the apparition are familiar and from one perspective already one and the same.

The heroine's recognition of the other differs from the oedipal hero's in that she is born of the hemisphere that the traditional hero wishes to conquer in order to dispel his fear of it. The hero's desire to determine and define the other is derived from the threat to ego stability and wholeness that the figure of the double poses, as was explored in great detail throughout the introduction to this work. The revisioned heroine has no desire to define or defeat the apparition because she sees herself reflected within its imagery - as already fragmented and dislocated, inhabiting the much talked of but ill-defined margins of patriarchal discourse. There is no threat to whole identity because it does not exist for the heroine, hence she does not fear the splitting of the subject- she explores it. As the earlier passage taken from Sexing The Cherry demonstrates the divide between self and other is re-addressed as the two parts meet resulting in curiosity and interest as Jordan traces 'the lineaments of my own face opposite me.'<sup>(18)</sup>

Throughout Jeanette Winterson's work the heterogeneous qualities of identity and the unconscious process itself are expressed through the vehicle of the doppelganger, which in turn produces a moment in history which manifests a cultural shift in the treatment of human representation. To reiterate, in classical Freudian psychoanalytical terms the appearance of 'der

doppelganger' acts as a direct illustration of the uncanny <sup>(19)</sup>, signifying from a poststructural point of view the pivotal moment of the Unheimliche's correlation with death: <sup>(20)</sup> a proposition demonstrated previously through the figure of the dead baby Dawn in Irvine Welsh's text Trainspotting.

Meeting your own self in the fog or believing you have seen a ghost can constitute a blurring of the distinctions between physical reality and conscious perceptions of fantasy which as a consequence can destabilise notions of an ego-centric unity. I have shown earlier in this work through cultural examples such as Henry, Portrait Of A Serial Killer and the Bluebeard figures of traditional folklore and contemporary fiction, how this dissolution of stability can have a melancholic/paranoiac effect on the masculine psyche, culminating in moments of extreme anxiety inducing psychosis which can result in violent and murderous behaviour.

It is also possible to chart a departure from the traditional response to the experience of 'Das Unheimliche'. This is demonstrated by writers like Winterson who can creatively manipulate and explore the fear of a split identity which can induce a schizophrenic personality - disseminating oneness and transforming the impossible desire to cling to the idea of one core identity into a subversive and potentially liberating, schizogenic being. This is a concept expressed through the gargantuan character Dog-Woman and her Twentieth Century incarnation - a chemist 'with a good degree', <sup>(21)</sup> who has drifted into pollution research after discovering how poisoned the waters of the River Thames have become. She becomes a modern day ecological warrior fighting against the corruption of the multi-national companies she feels are responsible for the destruction of the environment; deriving her strength from an inner being she perceives to be essentially

different from herself:

I had an *alter ego* who was huge and powerful, a woman whose only morality was her own.... She was my patron saint, the one I called on when I felt myself dwindling away through cracks in the floor or slowly fading in the street. Whenever I called on her I felt my muscles swell and laughter fill up my throat. (22)

The two women exist apart from each other, occupying the same geographical terrain but in different historical time frames. They mirror one another, they are each others double. Inhabiting different skins, yet emerging as echoes of the same consciousness, as slices of the same fruit as Winterson's illustration of a cut banana suggests (23). Also worthy of note here is the mockery of post-Freudian or more correctly post-Jungian play with the twentieth century preoccupation with analysing the valorisation of patriarchal iconography. Winterson's ironic, comic use of a banana dislodges the primacy associated with phallic symbol. The power associated with the phallus is relocated within the sphere of the maternal which will recall for the psychoanalytical theorist the concept of the phallic mother. In the novel each sight of the banana heralds the voice of the Dog-Woman and a shift in narrative pace and perspective. It is also important to point out that Jordan perceives the banana differently from his foster mother. Dog-Woman first believes the fruit to resemble 'nothing more than the private parts of an Oriental.' She then sees it through her boy's eyes: 'deep blue waters against a pale shore and trees whose branches sang with green... This was the first time that Jordan set sail.' Sexing The Cherry. (24) This train of duplication corresponds to the critical play of mirrors, (albeit from a slightly different theoretical perspective) as described by Marie-Helene Huet (25) during her

article on representations of monstrosity. The crux of her article is concerned with Nineteenth Century literary narratives which focus on the genesis of extra/ordinary creatures and individuals. Throughout this exploration of tales of the Uncanny Huet suggests that the effect of 'mise en abime' is to dissemble the artist's creative role. This she suggests is achieved within the text through the character-creator who inflected with the authority of an implicit authorial signature re-affirms the power of the monstrous as pure aberration: I would like to propose that within Jeanette Winterson's work the reverse is at play. Rather than masking the participation of the author within the text, the representation of the doppelganger raises the authorial signature to the fore emphasising the verisimilitude for the woman writer associated with representing the monstrous (feminine) form. This emphasis shifts meaning away from the un/natural, aberrant connotations associated by phallogentrism with womanhood and the supposed innate nature of her sexuality and re-ascribes the monstrous within the realms of the 'natural' tangible world. This manifests itself within Sexing The Cherry as the challenge posed by the blatant 'raw giant[ess]'<sup>(26)</sup> Dog-Woman who asks the reader, 'How hideous am I?' <sup>(27)</sup> and whose deviant (sexual) power is hinted at on the discovery of webbed toes upon the body of the new born Venetian infant Villanelle in The Passion:

There was never a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of the boat men. My mother in her swoon had visions of rosemary and blamed herself for her carelessness. Or perhaps it was her carefree pleasure with the baker she should blame herself for? She hadn't thought of my father since his boat had sunk. She hadn't thought of him much while it was afloat. The midwife took out her knife with the thick blade and proposed to cut off the offending parts straight away. My mother weakly nodded, imagining I would feel no pain or that pain

for a moment would be better than embarrassment for a lifetime. The midwife tried to make an incision in the translucent triangle between my first two toes but her knife sprang from the skin leaving no mark. She tried again and again in between all the toes on each foot. She bent the point of the knife, but that was all.

'It's the Virgin's will,' she said at last, finishing the bottle.

'There's no knife that can get through that.' (28)

The mother fears that the sight of her daughter's malformation could induce a (Freudian) horror or rejection of her as an adult woman - one which could take precedence over the beauty that the red hair signifies she is going to be. However, it is important to note, that in this instance the feminine body is *not* going to be castrated by a physical flaw or mark of birth ( as coterminous with female genitalia), as it repels the attempts of the knife to normalise the appearance of the infant body in preparation for her (non)entry into the patriarchal, symbolic system. Villanelle's birth-mark was there before her entrance into the world, recalling Elisabeth Bronfen's comments that

...the birth-mark is the signature of the maternal function within semiotic space as this coincides with the child's entrance in facticity, its being marked outside and beyond its entrance into paternal symbols and sexual difference. In a sense, the birth-mark is a repetition of the navel displaced upwards. The removal means controlling and surpassing nature on two scores - as the natural body always indicates maternal creation and as it always indicates the work of death. (29)

Nature or its analogous feminine cannot be controlled or surpassed on this occasion as the midwife discovers. Her failure to cut away the supposed offending abnormality highlights the irreducible quality of originary difference itself, bringing to the fore, in this instance, the actual, physical

death of the father before the birth or entry into the phallic realm of the daughter. Thus, this particular sequence of events acts as a contingent agency removing and dissolving the power of the paternal marker before it has the opportunity to score this particular child's psychological development.

The suggestion that Villanelle's deformity stems from her mother's failure (while pregnant) to carry out correctly the 'gloomy ritual' <sup>(30)</sup> of placing offerings on the lonely grave of her most recently deceased relative is reminiscent of a long tradition of tales wherein the desiring maternal imagination is said to produce physical malformations of birth. <sup>(31)</sup> The deformed baby becomes the visible manifestation of an unspoken desire or a scandalous act (Villanelle's relationship with the baker) who exists in part to punish the mother and to warn other women of the damage their abhorrent passions might cause. Winterson appears to use this tradition to establish and strengthen Villanelle's autonomous spirit, focusing on the magical abilities (walking on water) brought about by her birth-mark and the seductive, erotic charm Villanelle seems to possess. The mark must not be removed from the Venetian child's body because as a point of semantic indeterminacy it signifies the rhetorical function of difference itself - as has been demonstrated throughout this passage. On the one hand it signifies the phallogocentric manufacture of difference which produces the binary dialectics of masculine and feminine (for example; life, law and man are aligned and privileged within this system over death, which as has already been pointed out equates with supposed unlawful female sexuality). On the other it reveals the failure of the subsequent oppositions created by this split to limit the plurality of meanings produced by language and figural representations of Otherness. Ultimately, the presence of the birthmark serves to remind the

reader that meaning simply cannot be contained and therein lies the radical subversion of phallogocentric dictates by a character such as Villanelle.

It is also possible to trace the literary ancestry of Winterson's characters back to Rabelais<sup>(32)</sup> (as is the case with Dog-Woman) and to the hairy-legged, claw-footed, web-footed descriptions given of the Queen of Sheba throughout ancient mythology, adding further layers to an understanding of the repetitious doublings already identified within the work of Winterson. As Marina Warner's extensive research shows,<sup>(33)</sup> the image of a concealed, cloven or webbed female foot stretches far back into biblical and classical mythical metonymy where the figure of the prophetic Queen of Sheba embodies both wisdom and the carnal condition of womankind (aspects of character which make up her twentieth century incarnation Villanelle). Warner also focuses upon medieval imagery where the 'foulness' and evil associated with the webbed foot (as a sign of the devil's work) emphasises the monstrous feminine connoted by the secret foot as once again, an abomination against nature or God's work. The repetition of this sign within religious discourse conspires to raise to the fore woman's supposed shame, contrariness of character and her potential for sexual deviancy.

However, as Warner also notes, the sign of the goose foot also serves the subversive 'titillating side of the folk tale' which 'hints through the metonymy of hairy legs or a misshapen foot at secrets hidden under women's dresses which men fear to see, but long all the same to know',<sup>(34)</sup> - an image analogous with the previously referred to 'horrible pleasure'<sup>(35)</sup> of the man sucked back into the womb. Rich with Freudian euphemism, the folk tale hints at the possibilities for subversion and transgression this form can also hold for the malformed, 'hairy' heroine. The following extract from Freud's

paper on 'Fetishism' could be read as antithesis to the work of many contemporary women writers who manipulate Freud's theories and play with the idea of a feminine 'lack' by having at the centre of their work powerful, sexual, fur-covered and transformative heroines:

The foot owes its preference as a fetish - or part of it - to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet - as has long been suspected - are a fixation of the sight of the pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member. (36)

The power of female sexuality and the potential she possesses to deviate from the heterosexual norm as expressed through the metamorphosis of the female body into animal form is explored in great detail by Angela Carter in her well known collection of short stories entitled The Bloody Chamber. Through her reworking of traditional folk tales of 'tiger's bride's', beauties and beasts and the 'Wolf-Alice' we see a shift away from innocent brides devoured by the beast's desire for immaculate flesh. (37) Here the emphasis is placed upon the heroine's ability to both tame the metaphorical (cliché- ridden) beast within the man (or vice versa) as well as allowing her sovereignty within the heterosexual relationship. Hence, her own desires take precedence within the 'savage marriage ceremony' of the sexual act; a revision explicitly stated in the closing lines from 'The Company of Wolves':

See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf. (38)

Likewise, Jeanette Winterson's heroines portray a potential for a transgression



of gender which displaces the former centrality of the male subject. It is not possible to simply explain or define a typical Winterson heroine as the 'tomboy type', especially as these particular figural representations are traditionally fixed within the text in terms of their relationship to other men. Consider for instance that most famous of tomboys, Jo March, in Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women where the familial pressure placed on her to grow-up and become more lady-like accounts for the production and final containment of her tomboy persona within the oedipal trajectory as she is pushed towards adult maturation and 'normative' heterosexuality. This results in the cessation or toning down of her earlier mimicry of masculine behaviour, as Jo says herself, 'I can't get over my disappointment at not being a boy ...for I'm dying to go and fight with papa.'<sup>(39)</sup> This also surpresses the lesbian analogy which could be construed through her image: the cutting of her long hair, cross-dressing, boisterous, clumsy, unladylike behaviour and most significantly her desire to write.<sup>(40)</sup>

In Winterson's earlier novels she removes the father from the scene of the child's development altogether, either by killing him off before the protagonist is born, as is the case with Villanelle in The Passion, or by having the child murder the father who betrays her, as we find with Dog-Woman in Sexing The Cherry who kills the father who attempts to sell her as a freak. Alternatively, he may remain completely absent from the text - the biological father missing in action<sup>(41)</sup> as it were from both Jordan's (Sexing The Cherry) and Jeanette's (Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit) lives. If he does have a part to play in the narrative Winterson tends to make the father a kind but ineffective step-parent as in The Passion; or a completely impotent one, overshadowed by the dominating personality of the (monstrous) mother ( Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit). One can recall here the introductory discussion of

Irigaray's referral to Freud's 'little man that the girl is'<sup>(42)</sup> where Irigaray deconstructs psychoanalytical discourse in order to demonstrate how patriarchal form articulates limited variants of man - he is predominantly phallus bearing or defective and impotent or fe/male, defined in relation to him as mother and whore. Winterson also deconstructs this hom(m)osexual economy emphasising the limitations for humanity per se prescribed by patriarchy's symbolic system and in effect, rids her characters of sexual indifference, enabling them to traverse boundaries of both a geographical and psychological nature, unhindered by the laws of the father. Therefore, it becomes conceivable to propose that Winterson's heroines can also be of male form, oscillating, as Jordan does, (disguised as a fishwife) between the apparent segregation patriarchy imposes upon both masculine and feminine worlds. Jordan declares: 'In my petticoats I was a traveller in a foreign country'<sup>(43)</sup> but it is this very journey that leads him to question the validity of meaning produced by the binary system, one which brings him to the conclusion that:

The self is not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once.<sup>(44)</sup>

This indeterminacy creates a psychological space where concepts of desire, of which individual sexuality is symptomatic, can resist the forces of phallogocentric logic. This ambivalent zone provides the enabled subject with the means to transgress gender boundaries, displacing the suffocating centrality of masculine subjectivity, capacitating the possibilities for exploration and expansion of human consciousness. Hence, lesbian desire in Jeanette Winterson's work is not simply understood as an imitation of

masculinity (as is the case with classical psychoanalytical theory from Freud to Lacan to Kristeva), but demonstrates an alternative 'third' possibility relatively free from the constraints imposed by the symbolic system as the following extract from Sexing The Cherry shows:

Grafting is the means whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not.

There are many in the church who condemn this practice as unnatural, holding that the Lord who made the world made its flora as he wished and in no other way.

Tradescant has been praised in England for his work on the cherry, and it was on the cherry that I first learned the art of grafting and wondered whether it was an art I might apply to myself. (45)

The third or intermediate sex as defined by the German sexologist, Magnus Hirschfeld, (46) refers to homosexuality and not, strictly speaking, to lesbian sexual development. Once again, Winterson's narrative bends psychoanalytical interpretation away from the traditional focus upon masculine maturation pointing the way to a place, yet to be discovered, beyond the phallus where the unsayable, unrecognisable, unknowable woman can finally speak. Demonstrating an ability on the author's part to communicate with a larger female audience, who may be empathetic with lesbian politics but who nevertheless remain heterosexual in their own orientation:

## HALLUCINATIONS AND DISEASES OF THE MIND

*Objects 1* : A woman looks into her bag and recognises none of her belongings. She hurries home. But where is home? She follows the address written in her purse. She has never seen this house before and who are those ugly children wrecking the garden? Inside a fat man is waiting for his supper. She shoots him. At the trial she says she had never seen him before. He was her husband. (47)

Winterson's reference to 'homeless' femininity and mental illness is analogous with the hysteric and that Lacanian lack which (does not) define woman in psychoanalytical terms. It also emphasises psychoanalytical discourse's complete inability to negotiate with the figure of a lesbian woman on any other level beyond her inscription as a woman mimicking a man. This in turn implicates the writer's involvement with the characters on yet another level - highlighting the author's knowledge and manipulation of scientific and medical research concerned with the nature of female sexuality and identity whilst simultaneously locating herself as yet another slice of Dog-Woman's symbolically chopped up and divided banana. Winterson hints how it is possible to intercede with and re-inscribe already recognisable female archetypes within late twentieth century culture in order to create them anew. She facilitates an authorial philosophical presence which can be further detected in Jordan's introspective reflections in Sexing The Cherry:

*Paintings 1*: 'A Hunt in a Forest'. A forest at night. Men in coloured tunics are riding fierce horses. Dogs bark. Disappearing distance into distance into distance the riders get smaller and vanish. Uccello. The coming of perspective.

When I saw this painting I began by concentrating on the foreground figures, and only by degrees did I notice the others, some so faint as to be hardly noticeable.

My own life is like this, or, should I say, my own lives. For the most part I can see only the most obvious detail, the present, my present. But sometimes, by a trick of the light,

I can see more than that. I can see countless lives existing together and receding slowly into the trees. (48)

The latter paragraph has an ambiguous quality suggestive of the author's participation within the narrative flow. Is it only Jordan who speaks to the reader or can we also hear the voice of the author, whose presence echoes the cultural inscription of femininity itself, appearing to be located in 'a liminal zone ....neither absent nor present'? (49) The writer becomes the figure of the double as Jordan's sustained gaze stares through the painting, through the representation and at the artist herself.

During his consideration of the Uncanny Freud focuses upon the ambivalence of the doppelganger. He highlights the unheimliche quality of the double, as it shifts in meaning from a safeguard against the breakdown of the ego to a rendering of this apparition as an enemy come to haul your soul away into a nether world in his paper, 'Das Unheimliche':

From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death. (50)

The figure of the doppelganger oscillates between an affirmation of survival and a pronouncement that the subject's earthly time is up, emphasising how, in Helene Cixous words, 'there is nothing more notorious and uncanny to our thought than mortality'. (51) In classical psychoanalytical theory the double threatens to disrupt and fragment all narcissistically construed ideas of individual uniqueness and wholeness. The self confronted by the self is forced to reconsider, to doubt the self it thought it knew, which highlights Jentsch's point concerning 'intellectual uncertainty'(52). This uncertainty is the end result of the collision between semantic opposites and their transmitters - the figure of the double. When the self meets the self, or recognises itself in

the other, meaning inverts, creating an ambivalence that produces this intellectual uncertainty. As Elisabeth Bronfen has shown the double acts as a metaphor focusing upon the

uncanniness of the death drive, of 'unheimlichkeit par excellence' grounding all other versions of the uncanny because it points to what is most resistantly and universally repressed, namely the presence of death in life and at the origin of life. (53)

However, what should occur if the subject experiencing a moment of uncanny quality should be a woman / writer? For, as has already been noted, within psychoanalysis' schemata woman already equates with death, is not one, is not whole but always other and many. Fragmented, as a split and dissected subject woman *is* unheimliche. Woman, as this thesis has previously determined, is fundamentally, already dis/located from language. This is demonstrated by Lacanian analysis through her being not-at-all within the psychoanalytical structure of the symbolic order which maintains that the illusion of a whole, unified identity is constituted via the name of the father, ergo male. As such, unlike her masculine counterpart, she is not filled with horror at the sight of the/her figural body but aligns herself with the heimlich half of the equation: the double serves as an affirmation of what she already knows. Woman was never privileged in the illusion of wholeness and has always recognised herself in the reflection of that patriarchal mirror as a split body, a gap. To reiterate Cixous' point, which follows Freud's consideration of the prefix 'un' (of Unheimliche) as the 'token of repression', (54) any analysis of the uncanny constitutes a mark of the repression itself, (55) privileging fiction above psychoanalysis as a mode of transferring the

unheimliche enigma through its evocation of the uncanny, through the ability of fiction, of the story to raise the repressed:

'Fiction' is a secretion of death, an anticipation of non-representation, a doll, a hybrid body composed of language and silence that ....invents doubles and death. (56)

It is therefore possible to propose that other effects can be achieved as the uncanny enigma is revealed, unmasked and unfolded, as it is throughout Winterson's fiction. The very binary oppositions connoted in the persona of the woman / writer can act, as previously demonstrated, as an agency for freedom of movement. This initiates an un / repressed creative moment which can deliberately displace and dislocate notions of individual unity precisely because they are heimlich / familiar to her. The woman who is also a writer can thereby reproduce double upon double, further deviating from the accepted norm (which is irrelevant to her as other in the first place) while also continuing to undermine the law / name of the father. In effect she dilutes the paternal mark, abolishing the power of the father within this realm instilling not terror but another way of seeing:

He came to, and feeling his way, arms outstretched he had suddenly touched another face and screamed out.

For a second the fog cleared and he saw that the stranger was himself.

'Perhaps I am to die,' he said, and then, while I was protesting this, 'Or perhaps I am to live, to be complete as she said I would be.' (57)

Nicholas Jordan, a twentieth century character, meets his doppelganger at the opening of this chapter, Jordan, a seventeenth century sailor and explorer

meets his double in the fog and so it repeats.... Sexing The Cherry ends as it begun, disrupting conventional notions of linear time.

Winterson's novels are replete with protagonists and their other selves, her authorial signature is scored into the appearances of these very different yet repetitious and recognisable doubles. The following lines are spoken by the pollution researcher from Sexing The Cherry who has become embroiled within a personal quest to save London's river waters. Her words could have just as easily come from the mouth of the young evangelist tramping the streets of a Northern provincial town with her mother in Winterson's first novel, the semi-autobiographical Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit:

I wrote articles and pushed fact sheets through front doors. I developed a passion for personal evangelism. I stopped housewives on street corners and working men in caffs. <sup>(58)</sup>

Within the pages of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit Jeanette's alter egos and doppelgangers appear in many forms. Among them there are Winnet, a type of sorcerer's apprentice who inhabits a fairy tale landscape and Sir Perceval who stems from an ancient regime creating from a literary perspective a generically hybrid terrain. Winnet and Perceval intersect the narrative of Jeanette, the central protagonist, with their tales of adventure complete with riddles to be solved, shaping for the reader what Winterson herself terms a fluid spiral structure which allows for infinite movement and interpretation:

I really don't see the point of reading in straight lines. We don't think like that and we don't live like that. Our mental processes are closer to a maze than a motorway, every turning yields another turning, not symmetrical, not obvious. Not chaos either. A sophisticated



mathematical equation made harder to unravel because X and Y have different values on different days. <sup>(59)</sup>

Winterson's comments reiterate practices associated with poststructuralist stratagem. The themes explicit throughout her work emphasise post-modernity's exploration of and preoccupation with fragmentation, pastiche, irony and self-referentiality. Her accounts of the developing human psyche restore to prominence the split subject - but this time as an enabling vehicle promoting exploration and understanding of the un/conscious process. This endorses the privileging of multiplicity and difference over the mechanics of phallogentric discourse, effecting an expansion upon the dimensions of cognition. This transgressive act establishes alternative representations of consciousness, creating those 'new ways of seeing'<sup>(60)</sup> which culture and specifically psychoanalytical feminism are continually searching for.

Winterson's overlapping of generic form creates a split screen effect where one literary *mise-en-scene* corresponds directly with another. This intersection of two planes of existence at once, at the relevant narrative juncture, highlights the similarity in action or behaviour as one character reminds us of another in a fictional terrain elsewhere. For example, Winnet's possessive and dominating father doubles Jeanette's mother in deed and manoeuvre as both contrive to influence their off-spring's respective futures. They are, of course, parts of the same egg shell protecting the maturing ego, minimising psychological damage through the conscious repetition of the original psychological trauma whilst also effecting crucial revelations pivotal to the successful resolution of the oedipal drama for the central protagonists.

Herein lies a theoretical departure from classical Freudian analysis and the twentieth century's traditional literary exposition of the journey into

adulthood. Jeanette's mother is also paralleled with Elsie, creating a bad (wicked) stepmother / good (fairy) godmother dichotomy in the young child's imagination, (the appropriation of this familiar, familial, cultural construct will also anchor the reader's participation within the text and identification with the character). These three parental figures collide and overlap one another in Jeanette's consciousness as she attempts to resolve her own personal dilemmas. The maternal influences upon Jeanette's psyche are further divided by the unheimliche quality of the lost, original mother who is an actual presence within the text - represented by the biological mother. She is the voice in the hall, turned away at the door by the condemning adoptive mother. The legally appointed mother confronted by the natural mother (her living doppelganger) represses her fear of the other by invoking the power of the law. In this instance she cites the law of the judicial process as well as that of the religious father, so she feels doubly vindicated in her active disavowal of the mother who gave birth to Jeanette. She denies her access whilst simultaneously diverting the child's gaze away from the biological mother and onto her all-encompassing disapproval and anger, an act which further serves to deflect from her own horror and fear of the m/otherly apparition:

'She's gone.'

'I know who it was, why didn't you tell me?'

'It's nothing to do with you.'

'She's my mother.'

No sooner had I said that than I felt a blow that wrapped round my head like a bandage. I lay on the lino looking up into the face.

'I'm your mother,' she said very quietly. 'She was a carrying case.'

(61)

It is also possible to interpret the Winnet Stonejar sequences in relation to the breakdown of Jeanette's relationship with her mother. Through the fantasy environment provided by the fairy tale Jeanette can come to terms with the initial disappearance and desertion of her biological mother. The rejection she experiences at the hands of these two maternal figures is in the first instance narcissistic, setting in motion a play of signification, again within the limit(less) boundaries of the fairy tale's nether landscape. This psychical play resurfaces throughout Jeanette's daydreams, involving the negation and the return of the absent mother, or, of that initial loss which Winnet/Jeanette perceives has occurred between them. This poststructuralist strategy brings to the fore similarities between the Freudian termed 'fort-da' game and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory where the infant's play during the phase of pre-entry into language and the symbolic order is largely concerned with absence and presence. The infant, like Jeanette, learns to deal with the loss of the mother by repeating the event using other objects. This process of repetition veils the narcissistic wound:

While the reality principle injures narcissism, it is also through repetition that narcissism reasserts itself, tries to antidote the incision of the real by substituting it with images, with narratives, with objects. (62)

Yet as Elisabeth Bronfen points out, the 'fort-da' (once was here, now is gone) game leaves its mark, scarring the child's initiation into the world beyond the domestic threshold. In Winterson's novel that mark manifests itself through a metaphoric umbilical cord re-attached to the navel by the mother in the guise of a wizard who has metamorphosed into a mouse:

The raven ....could not warn her that her father had crept in, in

the shape of a mouse, and was tying an invisible thread around one of her buttons.... She did not notice, and when morning came, she had reached the edge of the forest, and crossed the river. (63)

Winnet Stonejar's tales-within-the-tale of adolescent maturation reiterate and recall the psychic dramas taking place within the context of the fictitious 'real' mother and daughter relationship whilst also indicating the duality at play through the autobiographical tone attributed to the novel itself. The fairy tale panorama provides a cathartic space, a non-threatening environment for Jeanette's corporeality, a place where she may mourn her loss and heal her psychological wounds. The protagonists' moments of self reflection could be suggestive of an intentional autobiographical intonation, a self-presentation loosely veiled or masked through the figure of Winnet / Jeanette who serve as Winterson's own fictional doubles.

The narrative progression of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit is also reminiscent of the oedipal movement charted by Kate Millett in D.H. Lawrence's Sons And Lovers - as discussed in detail in the introduction of this thesis. Previously, the focus centred upon feminist re-readings of modern classic literature and its appropriation of female stereotypes, with Lawrence's characterisations of femininity serving as one among many cultural examples. Now I choose to switch the context and frame Lawrence in parallel to Winterson in a more revisionist light. The influence of Modernist writers is clearly discernible throughout Jeanette Winterson's work from minor touches such as her application in The Passion of the chapter three title, 'The Zero Winter', taken from T.S. Eliot's poem 'Four Quartets'. If there were any doubt as to the allusion one need only point to the corruption of Eliot's line: 'Where is the summer, the unimaginable zero summer' (64)

which reappears as Winterson's rephrased: 'Winter. The unimaginable zero winter.'<sup>(65)</sup> This modernist inflection is not simply a homage to past writers, in spite of Winterson's well documented preference for Modernist literature <sup>(66)</sup>, or a post modern play with pastiche: it signifies more than that. Unlike Lawrence's hero Paul Morel, Winterson's heroine Jeanette in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit matures with the ability to secure herself a place in the outside world which is not dependent on the death or interment of her mother: a perspective which strongly informs the next section of this thesis. Consequentially, she does not (as Morel does) actively seek to reinscribe the maternal within her own psychic realm. The death of the mother affords Morel the ability to impose his own psychological constraints upon the previous power that maternal influence had over him, a mechanism which leads Lawrence to apply the same phallogentric rationale to womanhood per se - a viewpoint we see expressed throughout his subsequent works. For example, consider the phallic consciousness at play in The Rainbow and Women In Love where female autonomy is subsumed and smothered by associations with and marriage to men. In these novels Lawrence favours the alliances made between males - a preference alluded to in Sons And Lovers through the homosexual subtext implicit within the Dawes/ Morel relationship. This design highlights that although he considers himself 'Derelict'<sup>(67)</sup> at the closure of the novel, he is in fact, as Kate Millett points out, in complete control of his life and future, 'having extracted every conceivable service from his women, now neatly disposed of, so that he may go on to grander adventures'. <sup>(68)</sup> Released from the influential voice of the maternal figure he can now re-create her image and identity (and that of the other women around him) to suit his own ends.

Jeanette's return to her mother, albeit tugged by the string attached to

her psychical button, celebrates and affords the mother an independence of being not reliant on the offspring's infantile image of her. Morel's is never more than that, the jealous guarding of the selfish pre-oedipal child who desires to possess the parent, who uses the fantasy of persecutory force as justification for his own hostility towards womankind, an ingestion that inverts the original Freudian return to the womb as the son devours the spirit of the mother in order to satiate the vulnerable ego in the face of his own mortal shell:

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this.  
And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch  
him, have him alongside with her. (69)

The resolution of the Oedipal Complex recalls for Morel that omnipresent status of the phallic/ archaic mother. She is deliberately repressed by him, reduced to the culpable Lawrentian fantasy from which she was born. Morel transfers allegiance to the symbolic father - she is now construed as castrated, killed in order to grant primacy to the father's role as Paul takes his first unaided steps into the wider, greater world. Lawrentian disgust at female sexuality manifests itself through his inability to deal with the physicality of the sexual act itself (consider the cruelty and hostility Morel inflicts on both Miriam and Clara during supposedly intimate moments (70)); hence the necessity to rid himself again of female influence and to ultimately disavow the uncanny quality of femininity in the final lines of the novel:

But no, he would not give. Turning sharply, he walked towards  
the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth  
set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow

her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.

(71)

Contrast this denial of the feminine with the privilege re-assigned to the maternal voice in the closing lines of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit:

Then the back door slammed and my mother marched in on a gust of wind, the knot of her headscarf blown up on to her cheek like a patterned goitre. 'What a mess,' she raged, throwing the letter on to the fire. 'If I'm not sharp I'm going to miss my broadcast. Fetch the headphones.' I passed them over to her, and she adjusted the microphone.

'This is Kindly Light calling Manchester, come in Manchester, this is Kindly Light.'<sup>(72)</sup>

Winterson's acknowledgement of the loyalty<sup>(73)</sup> she feels toward and the bond she shares with her mother instigates in this final instance the possibility for the inscription of a maternal genealogy onto a cultural discourse from which it has remained primarily absent. She does at the very least create a discursive space from which concepts dealing with the nature of feminine desire and sexual / gendered difference can be reconsidered and newly articulated. It is also important to note that both Paul Morel's and Jeanette's development as working class characters is grounded in a desire for knowledge which supersedes all other commitments and relationships, as we discover when Jeanette, home from the University she worked so hard to get in to, finally dispatches Melanie just as Paul does Miriam before her.

Jeanette's character is able to preserve separation from the maternal figure while also sustaining an attachment with the mother that does not require her silence or internment in the ground (as Morel as representative of

the Oedipal hero does). As recently stated, Freud postulated that the infantile relationship with the mother, unless resolved at the normative Oedipal resolution, could have a psychically crippling effect upon the formation of the superego. From within this classical psychoanalytical account it becomes apparent that the mother is forever doomed to rejection and repetition, forced to transmit the detrimental (to her sex) archaic imagery of the castrating, phallic mother or the already impotent, castrated woman to the daughter. Therefore, it becomes imperative to discuss the mother-daughter dyad from a theoretical perspective outside of the terms associated with Oedipal drives. Jeanette's mother is proven to be neither representative of the phallic mother (who forces her daughter to flee) or akin to the castrated and oppressed mother who inspires only contempt and loathing in her off-spring. Alternatively, her ubiquitous influence is ultimately exploded and confounded by the revelation of her fallible humanity, humorously and affectionately portrayed by Winterson in the resolving narrative closure, as the now adult Jeanette returns to visit her adoptive parents. Within this allegorical text the daughter reveals herself to be equally in love and at war with the mother: a balance which leaves the subject psychically intact and able to resume a responsibility for the self which does not require the disavowal of the maternal object and the subsequent acknowledgement of female inferiority as proposed by that famous, Freudian, feminine lack.

Winterson's text counters Lacanian *jouissance* through its insistence on representing un/representable female desire. This leads, of course, to comparisons with *Ecriture Feminine*, where the emphasis is placed upon experimenting with language in order to produce texts which may be said to define an 'other', perhaps female language. Winterson's often anti-authoritarian approach to phallogocentric systems and the diverse range of



historical subject matter she chooses to explore throughout her novels to date certainly conforms to the criteria which loosely define the search for a feminine practice of writing: that is, those texts said to be characterised by

play, disruption, excess, gaps, grammatical and syntactic subversion, by ambiguities: by endlessly shifting register, generic transgressions [and] by fluid figurative language and myths <sup>(74)</sup>

-all aspects of which have been identified and documented throughout the progression of this thesis. Finally, the recurring question that the quintessential *Écriture Feminine* text is said to confront, is how to inscribe the, as yet not thought or expressed, in spite of a patriarchal economy so conventionally hostile to representational forms outside of its phallogocentric maxims as to insist on their continued exclusion. However this is, as Elizabeth Guild <sup>(75)</sup> suggests, a question we must also ask of the reader, as the consumer in receipt of the feminine, cultural product, as we move on to the second major section of this thesis.

#### 4: Doppelganger.

- 1 Wittgenstein, L., pg. 44. quoted in Perloff, 1996.
- 2 Winterson, J., pg.137-171, Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit,1991.
- 3 pg. 62-63 of this work.
- 4 Winterson, J., pg. 91. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 5 Winterson, J., pg.166. 1991.
- 6 Winterson, J., pg.144. 1991.
- 7 Warner, M., pg.111-128, 'The Glass Paving and the Secret Foot,' & pg. 353-370, 'The Language of Hair,' from The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 8 Lacan, J., pg.54. in Rose, 1988.
- 9 Winterson, J., pg.9. Sexing The Cherry 1989.
- 10 Language as a man-made entity was discussed in great length and detail throughout the introductory section of this thesis. The appropriate evidence of which was given via the relevant references, some of which were made to psychoanalytical theorists including: Freud, Irigaray and Kristeva. Poststructuralist and historical reconsideration's were also posited with reference to Bronfen, Warner and Spivak.
- 11 Mitchell, J., Women: The Longest Revolution. Essays in Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis, 1984.
- 12 Mitchell, J., in Bronfen, pg. 405. 1992.
- 13 Winterson, pg.69-70, The Passion, 1988.
- 14 Winterson, pg.73, 1988.
- 15 Barthes, R., pg.153. Mythologies, 1974.
- 16 Barthes, R., pg. 155. 1974.
- 17 Cixous, H., pg. 540., 'Fiction And Its Phantoms: A Reading Of Freud's " Das Unheimliche" ', New Literary History, 1976.
- 18 Winterson, J., pg. 9. Sexing The Cherry 1989.
- 19 Freud, S., pg. 382. 'Das Unheimliche', Applied Psychoanalysis SE 17.
- 20 Bronfen, E., pg.41 in Wright, Feminism And Psychoanalysis,1992.
- 21 Winterson, J., pg. 125. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 22 Winterson, J., pg.125. 1989.
- 23 Winterson, J., pg. 121. 1989.
- 24 Winterson, J., pg. 13. 1989.
- 25 Huet, M., pg.84-85, 'Living Images: Monstrosity And Representation' in Representations, 1983.
- 26 Winterson, J., pg.121. 1989.
- 27 Winterson, J., pg.24 1989.
- 28 Winterson, J., pg.51-52. The Passion, 1988.
- 29 Bronfen, E., pg.127. Over her Dead Body, 1992.
- 30 Winterson, J., pg.50-1. 1988.
- 31 Huet, M-H., ' Living Images: Monstrosity And Representation.' in Representations, 1983. Huet cites, by way of example, the ancient story of an Ethiopian queen who gave birth to a white child after studying a picture on her bedchamber wall of a pale andromeda. She also notes a report by

Ambroise Pare on the birth of a fur covered girl whose mother had seen a picture of John the Baptist clothed in animal skins.

- 32 Bakhtin, M., Rabelais And His World, translated from the Russian by Helene Iswolsky, 1968. See also Carol Bellard-Thomson: 'Rabelais and Obscenity: A woman's view' in The Body And The Text, Wilcox et al, 1990.
- 33 Warner, M., pg. 111. Chapter 8: 'The Glass Paving And The Secret Foot: The Queen Of Sheba 11,' 1995. Warner considers examples from both the Koran and the Bible before moving on to discuss the appearance of the 'secret foot' in folk lore and fairy tale.
- 34 Warner, M., pg.122. 1995.
- 35 Cixous, H., observations on Freudian analysis, New Literary History, 1976. Cited previously in this thesis on pg.77. the closure of the chapter entitled 'Tongue.'
- 36 Warner, M., pg.113. 1995. Marina Warner quotes from Freud's paper 'Fetishism' 1927. SE 21.
- 37 Carter, A., The Bloody Chamber, 1981.
- 38 Carter, A., pg.118. 1981.
- 39 Alcott, L. M., pg.10. 1955.
- 40 Simons, J., Foster, S., What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings Of Classic Novels For Girls 1995. for a detailed consideration of the tomboy figure in children's literature.
- 41 Bronfen, E., My use of the phrase 'missing in action' is a corruption of Elisabeth Bronfen's own discussion of Lacan's typology of gender constructions in Part 111 of her book Over Her Dead Body. The original title reads, 'Femininity -missing in action' pg. 205. 1992.  
It is interesting to note that Winterson does not pay any detailed attention to the representation of fatherhood until her later novel Gut Symmetries, 1997.
- 42 Irigaray, L. Speculum Of The Other Woman, pg. 26.1985. Also referred to at the beginning of this project: see pg. 25 of the introduction to this work.
- 43 Winterson, J., pg. 31. Sexing The Cherry1989.
- 44 Winterson, J., pg.80. 1989.
- 45 Winterson, pg. 78. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 46 Wright, E., pg. 157.1992. Refers to Hirschfeld's articles of the period 1898-1908.
- 47 Winterson, J., pg.81. 1989.
- 48 Winterson, J., pg. 92. 1989.
- 49 Bronfen, E., pg. 116, 'The Lady is a Portrait', Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 50 Freud, S., pg. 387. 'Das Unheimliche', SE 17.
- 51 Cixous, H., pg. 545. New Literary History, 1976.
- 52 Jentsch, in Freud, pg.382, Applied Psychoanalysis SE 17.
- 53 Bronfen, E., pg.114. 1992.
- 54 Freud, S., pg. 399. 'Das Unheimliche', 1919, SE17
- 55 Cixous, H., pg. 545. 1976.

- 56 Cixous, H., pg. 548. 1976.
- 57 Winterson, J., pg. 143. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 58 Winterson, J., pg. 123. 1989.
- 59 Winterson, J., pg. xiii. introduction to Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 60 Berger, J., Ways Of Seeing, 1972.
- 61 Winterson, J., pg. 99. 1991.
- 62 Bronfen, E., pg. 31. 'The Lady Vanishes', Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 63 Winterson, J., pg. 144. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 64 Eliot, T.S., lines 19-20, pg. 344, 'Little Gidding' from 'Four Quartets',  
The Oxford Library Of English Poetry: Volume 111, 1988.
- 65 Winterson, J., pg. 80. The Passion, 1988.
- 66 Winterson, quoted in an article published in The Guardian newspaper,
- 67 Lawrence, D.H., pg.481. Sons And Lovers, (1913) 1989.
- 68 Millett, K., pg. 257. Sexual Politics, (1971) 1991.
- 69 Lawrence, D.H., pg.492. 1989.
- 70 Lawrence, D.H., pg.392. 1989. For example, Morel's response to Clara's jealousy is full of hostility, suggestive of a rape scenario:  
    'You'd better run after Miriam,' mocked Clara.  
    The blood flamed up in him. He stood showing his teeth. She drooped sulkily.  
    The lane was dark, quite lonely. He suddenly caught her in his arms, stretched forward, and put his mouth on her face in a kiss of rage. .... Hard and relentless his mouth came for her.
- 71 Lawrence, D.H., pg. 492. 1989.
- 72 Winterson, J., pg.171. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 73 Winterson, J., pg.137-171. 1991. This is, of course, part of Winterson's authorial intention, as the title of this closing chapter 'Ruth' follows closely the theme of female loyalty as described in the biblical tale of the same name. In the book of Ruth, the daughter-in-law chooses to stay with and care for her mother-in-law following the death of her own husband and her father-in-law. Ruth begs Naomi, [16] 'Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge...'  
    Old Testament. pg.200-203, Revised Standard Version, 1952.
- 74 Guild, E., in Wright, pg.75. Feminism And Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary, 1992.
- 75 Guild, E., in Wright, pg.76, 1992.

## Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation

### 5: Girlz N The Hood : Adolescent.

'Effaced by what she represents, for Freud has no eyes for her. This woman appears obscene because she emerges there where one did not expect her to appear, and she thus causes Freud to take a detour.' <sup>(1)</sup> Helene Cixous

The opening analysis of this major section charts the popular cultural iconography associated with female maturation during the latter half of the twentieth century, dealing with specific examples as appropriate. This piece will negotiate with a wide range of imagery taken from comics, magazines, computer games, cinema and highly praised literary classics - all of which having been described by phallogentric culture as intended by the cliché 'for girls'. The main focus will be upon the ingenue and the subversive nuances of character which appear to reveal themselves in the most conventional of places. The comparative juxtapositioning of magazine with novel and cartoon with 'live' action heroine serves to emphasise the poststructural rendering of this Fin de Siecle adolescent.

The first of the proposed revisionary models of heroinism to be discussed here has much in common with the nineteenth century automaton, Olympia, <sup>(2)</sup> who is referred to in the above quotation. To begin with they are not flesh and blood manifestations of femininity but fictional, animated, representations of characters born of mythology and on occasion traceable through a long tradition of European fairy tales, most notably, within the terms of this project, in the accounts given by the Brothers Grimm and

complemented with allusion to interpretations of folk lore as scribed by Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Anderson and Italo Calvino.

At this particular juncture I am referring to and shall focus upon the representation of the young girl and the adolescent heroine as created by the Walt Disney Corporation. This consideration carries with it the expectation that the reader will look beyond the scorn of philosophers such as the Frenchman Alain Finkielkraut, who describes the generic output of Disney as a 'cultural Chernobyl'<sup>(3)</sup> and the fears of feminist writers like Kathi Maio who feel that 'the cultural tsunami called ...Disney'<sup>(4)</sup> eroticizes the figure of the pubescent female whilst simultaneously reinforcing the stereotype of the contented homemaker.

Certainly, it is important to take into account Maio's critical analysis, as is demonstrated throughout this chapter, she does, as a radical feminist reader, have cause for concern. For example, in a Disney produced colouring book the qualities ascribed to the heroine, 'Belle' from the animated film Beauty And The Beast<sup>(5)</sup> are those conventionally defined by patriarchal culture as typically feminine - with the exception of the attribute of being 'smart' and the rather elliptical associations conjured by the phrase 'special', she is described as 'caring, beautiful and loving'<sup>(6)</sup>. I am not suggesting that to be aesthetically pleasing in the eyes of others as well as deemed thoughtful and warm in spirit are qualities to be scorned in a human being, rather that the focus on these particular aspects of character mask the distinctly limiting parameters of such a role. It is also necessary to note the repetition with which the aforementioned adjectives are used in detailing the appearance and personality of *all* of the other of Disney's many heroines from 'the fairest of them all' - Snow White (1937) to Disney's much criticised entry into the postcolonial arena Pocahontas and Mulan (1998) whose father says of her,

whilst pointing at a bud upon the branch of a tree, 'When it blooms, it will be the most beautiful of all'.<sup>(7)</sup> Here again, it is most important to record the concerns and reproaches of writers and academics who fear that en masse the productive output of the Disney machine amounts to a form of cultural imperialism, 'spreading' as Andrew Ross notes 'its homogenized message across the globe'.<sup>(8)</sup> This particular aspect of Disney critique is given full attention at a later point in this chapter.

At this time, all I would ask of the critic of this piece, who, like Freud, has no eyes for the doll, or in this case, the re-animated pastiche of femininity she so crudely represents, is that they recollect the work of feminist film theorists - Kaplan, De Lauretis, Mulvey, Kuhn, Clover, Creed et al, whose individual, influential studies have so closely informed academic research over the past three decades as well as determining the methodological approach to be taken during the initial inception of this thesis. Collectively, these writers have called upon the academic establishment to look again at the ideologies associated with visual representations of womanhood, particularly on film, and the nature of interpretation which can be derived from them. Overall, the theoretical considerations of contemporary film analysis have famously included within its project a focus on the contradictory nature of the stereotype itself, which as a consequence, destabilises notions concerned with the fixity of cultural meaning per se: an area much explored throughout the introduction and the first section of this thesis.

During the early 1980s the iconography surrounding the femme fatale was much scrutinised in an attempt to re-evaluate the transgressive qualities contained within this figure and the potential for (sexual) subversion her various representations held. This particular invocation may now be

regarded as poststructural in strategy, as it focuses on a respect for the text regardless of its canonical critical value, identifying, as Catherine Belsey suggests through her own definition of poststructuralism,

[the] delicate ensemble of signifying practices which bears witness to the undecidability, the polyphony, the heterogeneity of meaning at a specific historical moment. <sup>(9)</sup>

Belsey's viewpoint strongly echoes Spivak who believes that one must recognise, and as a result, take into account the extent to which apparently opposed cultural and academic disciplines interrelate with and implicate each other: as Spivak says, 'I am a bricoleur, I use what comes to hand'. <sup>(10)</sup>

This overview of cultural discourse takes into consideration the assorted repertoire of 'classics and trash' (and all that is in-between) offered up to the contemporary reader/viewer/consumer and as a consequence serves to emphasise the re-visionary process first brought to bear on cultural analysis through feminist film theory and practice. As Yvonne Tasker suggests, it becomes crucial to consider cultural output per se 'as products of particular historical moments ...formed by and through a variety of political discourses'.

<sup>(11)</sup> Once this perspective is taken into account it becomes possible to propose that the

critical colonisation of popular cinema, whose products are judged by the standards of high culture, is intimately bound up with class and with the operation of cultural power more generally. <sup>(12)</sup>

This methodology can then be reconsidered and revised in the full glare of contemporary poststructural theory, where to avoid the pitfalls of falsely



framing and thereby constricting the interpretative process it becomes necessary to speak of perspectival multiplicity. This critical process enables other possible influences to be added to Tasker's particular reference to class; among them, of significance here, are gender, the romance genre, and the medium of artistic output itself, particularly when considering the nature of criticism levelled at the Disney heroine.

Beware the feminist interpreter who dismisses Belle from Beauty And The Beast, or Ariel from The Little Mermaid, or Esmeralda from The Hunchback Of Notre Dame and Mulan (from the film of the same name) as purely obstacles en route to the young girl's progression toward the attainment of a higher political, gendered consciousness lest she repeat the prejudices of the conventional literary critic who renders the author of 'romance' as a peddler of trash not worthy of a place within the established literary canon. It is tempting to recall F.R. Leavis' 'minor Note' upon the Bronte sisters at the end of his introduction to The Great Tradition.<sup>(13)</sup> Here, he not only places the three women outside of his general academic discussion, marginalising them in a most distinct way, to the point of not being part of his own personal notion of Englishness; he also completely ignores Charlotte's most popular work Jane Eyre and fails to mention Anne by name or her novel The Tenant Of Wildfell Hall. One can only ask, what motivated this denial, this silence? What brought about the refusal to comment upon Anne Bronte's story of a young mother who, determined and wilful, packs up herself and her son, leaving behind the rakish and abusive husband she can no longer bear. Interesting that this novel is now considered by some academics, most notably Winifred Gerin, to be the first sustained feminist novel<sup>(14)</sup> of its generation and can still command a large audience to hear its tale, albeit via the television screen, ( I am referring here to the 1998

television production of The Tenant Of Wildfell Hall produced and screened by the B.B.C.). Needless to say, it is simply condescending and of little critical value to dismiss the cultural impact of the collected works of the Bronte family in two short paragraphs as it is to denounce the production of popular culture and Disney especially, as a marker of the general 'dumbing down'<sup>(15)</sup> of the overall population:

It is tempting to retort that there is only one Bronte. Actually, Charlotte, though claiming no part in the great line of English fiction .....has a permanent interest of a minor kind. She had a remarkable talent that enabled her to do something first-hand, and new in the rendering of personal experience, above all in *Villette*.

The genius, of course, was Emily. I have said nothing about *Wuthering Heights* because that astonishing work seems to me a kind of sport. It may, all the same, very well have had some influence of an essentially undetectable kind....<sup>(16)</sup>

'A kind of sport' - this seems an uneasy statement to make, one born of the *unheimlich*, a throw away comment which seeks to disguise the fear of the feminine implicit within the subtext of this critique. 'Undetectable' because it resides in the realm of the other connoting the enigma, the stigmata that haunts the representation of womankind and is therefore beyond the comprehension of this most traditional of men? Part of the project of this thesis is to raise to the fore those influential but previously 'undetectable' elements which will take the contemporary theorist beyond the assumption that the masculine One can tell the collective body all we, as variants of others, might want to know about the Other. In doing so, the overall analysis may achieve

a more socially context-bound view of discourse, which is attentive to what individual subjects do within and through discursive structures, rather than assuming that discourses force us to behave in certain ways. (17)

Sara Mills' critical perspective is indicative of an academic progression which could finally expand feminist philosophies beyond the object/subject schema. For, as was noted during the abstract at the beginning of this thesis, if both subject and object are understood as interpretations, as variants, as aspects of knowledge, then the critical force of subjectivism, as applied by Leavis, is obviated. I use 'subjectivism' in the philosophical sense, where the subject as the focus of judgement is criticised only in terms of its failing to satisfy the standards of objectivity - the subject defined through its apparent opposition to the 'truth' of an already established knowledge. Hence, as Nietzsche determines in his essay 'How the 'True World' finally became a fable', the abolition of the dilemma renders the opposition meaningless:

The true world we have abolished: what world then remains?  
The apparent one perhaps? ...But no! With the true world we  
have also abolished the apparent one! (18)

To hark back to the femme fatale and to reinterpret or paraphrase the now famous call to remember the actual power the spider woman once possessed, regardless of her earthly dissolution at the end of reel time: this piece proposes that the young girl to whom, lest we forget, this type of film is meant to appeal, may recollect not 'the inevitable demise' (19) into domesticity for the animated ingenue but the adventure she had on the journey she made to reach this final seemingly contented place. The prepubescent spectator will, of course, grow to recognise, due to the mere

force of cultural repetition, the return of the female to the patriarchal fold, contained within the happy ending as suggested by the closing marriage ceremony (Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella) or consummating dance (Beauty And The Beast), much as the film noir audience expect to see the deathly incarceration which finishes off her more mature, transgressive, counterpart. An image which no doubt impressed itself upon Walt Disney and his animation team, considering the obvious allusions to the femme fatale and the noir genre generally contained within the design of the wicked queens and fairy in Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty. All are dark-haired black-eyed evil doers with the power to destabilise due order. In Marina Warner's opinion both Snow White and Cinderella

concentrate with exuberant glee on the towering, taloned, raven-haired wicked stepmother; all Disney's power of invention failed to save the princes from featureless banality and his heroines from saccharin sentimentality. Authentic power lies with the bad women, and the plump cosy fairy godmother in *Cinderella* seems no match for them. (20)

She continues with the visual parallel whilst considering a still of the Joan Crawford look-a-like from the aforementioned animation: 'The steep stair, the plunging angle, the raked shadows, those eyebrows, that raven hair: the stepmother from Hollywood stalks her prey' (21) mimicking the German Expressionism indicative of film noir.

On a comparative note, Disney's penchant for parody continues in their more contemporary offerings, for example, the wicked Frollo in The Hunchback Of Notre Dame resembles and sounds like the actor Stewart Granger. Also to draw in yet another, more recent observation, the current Disney presentation Tarzan opens with a doomed shipwrecked couple, babe

in arms, the mother of whom strongly resembles Belle from Beauty And The Beast. This slightly lighter-haired version stares out from beneath the shattered glass frame which houses the portrait of Tarzan's deceased parents. This unnamed woman wears the same inquisitive expression under a parallel stray curl echoing her earlier incarnation - Belle, who in times before, stared curiously into a broken mirror which flashed back at her a proliferation of aspects of her own reflection, in the forbidden wing of the castle.

It appears, in retrospect, to signify representation to come as this singular interpretation is alluded to via the lingering shot of the framed picture enclosed within the Tarzan animation at the moment when Tarzan finally learns the truth about his biological parentage: a touch which in itself signals Disney's apparent postmodern self-referential acknowledgement of their own ability to create 'stars' and recognisable motifs within popular culture. This assertion is qualified to a certain degree by the lexical items focused upon in the Tarzan film. For example, the appearance of a tea-set which is identical to the famous talking teapot and cup from Beauty And The Beast (Mrs. Potts and her son Chip) is placed carefully on the table, and remains central to the framing shot of Jane Porter's neat English camp forged out of the high jungle grass. This visual imagery gives evidence to Jean Baudrillard's proposition that representations do not copy, reflect or record the processes of the real world, 'for all are simulacrum.' As such, they inhabit a world of endless surface, devoid of meaning, having no basic reference point within actuality. The Disney character in this instance is postmodern in essence as it is purely a copy of a former copy, a repetition of roles played out by actors of old in reel time. Hence, this imagery is caught forever, an echo in a circuit of intertextuality with no originating text but itself. (22)

However, to return to Janey Place's proposition that the female spectator will ultimately recall not the due phallogentric order finally bestowed upon the heroine signalled by the narrative closure, (whether that be in death or marriage) but the power of the desire which propelled *her* as the strong willed central protagonist along the narrative current - in much the same respect, perhaps, as the nineteenth century reader of the Bronte sisters would have remembered Helen Huntingdon or Jane Eyre. Desire: therein lies both the key and the constant to the cultural shift which transforms the submissive Cinderella into the subversive Belle and the commonality which links this animated cartoon to the literary heroines first penned in North Yorkshire, England. This revisionary process has to acknowledge the desire which motivates and initiates change, for as Belsey states, it is

important to emphasise the way desire in all its forms, including heterosexual desire, commonly repudiates legality; at the level of the unconscious its imperatives are absolute; and in consequence it readily overflows, in a whole range of ways, the institutions designed to contain it. (23)

Therefore, a theoretical consideration of the appropriation of desire within western cultural discourse reveals the actual impotence of the hegemonic order, as it ultimately fails to contain the energies which desire sets free: as is demonstrated on a simplistic level by the figure of the femme fatale - in spite of her death, and through the portrayal of Belle despite her retrieval into the patriarchal realm via an apparently normative heterosexual pairing. A coupling which dances its way into public approval, sanctioned by the law,

(the gaze of her father and the castle staff) at the closure of Beauty And The Beast.

She does, as the reader/spectator will remember, fall in love in the first instance with the Beast, who as an/other representation of the monstrous feminine, reject or outsider from conventional society, mirrors Belle's own adolescent angst and otherly uniqueness. (This area is explored further at a later point in this chapter). Hence, the pair are united in their strangeness. Belle is described by her fellow villagers as an 'odd' child who in 'not' being 'one of us' is forced to inhabit a nether region outside of patriarchal dictates. This adolescent creature is thus, to quote Disney's opening score, 'never part of any crowd, with her head up in the clouds'.

Shunned, as Belle and the Beast undoubtedly are, romance can blossom between these two Kristevan dejects and a bond is forged which can then withstand the later disapproval of the villagers. The reader may recall the analogy made earlier between the deject and the hero/heroines of Jeanette Winterson's work. Once again, the deject (in this instance Belle) is the exile by whom the abject exists. The deject deliberately separates him/herself from society at large and as a consequence, the more she strays from the path through the wood, the more she is saved. (Corruption of Kristeva's original 'The more he strays, the more he is saved.'<sup>(24)</sup>) The deject is ultimately a 'devisor of territories [and] languages.' The 'deject never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines impel [the heroine] to start afresh.'<sup>(25)</sup> When this psychical transformation finally takes place in Belle, she is forced to make a stand against the indecent propositions of her human suitor (indecent because Gaston chooses to ignore the polite but firmly negative responses his advances are met with). Belle's emancipation and Gaston's downfall occur when the audience witnesses Gaston's rage at Belle's

final rejection of his marriage proposal. She slams the door shut against the unwelcome intruder and he finds himself propelled head first into a muddy pond only to surface with a pig upon his shoulders: the visual metaphor, alluding to sexism, is explicitly played out here to full comic effect - slapstick for the child's delight laced with knowing irony for the mother's. Gaston's personal humiliation is avenged when he aggressively incites a crowd of fearful villagers who then go with him to the castle where they intend to 'Kill the Beast!' The stock motive of the damsel in distress is ironically played here, if Belle not only refuses to be saved from the beast but also expresses feelings of love for this inhuman partner and actually identifies with his predicament then there can be only one solution in the mind of Gaston and the institution of machismo he represents- the death of both. Hence the line 'kill the Beast' is infused with a duplicit semantic message, as a consequence of murdering the monstrous object of Belle's affection Gaston also believes he will destroy the stubborn desire for equality and independence his chosen maiden harbours within. For without a monster to slay and a pretty princess to save, what place is there for the traditional hero as portrayed by the predatory Gaston? None - or so the narrative of Beauty And The Beast seems to suggest, as in the final instance Gaston is revealed to be both a coward (he cowers in fear when the Beast roars) and devious: he stabs the forlorn beast in the back before slipping and plunging to his death from the uppermost castle turret - a generic device which recalls the fall of the wicked queen from her own high tower in the first full length Disney film Snow White.

When Belle is finally allowed to be alone with her chosen partner her tears revive the seemingly deceased Beast, transforming him back into human form. Belle responds to the Beast's existential suffering because she has come to recognise that it is the same dissatisfaction that she feels



within her own limited realm of existence. Interesting, that the beast remains nameless, as if he were a man yet to be born into everyday dialogue and general comprehension. He, like Belle, remains outside of patriarchal culture's ability to define and contain his perspective on humanity. Therefore only Belle is equipped to answer the Beast's call for understanding, an angst reminiscent of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's most famous monster in Frankenstein who cries, 'I am malicious because I am miserable, make me happy and I shall again be virtuous.'<sup>(26)</sup> Suffice to quote Lacan yet again, in order to reiterate a point often made throughout this work:

Desire subsists both within and beyond the realm of the pleasure principle; it cannot be contained by the stable, institutional, public legality which is marriage. On the contrary, desire, which is absolute, knows no law. <sup>(27)</sup>

It is not unique to incorporate figures engineered by the Disney corporation within scholarly considerations of the female form. This is demonstrated throughout contemporary cultural and literary studies by academics such as Harriett Hawkins <sup>(28)</sup> and Marina Warner <sup>(29)</sup> who have both paid detailed, critical attention to the female caricatures created for children by this market dominating multi-media company. Both have focused on the figure of Belle as a new kind of female hero, emphasising aspects of design which counter the assumptions conjured by the typical Disney iconography. This familiar, staple imagery includes saucer-eyes set within wide infantile faces, surrounded by masses of curly or long hair. These large headed creations are balanced upon petite bodies with tiny waists clothed in mock medieval attire. Indeed, on one level, female representation as chronicled throughout Disney filmography appears to have been 'deep-frozen'

in an 'infantile world', 'embalmed and pacified', as Jean Baudrillard <sup>(30)</sup> says of the town built to further exploit the hype surrounding 'the magic' of the movies -Disneyland, Florida. That term 'magic' being Disney's current advertising slogan for the EuroDisney resort, located, possibly to Jean Baudrillard's dismay, just outside of Paris.

The similarity of clothing worn by Snow White, Sleeping Beauty et al could be interpreted as a fetishistic mimicry of legendary days gone by, bearing witness to Ross's comments that 'history, even in its most mythological Disney form, has been banished'. <sup>(31)</sup> Nevertheless, patriarchal dicta remain intact as the ancient motif of female castration explicitly reveals itself through chaste bosoms bound within stiff corsets: black laces form crosses over Snow White's maidenly chest forbidding the viewer from even considering the possibility that she has breasts, and thus identifying her ever more so with the pre-pubescent audience. In the nineteenth century version given by the Brothers Grimm, the seven year-old Snow-drop bears a strong resemblance to the Snow White of Disney fame. The child with skin as white as snow, cheeks as rosy as blood and hair black as ebony falls prey to the evil machinations of the wicked queen who, disguised as an old pedlar, attempts to squeeze the life out of her with a new corset lace. 'How badly your stays are laced' the disguised step-mother declares before setting, 'to work so nimbly and pull[ing] the lace so tight, that Snow-drop lost her breath, and fell down as if she were dead.' <sup>(32)</sup>

Covered limbs suggest the biblical shame attached to exposed flesh, as Snow White's innocent tongue tastes the poisoned apple and she finally succumbs to a life suspended in sleep, equating once again the fairness of the female sex with death:

Yet, sister woman, though I cannot consent to find a Mozart or a Michael Angelo in your sex, cheerfully, and with the love that burns in depths of admiration, I acknowledge that you can do one thing as well as the best of men....you can die grandly, and as goddesses would die, were goddesses mortal. (33)

And so, Snow White/drop and Sleeping Beauty / Rose-Bud show the small child the way forward. The fairy tale concedes their resurrection in analogous Judeo-Christian fashion but their deaths in life are grand and poetic, inspiring young princes to risk life itself for a glimpse of this legendary and delicate beauty. This perpetual internalization of said imagery is precisely what makes it easy for Disney to mimic and participate in the processes of myth-making as once again Walt and Company's twentieth century interpretation Sleeping Beauty follows closely the tale Rose Bud as chronicled by the Brothers Grimm. Only this time we are minus the procession of princes who had 'tried to break through the thicket into the palace' but having failed miserably stuck fast to the thorns and died horribly:

Then the young prince said, 'All this shall not frighten me, I will go and see Rose-Bud.'

Now that very day were the hundred years completed; and as the prince came to the thicket, he saw nothing but beautiful flowering shrubs, through which he passed with ease ...at last he came to the old tower and opened the door of the little room in which Rose-Bud was, and there she lay fast asleep, and looked so beautiful that he could not take his eyes off, and he stooped down and gave her a kiss. But the moment he kissed her she opened her eyes and awoke, and smiled upon him. (34)

The reviving kiss that each prince bestows upon the sleeping Rose-Bud and Snow White respectively recalls once again Elisabeth Bronfen's work on death, femininity and the aesthetic. This small animated kiss planted lightly on the flushed cheeks of these coloured-in icons signifies what is described by Bronfen as a

moment of eroticism which is in some sense synonymous and interchangeable with that of death, and by implication, the feminine object of desire corresponds in her lover's fantasies to a corpse. (35)

Except, in this case, the phantasy is made literal for the fairy tale hero as these adolescent objects of affection are presumed in the first instance to be dead, as this extract from 'Snow-drop' demonstrates (note the Christian subtext):

They lifted her up, combed her hair, and washed her face with wine and water; but all was in vain, for the little girl seemed quite dead. So they laid her down upon a bier, and all seven watched and bewailed her three whole days; and then they proposed to bury her: but her cheeks were still rosy, and her face looked just as it did while she was alive; so they said, 'We will never bury her in the cold ground.' And they made a coffin so that they might still look at her. (36)

Bronfen submits, as previously developed, (37) that the site of the corporeal female body is endowed with ambiguity: on the one hand the figure of the woman promises narcissistic gratification, on the other her physicality acts as an irritation, 'a source of annoyance to the illusion. Death eliminates the

irritation by effacing its object or cause and re-affirming the [masculine] fantasy of self-stability and security'.<sup>(38)</sup> Needless to say, this phallogentric security is procured when the wicked queen /femme fatale is finally despatched from the scenario when she drops dead at the news that the somnivolent virgin is awakened and restored into the hands of patriarchy. Her retrieval back within conventional society comes courtesy of Walt Disney's vision, via that single, chaste but controlling kiss. As Bronfen indicates,<sup>(39)</sup> the Grimm Brothers' prince demands not Snow-drop but her glass shroud, and she is restored to life not through tender touch but a jolt. As the prince lifts up the coffin to remove her unceremoniously from the top of the hill (and the wider public gaze), the poisoned piece of apple falls from between her lips. She is removed from public view because he jealously considers her to be his possession and as such this stuffed animal / embalmed woman is subject to his fetishistic gaze alone. This perspective shifts erotic desire to the level of viewing, a scopophilic form of control that manifests itself in many cultural areas, as exemplified, on a more simplistic level, in the thoughts of Nick Hornby's contemporary protagonist in his recent novel About A Boy, who inadvertently walks in upon a suicide attempt. He discovers an ostensibly dead body laid in it's own vomit:

He had to say that the thing he found most attractive about her was that she had tried to kill herself. Now that was interesting - sexy, almost, in a morbid kind of way.<sup>(40)</sup>

But what of the contemporary girl who watches Disney's Snow White for the first time? Does such imagery help sow the seeds of self sacrifice so intricately bound up with notions and expectations of the

feminine? Death is removed from the scene, sanitised via the serene face that still looks beautiful in spite of the fetishised kiss of death. The ambiguous nature of desire as expressed by the prince and the dwarves as potential lovers and fathers is ultimately connected with a dead woman. As narcissistic necrophiles the former carers of Snow White demonstrate at this particular juncture that if any form of mourning is involved, 'then it is such that the prince uses this displayed dead body to mourn himself'. (41) This begs the question of whether the child who projects onto the screen an identification with Snow White mourns for herself, or mourns at the loss of the mother suggested by the subtext as the price for her unavoidable journey into female maturity. Is she, as female, forced to rehearse the sacrifice patriarchy demands of her sex prior to the time when she will be finally expected to become a wife and mother? Many incarnations of Snow White / Sneewittchen / Snow-drop give up their maidenhood, simply trading one passive state (as corpse) for another, the role of wife, perhaps dammed to repeat the narcissistic behaviour and actions of the various wicked queens before them. She gives up herself to be looked at; just as the queen before her was obsessed with being the fairest in the land, Snow White has only her own inevitable demise to look forward to.

Finally, as auto-icon, Snow White performs the apotheosis of one of the central positions ascribed to Woman in western culture; namely that the surveyed feminine body is meant to confirm the power of the masculine gaze. (42)

As the prince gazes upon Snow White now he will one day look to replace her in an/other just as the incestuous father in Catskin sought to replace his dead beautiful wife with one whose own fairness is equal to his former

beloved's. The repetition of this archaic perpetual cycle is vital to the narcissistic machinations explicit within the masculine ego:

May I not marry my daughter? She is the very image of my dead wife: unless I have her, I shall not find any bride upon the whole earth, and you say there must be a queen. (43)

Almost two hundred years after the original publication of this folk story in Germany and the contemporary girl can still perceive the Grimms' version's original intent: curiosity spells danger for the child who turns the golden key and opens the lock of the forbidden room.

In appearance these particular Disney ingenues are secrets in themselves with their tiny bodies discreetly bound beneath layers of flowing material. High collars disguise necks, sleeves crawl along the backs of hands and legs remain hidden under long skirts brushing the stone floors of imposing castles and the overgrown paths of deep, dark forests - perhaps inscribing the equation of masochism with the feminine, the very principle of courtly love, upon the young girl's conscious processes for the very first time. Just as Zizek remarked that the medieval lady, who waits upon the demands of the chivalrous knight, becomes an uncanny entity of monstrous character, so to do Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella, particularly when one considers the elevation of the first two figures in question to ethereal, spiritual, idealistic heights. As representatives of the lady they act as automaton, as Lacan terms 'inhuman partners ...never characterised for any of her real, concrete virtues, for her wisdom, her prudence, or even her competence.'<sup>(44)</sup> Empty-headed prettiness, kind and banal, the meaningless of

their dialogue is suspended within the dynamics of the animated action. What space is there for revision here?

Damsels walk on tiny feet without toes - toes are for the ugly, the excessive and the unladylike as we find with Cinderella's unpleasant, grotesque step sisters. Their toes, snake-like and tentacular, spill out of the delicate slipper meant for the virgin's foot, revealing the horror and the perversity patriarchal culture attributes to the desiring female, and once again echoing Freud's own identification of the monstrous Medusa with the female genitals. However, there is an exception to this archaic rule here. In Tarzan, the most recent of Disney's computer-animated offerings, the young heroine Jane Porter loses her dainty boot revealing large splayed toes which curl along with Jane's boisterous laughter in response to Tarzan's tickling: an early indication of Jane's curious, playful and erotic nature.

Freud's psychoanalytical analogy is also drawn upon by Marina Warner during her own examination of the symbolism connoted by the female foot <sup>(45)</sup> and discussed in the previous section with reference to Villanelle in Jeanette Winterson's novel The Passion. Cinderella's own foot slips silently into the glass slipper - echoing the sexual circumcision implicit within the image of the Chinese maiden's tightly bound and deformed limb - itself an eroticized play on the shape of the petals of the orchid and the lips of the vagina.

On a historical note, Warner also cites, by way of example, the earliest recorded version of Cinderella still surviving, a ninth century story from China which tells of a wronged daughter who loses her tiny golden shoe. <sup>(46)</sup> Within the Grimm brothers' rendition, Ashputtel, the ugly sisters are 'fair in face, but foul in heart'; <sup>(47)</sup> encouraged by their ambitious mother hack they off their toes so they can fit their big feet into the golden slipper - '...cut



it off; when you are queen you will not care about toes, you will not want to go on foot.' (48) From this perspective, Disney's interpretation merely repeats the conventions seemingly locked into place many centuries ago, exploiting the rationale of mythology to the full.

Time and time again distinctive hoods protect female modesty, sheltering innocent eyes from the fruit of the biblical tree, hiding the flowing locks that could arouse scopophilic interest in the maturing maiden. From Snow White through to Beauty And The Beast the motif of the hooded female child is exploited to the full. What is not banished is clear - an eternity of iconography which at first appears to leave no space for revision or pluralistic interpretation as both Snow White and Belle, draped with capes, flee from one life threatening situation into yet another in the deep, dark woods.

Although Belle is endowed with many of the same distinguishing attributes as her antecedents the reader is also reminded by Marina Warner of those 'emancipated touches' bestowed upon her by the screen writers (principally Linda Woolverton) and animators. This girl walks with a confident swing, is a curious child who, craving adventure, develops a large appetite for experience and knowledge, as expressed to the young audience through her joy of reading. Here is a heroine whose own hair is shown to break free of its ribbons: a repeated motif throughout the animation which acts as a straightforward analogous marker as to Belle's strong spirit, as loose curls point the young viewer to the furrowed, determined brow. This creation does not fear the forest as Snow White once did, its thorns do not envelop and imprison her as Sleeping Beauty was. Belle travels its paths on horseback, cracking the reins in authoritative manner as she determines to rescue her father. Confronted by the hideous vision that is the beast, she

demands that he step out of the shadows so she can see him for herself. It is as if she were born of an Angela Carter heroine - 'any but a mountaineer's child would have died of fright at the sight of it' the narrator exclaims in Carter's short story 'The Werewolf' <sup>(49)</sup>. Belle, like Carter's Red Riding Hood before her, is not afraid of the big, bad wolf; she defies him and she questions his own motivation:

The script even contains a fashionable bow in the direction of self-reflexiveness, for Belle likes reading fairy tales more than any other kind of book, and consequently recognises, when she finds herself in the Beast's castle, the type of story she is caught in. <sup>(50)</sup>

No longer crafted with paint and wood, as the nineteenth century Olympia of the opening extract was, these contemporary simulacra are designed and animated by computer for consumption by a global audience through the visual media of screen and television. <sup>(51)</sup> A factor which recalls Warner's logical supposition that no ancient patron around the fire of the storyteller,

no participant in the mysteries celebrating the exploits of Hercules, no member of the audience at the tragedy of Agamemnon or Jason had the story recapitulated and reproduced and beamed at him - or her - again and again in a frenzied proliferation of echoes. <sup>(52)</sup>

From paper to screen the Disney heroine inhabits an artificial landscape and psychical space which correlates directly with the much discussed psychoanalytical notions concerned with the lost or disguised femininity of the previous section. The question remains - how to interpret this theatrical fake born of technological efficiency and very successful mass marketing?

As noted earlier, some of the academic critiques of Disney's hood wearing maidens appear to replace intellectual fortitude with cynicism and outright dismissal. As has been suggested, it has become far too easy to dismiss this form of female representation as quintessentially delusive and banal, and it is unhelpful to any feminist centred project to describe Cinderella and Snow White as innately sexist simply because they sing while they carry out their domestic chores, especially when one considers the impact this filmic iconography has had upon generations of young female audiences in the West.

Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation.

5: Girlz In The Hood: Adolescent.

- 1 Cixous, H., pg.528. 'Fiction And Its Phantoms: A Reading Of Freud's 'Das Unheimliche!.' New Literary History
- 2 Hoffmann, E.T.A., The Sandman, 1817, Olympia is previously referred to on page 76 of this thesis and discussed thereafter, in detail, in relation to Freud's work on the Uncanny and Helene Cixous' response to the aforementioned paper ( Cixous source cited above).
- 3 Warner, M., pg.414. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 4 Maio, K., pg14. 'Disney's Dolls' New Internationalist, December 1998.
- 5 Walt Disney's Beauty And The Beast, 1991. The colouring book in question is an American publication produced in 1996.
- 6 Evidence which further qualifies Maio's assertions appears in the form of a magazine quiz which asks, 'Which princess do you think you are most like?' Questions include, 'Who would you most like to marry?' and 'What do you prefer to do.... sew, read or brush your hair?' The young reader with mostly 'a', 'b' or 'c' answers can then identify herself with one of the following:  
  

Belle *Mostly a*: You are just like beautiful Belle. You love reading, you enjoy day-dreaming and wherever you go you make people smile.  
[ Non-threatening, dozy and clever?]

Cinderella *Mostly b*: You are most like lovely Cinderella. You're helpful, kind and thoughtful. You make friends easily and you love pretty dresses.  
[ A conservative/republican figure, a retrospective ingenue - a 1950's amenable, happy homemaker.]

Jasmine *Mostly c*: You are like Jasmine. You are adventurous and full of magic and mystery and you love wearing glamorous outfits.  
[ The modern-day ethnic alternative: connotations of the racist, stereotypical imagery associated with women-of-colour, highlighting within the word play the exotic, enigmatic, 'nature' colonial racism applies to those 'other' types of women]

My observations in parentheses. Source: Disney's Princess, Issue1, 24 June,1998.
- 7 Disney, Mulan, 1998. Taken from the film script, reiterated in a children's book version of the film, Disney's Mulan, pg. 7, 1998.
- 8 Ross. A., pg.128, No Respect: Intellectuals And Popular Culture, 1989.
- 9 Belsey, C., Desire: Love Stories In Western Culture, pg.13, 1994.
- 10 Spivak, G., in Young, R., pg.157, White Mythologies: Writing History And The West, 1992.
- 11 Tasker, Y., pg.6, Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre And The Action Cinema, 1993.

- 12 Tasker, Y., pg. 5, 1993.
- 13 Leavis, F.R., pg. 39, The Great Tradition, (1948), 1983.
- 14 Bronte, A., The Tenant Of Wildfell Hall, 1988. On page 7 of the introduction to this particular edition Winifred Gerin writes, 'Written between 1846 and 1848 and published in the early summer of 1848, it might be said to be the first manifesto for 'Women's Lib'. Taking for her theme a Byronic-style marriage, between wholly-unsuited partners, with a heroine, Helen Huntingdon, driven to leave her atrocious husband; to claim her right to an independent existence and successfully earn her living - and more risky still, to abscond with her son - Anne Bronte was not only shocking the conventions of the day, but flouting the laws of the land. In 1948 wives - and still more the children of a marriage - were wholly subject to the husband's control.
- May Sinclair, writing in 1913, said that the slamming of Helen Huntingdon's bedroom-door against her husband reverberated throughout Victorian England.'
- 15 In a brief article entitled 'Intellectuals fight 'dumbing down',' which appeared in The Times Higher Educational Supplement March 12, 1999: Harriet Swain reports on a recent conference 'on dumbing down'. Topics included a debate on access where one, James Tooley: 'Professor of education at the University of Newcastle, criticised football and women's studies. Stephen Rowland, director of the Higher Education Research Centre, said students had been turned into clients and education into a leisure activity.'
- One hopes that the banality of Professor Tooley's statement does not need elaborating upon.
- 16 Leavis, F.R., pg. 39. 1983.
- 17 Mills, S., pg. 86. Discourse, 1997.
- 18 Nietzsche, F., Twilight Of The Gods.
- 19 Place, J., in E. Ann Kaplan (Ed), Women In Film Noir, pg.47, 1980.
- 20 Warner, M., pg.207, 1995.
- 21 Warner, M., pg.225, 1995.
- 22 Kuhn, A., pg.177-178 Alien Zone, 1992.
- 23 Belsey, C., pg.7, 1994.
- 24 Kristeva, J., pg. 9. Powers Of Horror, 1982.
- 25 Kristeva, J., pg.8. Powers Of Horror, 1982.
- 26 Shelley, M., Frankenstein 1988.
- 27 Lacan, J., Ecrits, pg.311. 1977.
- 28 Hawkins, H., '...the Wicked Queen in Disney's *Snow White* is a perfect cartoon-version of Lady Macbeth, while the recipe for the witch's brew that turned her into a hag was clearly inherited from her Shakespearean precursors.'  
Classics And Trash, pg.115. 1990.
- 29 Warner, M., From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995 & No Go The Bogeyman, 1998.
- 30 Baudrillard, J., pg. 354, in Storey, J., (ed.), Cultural Theory And Popular Culture,1998.

- 31 Ross, A., pg. 39, 1989.
- 32 Grimm, pg. 95. Grimms' Fairy Tales, 1996.
- 33 Bronfen, E., Thomas de Quincey, quote taken from the title page Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 34 Grimm, pg.51., Grimms' Fairy Tales, 1996.
- 35 Bronfen, E., pg.184. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 36 Grimm, pg.97-98. Grimms' Fairy Tales, 1996.
- 37 The reiteration of Elisabeth Bronfen's theoretical work in this instance hopefully serves the overall fusion of this thesis. The reader will recall that imagery surrounding death and femininity was discussed throughout the opening introductory chapter Cut and also focused upon in other cultural forms in the chapters Tongue and Bite.
- 38 Bronfen, E., pg.184-5. 1992.
- 39 Bronfen, E., pg. 100. 1992.
- 40 Hornby, N., pg. 95-96. About A Boy, 1999.
- 41 Bronfen, E., pg.102, 1992.
- 42 Bronfen, E., pg.102, 1992.
- 43 Grimm, pg. 253. 1996.
- 44 Zizek, S., pg.90. The Metastases Of Enjoyment, 1994 quotes Lacan, pg.149, The Ethics Of Psychoanalysis, London: Routledge,1992.
- 45 Warner, M., pg.113. 1995.
- 46 Warner, M., pg. 128 and 202-203, 1995.
- 47 Grimm, pg.164 Grimms' Fairy Tales, 1996.
- 48 Warner, M., pg.169. 1996.
- 49 Carter, A., pg.109. The Bloody Chamber And Other Stories, 1981.
- 50 Warner, M., pg. 314, 1995.
- 51 Chinese officials are currently attempting to prevent the release of Disney's latest animated feature Mulan within China itself, as part of an on going struggle 'to suppress foreign-backed interpretations of the country's literary heritage.' Mulan is already a commercial success in other Asian markets such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, pg.14, Maio, K., 1998.
- 52 Warner, M., pg.27. Six Myths Of Our Time: Managing Monsters, 1994.

Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation.

6: Radical Horror and the Ingenue

' The bad girl is the heroine of our times, and transgression is a staple entertainment.' <sup>(1)</sup> Marina Warner

As this scholarly consideration has progressed it becomes obvious that it is not enough to talk of ancient patriarchal constructs as blocking the way forward for female representation per se. It is important to recall one of the propositions of the first section, namely, that the image itself does not contain the one and only, sole, authentic meaning as for instance, that purported to be intended by the author (as with academic interpretations of the auteur theory in relation to the work of Alfred Hitchcock). The site of meaning is located in the interaction between reader and image and is therefore subject to numerous contingent, mechanical collisions within the reader's own consciousness which are themselves subject to shifts and changes over time and circumstance.

Perhaps a more suitable analogy would be to consider personal interpretation as akin to poetic uniqueness. Interpretation could then be recognised as:

less a matter of authenticity of individual expression than of sensitivity to the language pool on which the poet draws in re-creating and re-defining the world as he or she has found it.

<sup>(2)</sup>

In this sense the 'personal' follows Wittgenstein's philosophical proposition that the self is not necessarily equated to the inward looking gaze of the

psychologically complex subject but is, as it were, 'poised' (as Lacan's subject was) on the edge or limit of the world as (she) found it. The poet like the philosopher, like the psychoanalyst, acknowledges that their individual, private, linguistic construction of the world-out-there is partly reliant upon a complex negotiation involving repression and disavowal with the language of her nation and culture. (3) The female subject recognises ultimately that 'I' am an illusion on an imaginary void, echoing Lacan's subject who is balanced precariously upon the rim of the abyss. Therefore, for the female subject, as already party to the knowledge of the illusion of psychical wholeness, it becomes of less importance to consider that Disneyland is 'the site of a monstrous confidence trick upon the American people'(4) and of little surprise to hear this same fantasy described as merely 'a sentimental compression of something that is itself already a lie'. (5)

On another note, maybe such derisory commentary, as propounded by Finkielkraut during the opening pages of this chapter, simply reveals the misogyny still very much implicit within a cultural hegemony which still distinguishes between the sexes, defining action and adventure narratives as primarily intended for boys with domestic realism and fairy tale as something lesser, more sedate, and therefore more appropriate for girls. Images of boys steeped in action and adventure persist from Disney's Peter Pan and Pete's Dragon (6) to that most recent of media hyped films Star Wars, Episode One: The Phantom Menace. The young hero central to the plot movement, Anakin Skywalker, is seen racing a high speed air vehicle in a 'pod race'. This specific imagery is repeated in the market place where Star Wars toys remain popular and further complemented by the computer console industry in the form of a Nintendo 64 game. Now the young viewer can role play at home by virtue of virtual reality, mimicking the behaviour he



witnessed on screen by flying in that very same pod race himself. He can *be* Anakin as the young female fan sits by colouring in the ornate and cumbersome costumes designed for Anakin's female counterpart, the young queen destined to mother his children.

Aside from the fact that these rather stagnant complementary colouring books fail to acknowledge within their representations that this new Star Wars film has a strong adolescent heroine as a lead protagonist (Queen Amidala, as played by the actress Natalie Portman) Nintendo, Sony Playstation and other various computer formats have failed to create a complementary game that reflects her valorous character. She is described by the surrounding advertising hype as possessing 'the strength, wisdom and courage of a great ruler' with a beauty matched only by 'her determination and compassion'. (7) But this is not enough to impress manufacturers of children's toys and games to invest more thought and effort in appealing to the female prepubescent population. Indeed, designers within the computer games market consistently fail to represent females of any description adequately. For example, do not be fooled by the Nintendo 64 title 'Zelda': this is not the story of a female questor. She is purely the damsel in distress; yet an/other awaiting rescue by a Peter Pan like character who has to solve the riddles, slay the monsters and collect the treasure before he can finally save Zelda.

As recently highlighted, note the distinct lack of female representation within the computer games market - the cult-like status of the computer-animated Lara Croft included. This star of three 'Tomb Raider' epics is a dominatrix with a plait. She stands in shorts and army boots with breasts bigger than her head, most definitely contrived from some masculine sexual fantasy. The Lara Croft doll is not marketed to appeal to young girls,

she does not sit between Barbie and the 'Generation Girls' on the toy shop shelf - she is to be found amidst the plastic science fiction figures and Action Man paraphernalia so obviously aimed at small boys and enthusiastic fathers (appropriate analysis of this action heroine has been undertaken in the following chapter 'Frontier Gals'). Representations of womanhood can still be viewed, of course, as hapless victims having their arms and heads pulled off, as in Play Station's 'Resident Evil' and its sequel 'Resident Evil 2'. Here again, the simple oppositional dialectics of the female stereotype are reinforced, woman as pistol-toting warrior or blood-splattered machine-gun fodder.

Perhaps at this juncture it would be fair to say that Lara Croft's representation is to some degree a reversal of traditional plot conventions, as is the case with Roald Dahl's interpretation of Little Red Riding Hood: 'Her eyelid droops, her eyelid flickers. She pulls a pistol from her knickers' and guns down the big bad wolf, skinning his carcass and wearing his fur as a winter coat. <sup>(8)</sup> The unmistakable dynamics of the revenge motif, although examined throughout this chapter, must also be considered ultimately limiting for female representation per se. Whereas one can appreciate the surprise, or shock of the formerly victimised female character transformed into the active protagonist and the entertainment value thereof, surely any radical retelling of the story of womankind must delve deeper than this basic reversal and manipulation of a familiar plot.

Female doers, though in existence, are less than prevalent within the pages of today's many forms of pulp fiction. The reader need only pick up any contemporary Disney comic or girls magazine (newsagents stock, among the many others, titles such as 'Sugar', 'Miss' and 'Girl-Talk') to see that what is considered interesting to young females are boys, spangle nail

varnish and a perpetual urgency to look good in order to appeal to the opposite sex. The recent cover of the teenage magazine 'B everything you want' proposes, via the obvious connotations of its title, that life's opportunities and possibilities are endless for the modern woman and then headlines with four major stories involving heterosexual relationships and two articles focusing on body image: 'Persecuted for having an eating disorder' and how to appear 'sexy and sun-kissed in under five hours'.<sup>(9)</sup> Alarming perhaps, to the eyes of the radical feminist reader, is the rate at which the aforementioned material is repeated across lengths of shop shelves. On the front cover of an adjacent sister magazine, aimed in this instance at the twenty-something reader, the very same stories occur. This time 'New Woman' which assures the customer that 'you can't put a good woman down' focuses upon men: 'Have 100% More Sex: Make him do it more,' body image and materialism: 'Foxy Fashion Looks: Just Add You' and 'Can two thousand pounds buy a perfect body?'<sup>(10)</sup> In effect, these magazines promise more than their limiting format can deliver, being more concerned with advertising sales than the actual content of the features they produce. This capitalist manipulation of stereotypical gender representation is also evident within the Disney magazines examined earlier<sup>(11)</sup> in this chapter where the young reader adorned with free plastic jewels and stick-on earrings is asked which Disney prince they would most like to marry and which activity they prefer - sewing, reading or brushing their hair.

To return to the original intent of this section: the locus of this specific chapter has concerned itself with the mapping of the transgressive qualities to be discerned from popular images of juvenile heroinism, together with a consideration of this iconography in relationship to the coexisting

literature of the times. The consequence of this theoretical parallel has to include a poststructural rendering of contemporary representations of girlhood. For, it becomes possible, as illustrated, to distinguish from within this comparative analysis the cultural manifestations of what could be defined as a revisionary model of adolescent femininity within the artforms of the Western world.

What draws me to this particular area of discussion is the distinct lack of critical theory surrounding images of the ingenue. Why the apparent overlooking of such an important figure? Adolescence can be understood as an ambiguous site of meaning for the unstable ego. It is both a signifier of cohesion and disruption - the corporeal body integrates childhood with adulthood but it also signals rupture and the irresolvable crisis that influences all of our lives: that perpetual negotiation the unconscious is forced to make with the death drive. It is conceived as both an epoch of uncertainties and as a berth for the most normative (heterosexual) accounts of sexual formation. Jo Croft points out that

Adolescence has a problematic status within this vocabulary of the body's beginnings and endings: typically conceived as a transitional, in-between and conflict-ridden category, its relationship to the unswerving linearity of physical chronologies is apparently uneasy. (12)

The adolescent figure is essentially a hybrid composition who is caught within a complex psychological wrangle between her ideas of girlhood and her own physical reality. Therefore, it could be suggested that she perceives herself to be alien to herself and the body she once knew, which is now changing before her very eyes. Little wonder that Disney's Belle, Esmeralda,

Ariel and Mulan could all be said to inhabit 'narratives of escape'<sup>(13)</sup> paralleling female creations from the world of children's literature such as Mary Lennox ( The Secret Garden ). The image of Lennox herself has now been projected onto the screen, reproduced in a British television series during the 1970's and more recently reduplicated in a 1994 major film production of this acclaimed Edwardian classic for girls. The repetition of this type of heroine, with a dash of Red Riding Hood about her - young, dark, wilful and clever - remains paramount within late twentieth century culture specifically directed at girls. We see her incarnation once again in a 1997 film version of Roald Dahl's Matilda. Matilda, as was Winterson's Jeanette in Oranges Are not The Only Fruit is a very special and gifted child who, misunderstood by her grotesque family (or community), craves happiness and fulfilment via the enlightenment promised by education. What these characters share apart from 'Jo [March's] cross-dressing, Katy's daring, [What Katy Did Next] [and] Mary Lennox's sullenness and temper'<sup>(14)</sup> is the power to create an autonomous universe, a fantasy regime which is determined by the heroine herself in order to escape the oppressive dictates of the familial situation. This psychical space becomes a safe haven for her developing ego, a place in which she can acquire knowledge and negotiate with philosophical concepts she feels are relevant to her sex and gender.

The cultural repetition of this trope suggests the 'existence of a coherent feminized perceptual framework'<sup>(15)</sup>, one which counters patriarchal discourse, allowing the female child to free herself from class and gender restrictions. This same subversive action empowers a cross-dressing Mulan to do what a discontented Jo March (Little Women) merely dreamed of: Jo desired to go off to war, to take up a place alongside her soldier father, to usurp the throne of the oedipal boy and make the quest her own. Mulan, in

turn, ceremoniously cuts off her hair at the altar of her ancestors, sacrificing the unmanageable feminine garb which has up until this moment merely caused her anxiety, (in much the same manner as Jo March chooses to sell her one beautiful, feminine attribute to the local wig maker). Mulan dresses as a soldier and goes off to fight for China, taking the place of her noble but ageing father. The hood motif is recalled once again, but here it disguises the fact the young noble warrior is in fact female.

This same contingent agency enables the 'gorgeous' but 'strange' Belle ( who sings to her audience, 'I want adventure in the great wide somewhere'), like the solitary Matilda, to first find comfort and pleasure within fairy stories and then to uncover the endless possibilities for experience as suggested by the world of literature. These reading skills equip Belle, Jo and Matilda with the ability to incorporate knowledge gained from their chosen reading matter when traditional oedipal obstacles present themselves within the supposed reality of the domestic realm. As Matilda's strong young mind continues to grow it occurs to her while reading Ivanhoe, with a somewhat melancholy contemplation, that 'talking dragons' and 'princesses with hair long enough to climb' might not actually exist prior to the magical revelation, which compounds her self sufficiency, that 'she had a kind of strength she wasn't even aware of.'<sup>(16)</sup> A cognisance reiterated by twelve year-old Mathilda in the controversial, adult film Leon (1994) who following the murder of her family by gangsters, including her most beloved baby brother, asks, 'is life always this hard, or is it just when you're a kid?'<sup>(17)</sup>, before moving on to learn the tricks of the assassin's trade. Hence, for the ingenue, the state of melancholia is not an immobilising predicament or a paralysing force, as suggested by the sight of Snow White trussed up in a glass box, but a last bow to the naiveté attached by society to childhood, the

recognition that she is about to give up the innocence patriarchal wings longed to protect and perpetuate, in the pursuit of personal enlightenment. The world does not strip her of her girlhood: she thoughtfully and deliberately gives up the hood that sheltered and blinded her, that idealised her supposed gentle femininity, in order to take up the challenge of the quest formerly denied her.

Enlightenment makes the contemporary heroine wise: it enables Matilda to despatch the cruel headmistress, Miss Crunchball. Her wit and telepathic skills assist Matilda as she seeks revenge, forcing the evil feminine double to fly the school she rules with fear and violence and the home she previously stole from her petite but bright niece, Miss Honey. Matilda's academic prowess enables her to save her own crooked father from the law, before using that same judicial structure to force her neglectful parents to allow her to select her own guardian, affecting her legal adoption by the kind and loving Miss Honey. There are, of course, other strong minded heroines who choose not to be cared for by grown-ups - as we find with A. Lindgren's 1945 creation Pippi Longstocking, the young child who lives in her own house with her pet horse and a parrot. Her single-minded vision is reproduced in Babette Cole's more contemporary cartoon character in the pages of Princess Smartypants (1988) and within M. Waddell's self explanatory invention The Tough Princess (1989).

The revisionary protagonist, as has been demonstrated, can be situated in several cultural arenas, suggesting that she is not a new kind of female hero at all but one who has maintained a marginal place within cultural discourse over the centuries. This iconography recurs throughout history via one usually derided medium or another: whether that be the folk or fairy tale of oral tradition, children's literature, the romance genre or other

novels written by or principally for women, those aforementioned animated Disney 'classics' or the much scoffed, maligned and often censored or banned films from the slasher genre. However, although often marginalised, or overlooked by the elitism of established academic canons of thought, all of these disciplines place a female figure at the centre of an action narrative. These areas include the literature of successful and widely respected women writers such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Sally Morgan, examples from which have been incorporated at the appropriate junctures throughout this thesis.

Furthermore, as previously explored, the figure of the animated, adolescent girl within the cycle of films made by the Disney Corporation has closely informed the basis for a distinctive definition of a popular revisioned postmodern artefact. With this proposition in mind, this chapter has paid detailed attention to Beauty And The Beast, and will continue to do so, throughout the subsequent work, with reference to Pocahontas, The Hunchback Of Notre Dame and the more recent Mulan. In conclusion, the ensuing chapter will consider the re-presentation of the American Scream-Queen who has come to appeal to the slightly older girl in preparation for the final piece which deals with the more mature female figure.



## Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation

### 6: Radical Horror and the Ingenue

- 1 Warner, M., pg.11. Managing Monsters: The 1994 Reith Lectures.
- 2 Perloff, M., pg.198. Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language And The Strangeness Of The Ordinary. 1996.
- 3 Perloff, M., pg. 217. 1996.
- 4 Ross, A., pg.39. 1989.
- 5 Doctorow, E.L., pg.288. The Book Of Daniel, New York: Random House, 1971.
- 6 A 'live' action Disney film incorporating animated shots of the dragon, much in the manner of the earlier Disney films Song Of The South, Bedknobs And Broomsticks and Mary Poppins. In this instance only the young central protagonist Peter can see the dragon who becomes his loyal and trusted friend.
- 7 This particular text is taken from a scroll which accompanies a free Princess Amidala plastic figure, courtesy of Kellogg's Cornflakes, 1999. The Anakin Skywalker scroll follows conventional hero expectations: 'A nine year old boy who, along with his mother Shmi, live as slaves on the planet Tatooine. His scruffy appearance is misleading - he is a genius with equipment and machinery. Working for Watto in his junk shop he dreams of becoming a starpilot and longs for adventure.'
- 8 Dahl, R., Revolting Rhymes, 1984.
- 9 'B everything you want', August 1999. Cover page titles include: 'Love Criminals: Why these women forgave their lying, cheating boyfriends.' 'My millionaire lover saved me from a life of prostitution.' and 'Hot Summer Nights: The 4 secret steps to perfect dates.'
- 10 New Woman, August 1999.
- 11 A full account of the Disney magazine article in question is given within Note 6 at the closure of the preceding chapter.
- 12 Campbell & Harbord, pg.190. Croft, J., 'Writing The Adolescent Body,' 1998.
- 13 Simons, J., pg. 29. What Katy Read: Feminist Re-readings Of Classic Novels For Girls. 1995.
- 14 Simons, J., pg.27. 1995.
- 15 Simons, J., pg.29. 1995.
- 16 Quotes notated are taken directly from the film soundtrack version of Matilda, directed by Danny Devito, 1997.
- 17 Line of dialogue taken directly from the film Leon, directed by Luc Bresson, 1994. Mathilda is played by Natalie Portman, who has already been referred to in this chapter in connection with her major science fiction role. To recapitulate: she appears as the fourteen year-old queen and ruler - who will one day give birth to Star Wars (1977) protagonists Luke and Leia, in Episode One: The Phantom Menace, 1999.

## Popular Matter: Revised Heroines in Film and Animation

### 7: The Final Girl Revisited

'I didn't raise my girl to be a severed head!' (1)

The Scream-Queen may be described as a typically white, middle-class teenager (a point highlighted by the middle-class black girl who falls victim to the unknown maniac in Scream 2). This particular revisionist product inhabits the reconsidered realm of the contemporary Trash slasher / horror film genre, which is circulating the cultural hemisphere once again, most notably within Wes Craven's genre revising offering Scream and it's aforementioned sequel.

These locations may at first appear disparate; however, as will be made clear in substantial detail, they are commonly linked by a contingency equating directly to ancient mythology and the traditional European fairy story pre-dating the work of the Brothers Grimm, Anderson and Perrault (which itself has links with more ancient Greek and Asian ancestry (2)). No text can be fully understood without analysing how it slots into the vast universal revenue of other artistic works. Sara Mills' earlier supposition is corroborated by John Fiske's statement that

Culture is a process of making meanings that people actively participate in; it is not a set of preformed meanings handed down to and imposed upon the people. (3)

In this instance, the historical reference to medieval and archaic mythologies concerned with the representation of women bears a direct correlation with this specific contemporary figure in so far as all the forms referred to place particular emphasis upon the young girl's appropriation of sexual knowledge, charting how she develops an understanding of gender and sexuality in the adult world. The point that needs to be re-stated here concerns the emphasis on the multiple voices that enunciate the complex subjectivity of woman herself. The sustained examination of the polymorphous identities inscribed upon her by cultural discourse necessitates referral to a diverse range of contemporary references. The emphasis placed upon the vicissitude of places in which so-defined stereotypical representations of womanhood appear simultaneously opens up the possibilities for the radical re-interpretations of femininity which can manifest.

This juvenile figure appears within sectors of art and entertainment (such as Disney) ordinarily disregarded, as previously expressed, by an academic establishment which has 'no eyes for her' as Freud, in Cixous' opinion, had no eyes for the animated doll in his reading of Hoffman's The Sandman.<sup>(4)</sup> As was the case with Olympia, this initially proposed model of revisionary heroinism is also animated, and has become much derided by the intellectual, academic establishment. As Olympia herself was shown to the besotted Nathaniel to be an inhuman partner via the tearing out of her eyes and the dismembering of her wooden limbs by the very hands that created her, so too we see the disavowal of the cartoon heroine by a phallogentric logic which brought her into being in the first place.

Therefore, to rephrase Cixous, and repeat a previous proposition, it would appear that certain factions of academia are effaced by

what she, as a child's nursery time favourite, or a slasher movie protagonist appears to represent and it seem obscene, too far removed from traditional critical theory to be worthy of serious consideration. Replace Freud with 'academia' and one might suggest that current traditional academic thinking is desperate in its attempts to move away from and denigrate the poststructural desire to determine popular models of mass entertainment as intellectually and historically relevant. It is not simply a matter of fashion - if indeed the reader supposes that fashion is a superficial product susceptible to the manipulation of prevalent discourse: one which depends upon the distinct historical era in which you find yourself to be born. Therefore, in the current historical, political climate it is the media against which the charge of psychological manipulation is levelled:

media (input) has a given effect [passive acceptance] on the human subject without the intervention of that subject's mind or consciousness. (5)

Whether or not one agrees with the research which focuses upon the exploitation of response mechanics involving behavioural manipulation, what is possible to cite as evidence is an actual circumstance of cultural change which has produced a revisionary model of adolescent heroinism. This point recalls an earlier observation, one pertinent to the current theoretical debate. What would appear to be an inappropriate area for academic discussion can be challenged following on from the proposition made in the first part of this thesis: that the contemporary American horror movie is the reincarnated, recycled descendent of the seventeenth and eighteenth century European fairy story. This chapter proposes, as was alluded to in the prior section entitled 'Castrating Form/s', that the major

protagonists within these film narratives, Jamie Lee Curtis in Halloween and Halloween H20 and Neve Campbell in Scream and Scream 2, contain within their composite structure elements which could define them as a form of Western revisionary heroinism. However, Carol Clover suggests that the feminist academic should guard against heralding the horror genre's female protagonist as a new kind of action heroine for fear of simply adding credence to age-old misogynies:

To applaud the Final Girl as a feminist development... is in light of her figurative meaning, a particularly grotesque expression of wishful thinking. She is simply an agreed upon fiction and the male viewer's use of her as a vehicle for his own sadomasochistic fantasies an act of perhaps timeless dishonesty. (6)

I disagree with Clover's assertion because it fails to take into account the impact of this genre upon the female spectator and overlooks the obvious psychoanalytical connotations to be drawn from the relationship between the monstrous grotesque and the feminine itself as a de/stabilising, threatening force to the illusion of masculine primacy so guarded by the phallus. Nevertheless, Clover is most accurate in her estimation of the radical transgression of gender roles explicitly played out through the assumption of the masculine gaze by the Final Girl herself:

these are texts in which the categories masculine and feminine, traditionally embodied in male and female, are collapsed into one and the same character. [This figure is] anatomically female and one whose point of view the spectator is unambiguously invited, by the usual set of literary, structural and cinematic conventions to share. (7)

Jamie Lee Curtis's portrayal of the Final Girl in films such as Halloween, Terror Train, Prom Night and The Fog pre-dates the more polished, popular face of slasher film mentality, as played by Jodie Foster in Johnathon Demme's film Silence Of The Lambs. For they, juxtaposed with the animated Disney characters of Belle in Beauty And The Beast, Esmeralda in The Hunchback Of Notre Dame and Pocahontas, represent a cultural influence on the young females the late twentieth century indicative of the significant pace and shifts in global cultural communication. It cannot be said that words have been replaced by televisual and filmic imagery - it is more the case that the word and the image now co-exist within models of communication which stress the human practice and the current academic obsession with encoding and decoding cultural information. A characteristic which is prelevant to the Disney heroine Belle who, from within her cartoon, pseudo medieval American-French environment chooses to read books in spite of the community's disapproval ('It's not right for a girl to read' says her misogynist suitor, Gaston in the opening of the film). Books, which happen to be fairy stories, which in turn enable the young rural heroine to decipher meaning from the world around her. She reads of 'dashing swordfights, far-off places' almost as preparation for the adventures which are about to unfold before her. As her skirt sweeps the horizon from the top of the hill, her desire to go beyond the boundaries etched out for her by Gaston and the villagers is answered in the shape of a traditional quest. The family horse, Philippe, returns home, afraid and without the inventor father who had gone off to trade at the fair. It is left to Belle to rescue her father. The models of femininity offered here are involved in both the production and consumption of the reel time world. Both Neve Campbell in Scream and Belle in Beauty

and The Beast participate in the making of their environments - whether that be the slaying of evil doers, the rescuing of fathers who appear sterile or impotent in the psychoanalytic sense, against a personal background where the original, biological mother figure has previously died/ been murdered: and most importantly, for here is the major cultural shift - both of these heroines- despite the obvious differences of film genre and audience target range - partake in the active consumption of their worlds:

The Final Girl is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine - not in any case, feminine in the ways of her friends. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself. (8)

Belle and Neve enjoy the fruits of their quest, like the literary heroines of Jeanette Winterson discussed before them. They are seen to consummate their physical relationships with their chosen love objects on an equal footing - they share sovereignty at the discretion of the female. Belle saves the Beast and solidifies their relationship with a kiss which transforms him from the animal form he is back to human shape he once was at the closure of Linda Woolverton script. Neve's teenage character has sexual intercourse with the student boyfriend she suspects is the psychopathic beast dismembering the young women of the local high school population. These female characters revise their respective genres because, in spite of the patriarchal dictates set in place by many a cultural form before them, for the first time, in an attempt to appeal en masse, the young, chaste, female protagonist (Neve in Scream) chooses to have sex with the analogous beast and Belle symbolically

consummates her relationship with an open-mouthed kiss, as do Esmeralda and Pocahontas. Notably, Pocahontas is the only Disney heroine who chooses not to stay with or marry her suitor. Instead, she waves off the Englishman, John Smith, as he sets sail for home at the end of reel time. Pocahontas, having saved Smith's life and prevented war from breaking out between the indigenous population and the foreign invaders, decides to stay with her father the chief, and village, as she feels she still has a place and work to do within her own community. She returns to the patriarchal fold armed with a purpose born of her desire to run free (as the animation sequences frequently demonstrate) and not marry anyone. This overriding desire for independence was established early within the film text when Pocahontas firmly rejects the earlier marriage proposal of a fellow brave in a similar vein to Belle's rejection of Gaston in Beauty And The Beast. What differentiates the two characters in the final analysis is Pocahontas's decision not to leave her homeland in order to follow her man, whereas Belle, of course, does. However, none of the aforementioned heroines is punished for their transgressions and all remain psychically and physically intact regardless of phallogentric maxims.

As the teenage Sidney gazes upon the photograph of her murdered mother she draws acute attention to the irreversibility of the mother's death, and the inevitable demise of us all. The tears she sheds over the broken bond directly acknowledge the mother-daughter lineage which remains missing in action, recalled and repressed once again just as it was within the Disney texts examined. The maternal metaphor is compounded by the television news commentary which flashes yet another picture of Sidney's deceased mother announcing the anniversary of her brutal rape and murder. The perpetuation of her image in front of a distressed and lonely daughter



serves to accentuate the ambivalence ascribed to the maternal role by patriarchal discourse. This mother's psychic influence remains interred safely within the earth: she is neither resurrected as reanimated corpse or metaphysical guide. Her recapitulated image serves purely as a vehicle of frightening oppression, focused upon in order to emphasise how alone and vulnerable the young Sidney truly is. This interpretation is further qualified within the film's story, as Billy, her boyfriend and the real murderer, reveals the motive behind his violent act. He killed Sidney's mother in order to avenge the desertion by his own mother following the revelation that Mrs. Prescott was having an affair with Billy's father. Her image becomes a standard, warning women, whether they commit adulterous acts or not, of the dire consequences of straying from the path.

The desire for the retrieval of the lost object is also apparent within the structure of the folk tale. For instance, the fairy tale daughter in the Grimms' Ashputtel summons the transitory presence of her dead mother in the form of a kindly tree, bearing magical gifts. The hazel tree planted on her mother's grave silently grants wishes and aids the dirty maid in her desire to go to the ball. This imagery is reiterated in Disney's animation Pocahontas where the tree spirit, personified by the face of an old woman, fulfils the maternal role for the motherless child. Filled with ancient wisdom this cheerful spirit speaks directly to the young protagonist, offering her advice on which path to take in life: no such guidance exists for the forlorn Sidney who averts her eyes from the voiceless and unhelpful maternal image beamed at a child who remains unprotected against the threat of the father and lover (Billy intends to kill her). Hence, the mother remains, in spite of her absence, as a massive presence within the adolescent and the overall cultural repertoire. This influence, in Sidney's case, is the source of overwhelming anxiety and

loss, as she has inextricably been torn from the mother. As Elisabeth Bronfen states:

The function ascribed to femininity over the maternal position is that of difference leading to a constantly mobile dialectic of destruction and new creation, loss and recathexis, an indication of a split in any dual relation between self and other which leads to unity over loss and difference. As that which is always receding, the mother brings ambivalence into the libidinal play, introduces the notion of an inadequate third the substitute bride, who recalls but never entirely duplicates the lost mother, figuring as a mitigated form of death's presence. (9)

Marina Warner has chronicled how the 'spinning' and 'weaving' of folk tales by women reveals the potential for subversion contained within these ancient stories, 'often running against the grain of commonplace ethics'. She notes how women from various social backgrounds have 'collaborated in storytelling to achieve true recognition for their subjects' and believes that this process is still going on. (10) The emphasis placed upon the fortitude and skills of women and their female offspring suggests a different way of appraising the fairy tale, one which indicates a possible avoidance and escaping of the imposing limits placed upon females by society. In the spirit of the fairy tale, the protest of the young heroine in Scream is foregrounded over all other aspects of the action. As she surveys the surrounding countryside from the balcony of her remote home, the effect of the mise-en-scene is undoubtedly analogous with an imprisoned maiden awaiting rescue. She is aided in this instance by a slightly older female companion, (played by Courtney Cox) who appears, at the outset, to be antagonistic towards the young principal, (questioning Sidney's version of the events surrounding her mother's death) but in the final moment saves her life. Interesting that Cox's

character, Gale Wethers, is a television anchor woman - a modern day storyteller. This particular wise old crone wishes to discover the identity of the true murderer and has written a book in which she claims the man convicted of the killing is actually innocent.

What Scream ultimately demonstrates to the teenage female audience with whom this film is so popular (as does Beauty And The Beast before it) is a dictum straight out of Perrault emphasising the different cultural guises of various monster bridegrooms: <sup>(11)</sup>

Now there are real wolves, with hairy pelts and enormous teeth; but also wolves who seem perfectly charming, sweet-natured and obliging, who pursue young girls in the street and pay them the most flattering attentions.

Unfortunately these smooth-tongued, smooth-pelted wolves are the most dangerous beasts of all. <sup>(12)</sup>

Jeanette Winterson repeats this warning in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit when she turns as a child to the world of fairy tales in the hope it will help her to fathom the puzzles of the real one. The tale of the feared animal groom attracts many different interpretations and reactions:

What do you do if you marry a beast?  
Kissing them didn't always help.  
And beasts are crafty. They disguise themselves like you and I.  
Like the wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood'.  
Why had no one told me? Did that mean that all over the globe  
in all innocence, women were marrying beasts? <sup>(13)</sup>

These comparative cautionary tales reiterate the same message to the contemporary ingenue: be wary and wily in these (post)modern times for the

wolf of old does not only inhabit the forest deep, he can be spotted behind the charming smile of the most well acquainted with of male faces.

What the seemingly disparate texts of Beauty And The Beast and Scream share is that by placing a female protagonist as the central narrative concern within their respective genres they shift the perspective away from woman as victim onto woman who contests fear. As with the fairy tale before them, these girls in the hood turn their eye on the phantasm of masculine desire and recognise it: either rendering it transparent and secure, the self reflected as good, as is the case with Beauty and her beast, or ridding themselves of it by destruction or transformation. In the latter illustration Sidney does both, she transforms herself by donning the cheap Halloween mask previously worn by the killer (itself a pastiche of Edvard Munch's painting 'The Scream') and slaying Billy, her boyfriend /lover who was in the first instance the murderer of the maternal object. Beauty and the Beast is a classic fairy tale of transformation - the script of Scream follows that tradition carefully: Billy becomes the mysterious harbinger of the fatal unknown. Sidney is the questor who discovers his true nature. The fairy tale and horror film both foreground limits, limits which are set by fear. These boundaries demand that the wily young heroine become strong and courageous lest she fall into the trap which claimed her sisters before her. She can either confront the beast or become food for the wolf's belly. The 'final girl' of slasher film fame <sup>(14)</sup> must defend herself alone or else find her body strewn, once more, across the cinema screen in a thousand bloody pieces (as discussed in detail throughout the first part of this project). As Marina Warner observes:

At a fundamental level, Beauty and The Beast - in numerous

variations forms a group of tales which work out this basic plot-moving from the terrifying encounter with otherness, to its acceptance or annihilation. In either case, the menace of the other has been met, dealt with and exorcised by the end of the fairy tale. (15)

Also at play here, the reader must be aware that a critique which does not consider the conflictual structure of its own discursive operations is in danger of merely reproducing the constraints placed upon its subject matter that the critic initially intended to deconstruct, to displace. As Robert Young points out during his discussion of the importance of Spivak's poststructural and postcolonial writings:

If woman is the constructed category of a patriarchal society, how do you posit an alternative without simply repeating the category in question or asserting a trans-historical essence that the representation travesties? (16)

Spivak herself indicates the contradictions implicit within any project which attempts to retrieve the lost, true, speech of the 'silenced other' (17):

The radical critic in the west is either caught in a deliberate choice of subalternity, granting to the oppressed either that very expressive subjectivity which s/he criticises, or instead, a total unrepresentability. (18)

It is important to acknowledge that this paradox is a problem for both feminist and poststructural methodology, but it does not signify an absolute conundrum or a critical impasse as can be suggested. It is possible, as Spivak has shown, to work from within a structure in order to construct a counter argument. This does not only involve the now famous radical feminist call to

master patriarchy's tools in order to subvert the offending doctrine from within. The process involved in the dissolution of stereotypes is proving, as I feel my evidence demonstrates, far more subtle, and less necessary than was first assumed in the introduction to this project.

Barthes states that mythologies are not fixed, they are ever changing. <sup>(19)</sup> This manifests itself within the material scrutinised and selected from popular culture. The shifts in female representation are elliptic, nuances of definition which perhaps are not immediately obvious to the cultural anthropologists and academics who dismiss the animated children's film and the slasher/horror flick as amongst the lowest of the forms of popular culture available to the western viewer of mass entertainment. Perhaps it would be more challenging to the contemporary theorist to accept the 'unavailability of a unified solution' <sup>(20)</sup> in terms of the origins and truth of femininity and to focus on what the eyes of today see within western culture and how quickly coexistent representation per se bends and sways continuously. As Catherine Belsey suggests:

My concern is rather what we might do with a cultural meaning which is certainly patriarchal, but which points to the limits of patriarchal control. Since poststructuralist theory proposes that 'man' is no more than a symptom of the desire for plenitude, the question is where we might (all) go from here. <sup>(21)</sup>

## Popular Matters: Revised Heroines in Film and Animation

### 7: The Final Girl Revisited

- 1 Newman, K., pg. 143. Nightmare Movies, 1988.
- 2 Warner, M., 1995 and 1998.
- 3 Allen, R. C., quotes Fiske, pg.285. in Channels Of Discourse, 1987.
- 4 Cixous, H., pg. 540. New Literary History,1976.
- 5 Dyer, R., pg. 15. Stars, 1982.
- 6 Clover, C., pg.53. Men, Women And Chainsaws 1996.
- 7 Clover, C., pg.61, 1996.
- 8 Clover in Tasker, Y., pg.81. 1998.
- 9 Bronfen, E., pg.137. Over Her Dead Body, 1992.
- 10 Warner, M., pg. 25. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 11 Warner, M., pg. 277. 1995. To Marina Warner's own list of monster bridegrooms which include King Kong and Edward Scissorhands I add Anakin Skywalker, later to become Darth Vader, former husband to Queen Amidala; Billy, the boyfriend / killer from Scream and Chucky, the rather unpleasant axe wielding animated plastic doll of Child's Play notoriety. Chucky is currently enjoying renewed box office success as a psychotic Mister in Bride Of Chucky.
- 12 Warner, M., pg.182-183 Les Contes de Charles Perrault,  
edited by Gustave Dore, Paris, 1862, 1995.
- 13 Winterson, J., pg.71. Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit, 1991.
- 14 Clover, C., Men, Women And Chainsaws, 1996.
- 15 Warner, M., pg.276. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 16 Young, R., pg. 128. White Mythologies, 1992.
- 17 Young, R., pg. 165. White Mythologies, 1992.
- 18 Spivak, G., pg. 209. In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics, 1987.
- 19 Barthes, R., pg. 56. Mythologies, 1974.
- 20 Spivak, G., pg. 78. In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics, 1987.
- 21 Belsey, C., pg.226. note 57. Desire: Love Stories In Western Culture, 1994.

Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation.

8: Frontier Gals: a.k.a. 'The Bride Wasn't Willing' (1)

Bastard Daughters And Heretics.

My dear, more good women have been lost to marriage than to war, famine, and pestilence. (2) Cruella De Vil, 101 Dalmatians, 1995 version.

The opening title of this final chapter is a direct reference to an old black and white cinematic offering called 'Frontier Gals' - a title which



aply describes the manner of female representation which is to be explored here. The potential for a radical re-reading of the politics of this apparently phallogentric and traditionally scripted western film paves the way for a comparative discussion involving the 'frontier gals' more contemporary model. This particular incarnation is available within the public arena en masse and can be found in cinematic pieces as varied as Ridley Scott's Thelma And Louise ( a motion picture which has itself been discussed at great length by academics within the field of film studies <sup>(3)</sup>) and those members of the hybrid horror/science fiction genre which seek to explore new extra-terrestrial frontiers for themselves. These distinctive films include famous examples such as the ever-expanding Alien saga, (which has also been subject to much critical attention <sup>(4)</sup>) Event Horizon and the children's space adventure Lost In Space. In general, they contain within their narrative structure, images of independent women who rearticulate the threat and the strength of the often referred to (throughout this thesis) femme fatale of earlier Hollywood history: as Yvonne Tasker suggests, her representation functions as an 'enigmatic object of investigation' conducive to the 'exploration of female sexuality' suggestive of 'a juxtaposition between desire and death'. <sup>(5)</sup> This critical analogy is explicitly rendered on screen as one female astronaut after another finds herself taking up arms against some vicious, monstrous alien threat. The duplicit semantic capacity connoted by the alien, the monstrous and the feminine has been well documented throughout this work as has the cross-dressing motif across cultural form and genre. At this juncture, it seems suffice to reiterate that the female scientists sent out into space to recover some lost craft and crew are propelled into a world which forces them to act in 'masculine' fashion, as soldiers at war. Hence, these characters reinforce the ambiguous nature of gendered identity

in relation to female action hero, and as a consequence, 'points to the instability of a gendered system and the production of an alternative space through that instability'. (6)

The opening quotation, which is taken directly from the mouth of the Disney villainess Cruella De Vil, intimates the flavour of the subversive counter-cultural tongue to be examined, highlighting the wisdom and the heresy explicit within the tales re-told by the more mature women of society. Her voice harks back to the ancient Sybils, who were both tricksters and seers. Her appearance inspires both awe and fear: is she a witch or a wise woman as she utters her words of warning to the young woman in her employ? This old crone articulates a double voice, one that may yield a multiple female consciousness. These many-sided voices enunciate her complex subjectivity correlating directly with the focus of this piece and the cinematic origins of this particular exemplar of the transgressive, revisionary heroine.

The fascination society has with the wicked/powerful woman cannot be denied as evidenced by my own small daughter, who likes to watch Disney's Snow White on video. During the game that follows on from the film she favours the role of the wicked queen. Sitting firmly on my belly she begs me to eat her luscious air-apple - all the while giving me the full benefit of her finest two-year-old witches cackle. On one level, this fantasy game may appear to be an expression of the analogous psychoanalytical dictum which states that the child is constantly in love and at war with the maternal object. Does this scene demonstrate that the mother cannot transmit to her daughter a culturally accessible and respected image of woman from within the bounds of phallogocentric discourse? Will the daughter, as psychoanalysis has suggested, only see the mother in terms of being a phallic figure (as with

the castrating and powerful queen) or as a castrated and submissive one, as the mother pinned to the floor might suggest? Perhaps, what is more crudely demonstrated is an early participation with the masquerade that connotes femininity, a play acting which is also reliant upon the maintenance of a bond with the mother which is in itself beyond language. This early flirtation with autonomy and aggression could also initiate the intellectual mastery which will later deconstruct stereotypical images of woman and will subsequently serve ego stability with a healthy and active desire for personal satisfaction.

Frontier Gals was directed by Charles Lamont in America during 1945 and released in Britain under the alternative title, 'The Bride Wasn't Willing'. The film stars Yvonne De Carlo as the cowgirl saloon owner, Lorena Dumont who in the first instance falls in love with cowboy Jonathon Hart (played by Rod Cameron.) He turns out to be a fugitive from the law, whom she tricks or forces into marriage after he describes her as a good horse but not the type for marrying: her being a lady of easy virtue and all. He informs her, after he has initially seduced her, that he already has a respectable school teacher for a fiancée. A brief synopsis of the ensuing action reads as follows:

The rugged hero, Hart has his revenge on the mischievous gal. He kidnaps her on horseback, takes her to his ranch where he intends to fulfil his conjugal rights. On arrival there the faithful man servant, a quiet Indian chap, delivers what would appear to be his one line in the film, 'You talk too much'. This phrase is directed at all of the female characters who enter into the ranch's proximity. This character in turn plays the 'woman' of the house (until a suitable replacement can be found) and the stooge: the figure who constantly gets hit on the head by the flying household objects propelled by the angry Lorena in the first instance and later by the screaming daughter of

this one off union, Mary-Anne. The apparent rape fantasy re-enactment ends with Lorena's tired submission to Hart, who then 'romantically' carries her off to bed only to be recaptured (the next day) by the lawmen and sent off to jail for six years. He returns to town to discover Lorena still a woman of property, with his rival and enemy Blackie still waiting in the wings for the hand of the now Mrs. Hart. Repetition of their parting sexual union takes place. Hart then meets his now six year old daughter for the first time. He rejects them both (again), but following some father- pestered-by daughter scenes he decides to take away the daughter he now (suddenly) loves because he feels a bar is not a suitable place for a child to grow up in. This point of view is shared by his sidekicks. This comical crew of said lawmen includes an old judge who informs Lorena that in spite of Hart's prison sentence and enforced absence from the child for the whole of her young life no court in the land would side with Lorena, the mother, over him. Mary-Anne meanwhile has a tantrum and is dealt with swiftly by her long lost father:

'Daddy, you smacked me. That means you must love me.'

At the closure of the action, Blackie reveals himself to be a total villain. He kidnaps the child when he realises he has lost all chance of winning Lorena over. Daddy has to save the day, but not before he tries to persuade his previous school teacher fiancée that she and her old maid aunt should come and live (in sin) with him and raise the child correctly - in proper Christian fashion. Wise old Aunt Abigail tries to persuade Lorena that this is the respectable course of action to take, reminding Lorena of the limited ways in which women can earn a living:

'There's only two careers open to women - hers' [school teacher / virtuous lady of honour] 'and yours' [barmaid / prostitution / good time gal].

The bad girl/ good girl dichotomy is played to full effect, the exception being that for once the virtuous fair maiden does not win the day. The twist in the tale which registers the subversion within the structure of this particular western film is the transgressive slant which signifies the potential for an analysis and definition of a revisionary model of heroinism: the bad girl actually gets the chap (after revealing herself to him as the reformed scold / tart with a heart of gold, potentially a good wife and mother after all) - on his terms of course:

Mary- Ann: 'Daddy you smacked Mummy.'

Hart: 'Ya darn tootin.'

Mary- Ann: 'That means you must love her.'

Hart: 'That's what I've been trying to tell her.'

Happy ending - roll credits.

Now let us move forward in time from the mise-en-scene of one frontier tableau to another and mark the transformation of the female heroine out there in the wild, wild western skies far above the earth. Somewhere, out there (o[u]ther[e]) in space, on a prison colony inhabited only by men, there crash lands a space craft with one, lone surviving, occupant on board - a woman. The stranger in town is Lieutenant Ripley and the film is the third in the very successful Alien series. (7) Greeted with scorn and hostility by the head prisoner and his comedy sidekicks, she tries to warn them of the danger which will invade and destroy them all. When this contemporary creation is

confronted with the overwhelming dictates of phallogocentric mania she responds in a calm and collected manner:

'I am a murderer and rapist of women' says the prisoner in charge. 'I guess I must make you nervous,' is Ripley's reply. (8)

No longer conquered as saloon-bar Lorena was before her, but conqueror of a celluloid landscape. The essence of the transformation is expressed in an infinite space where conventional patriarchal restrictions become meaningless amidst all that uncharted territory. As Jeanette Winterson's forlorn protagonist observes in Sexing The Cherry:

My father watches space films. They're different: they're the only area of undiminished hope. They're happy and they have women in them who are sometimes scientists rather than singers or waitresses. Sometimes the women get to be heroes too, though this is still not as popular. When I watch space films I always want to cry because they leave you with so much to hope for, it feels like a beginning, not a tired old end. (9)

Contemporary western cultural discourse is now strewn with images of women inhabiting outer space: from science fiction to the horror genre to the family film, the proliferation of cinematic examples of heroism encompasses every stereotype known to femininity and created a few of its own along the way. From the cult status now attributable to actresses the likes of Sigourney Weaver, Linda Hamilton (Terminator and Terminator 2) and Gillian Anderson (The X Files), film history can also chart the rise of the shape-shifting female alien as personified in Species, Species 2 and Dark

Skies. Perhaps another relevant sub-title to 'Frontier Gals', indicative of this astronomical hemisphere, would have been 'Doctors in Space': the crews of space-craft in movies such as Event Horizon, Aliens and Star Trek are peopled by female scientists and engineers, and the company of the ship in Lost In Space are made up of a female professor (Mimi Rogers) and doctor (Heather Graham) who comprise a mother and daughter team.

One prevalent characteristic commonly shared by these heroines of popular culture is an ability to utilize the resources available to them, this is foregrounded within the film texts as traits supposedly peculiar to their sex as they incorporate everyday domestic items into their struggle to stay alive. Margaret Atwood in her work Survival asks the question 'Where is here?' She interprets this proposition in terms of a gendered masculine response: 'It is what a man asks himself when he finds himself in unknown territory.' She then considers how this inquiry implicates several other questions, meditations clearly at the fore front of the female space explorer's reaction to her experiences: 'Where is this place in relation to other places [and] how do I find my way around it?' <sup>(10)</sup>

These deliberations are clearly in motion within the narrative structure of science fiction film First Contact. Jodie Foster plays a scholarly sky-watcher who becomes the first human being to travel through space and time in order to meet 'other' extra-terrestrial beings. Significantly, she is yet another motherless child (following on from the discussion of the previous chapter) who, influenced by her father's passion for astronomy subsequently follows in his footpath as a young and orphaned adult. Interesting, that her search for knowledge and explanations as to the meaning of existence echo the unconscious longings of another independent female character played by

Foster in the film The Silence Of The Lambs. As Thomas Harris's original novel states:

Starling had the psychology background - Mapp's was law- yet it was Mapp who knew the washing machine's rhythm was like a great heartbeat and the rush of it's waters was what the unborn hear - our last memory of peace. (11)

Both of these cinematic heroines display a vulnerability which is not indicative of patriarchal assumptions concerned with female passivity and submission: rather, the emphasis upon the slight physical build of these two particular characters and the isolation this image reiterates within their respective professional communities brings to the fore their individual strength and determination in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We observe the young Starling struggle to find her voice, when among her more assertive male colleagues as was the case with the Philomel of legend who transformed into a bird sings in order to warn her sisters of the impending threat posed by the vicious false husband . Starling has to clear her own throat first, before she can point out to the assembled representatives of the law, that the mutilated female cadaver before them has also been silenced by a moth inserted into her throat.

It seems fitting testament to the spirit of the revisioned heroine within popular cultural form and the motif of postmodern irony implicit to her characterisation to draw to a close my consideration of female representation with a line played out in full glorious, grotesque, jouissance by the very woman who inspired absolute fear and loathing as a femme fatale just two decades ago. The comic wisdom of Cruella De Vil's statement, 'more good women have been lost to marriage, than to war, pestilence and famine' is



reminiscent of the tales told round the fire by ancient old crones, warning young women not to be too hasty too marry (as Cruella warns the young potential protegee in her office). Many versions of these tales have been documented within Marina Warner's vast body of research as published in From The Beast To The Blonde and No Go The Bogeyman. Glenn Close's characterisation of the original animated Disney villain is an inspired and skilful master stroke which undermines the abject terror associated with the bunny boiling psychotic she portrayed in the reactionary conservative politics of the film Fatal Attraction. (referred to in the opening pages of this thesis). The Sibyl like traits of her characterisation draw attention to this cross-cultural symbol which appear to deny historical difference. As Marina Warner states, speaking of the Sybils of old:

her words, originating in the past, apply to the rolling present whenever it occurs; however, the perceived fact of her roots in the distant past adds weight to her message precisely because it is free of the historical context in which she uttered it; she was not fettered by her historical time and place but could transcend it with her visionary gifts. In their very identity as truth-tellers, the Sybils of tradition cancel connections to history - this is crucial in their contribution to the composite character of the female narrator and inventor of future fictions. They speak their verses, or sing their messages, and though they are always communicating a prior, universal wisdom, they are seen as actively shaping it - their voices are the instruments of the knowledge they pass on in order to prepare for life ahead. (12)

Cruella De Vil's persona is Cixous's laugh of the Medusa made available en masse. What this particular incarnation of the old hag is attempting to communicate to the maiden /daughter is that patriarchal gender roles are not an inescapable destiny or genealogical inheritance passed on from mother to

daughter. The practices of phallogentrism would have the ingenue believe that for womankind the journey through life is already closed to opportunity, in effect, her being is dead to the future. Cruella De Vil merely reminds the listener that there is always an/other path to explore. The perverse insatiability of this excessive creature expresses not just her barbaric evil (the reader will recall De Vil's desire to skin all of the Dalmatian puppies in order to make up a new and splendid coat for herself) but the latent promise of the mature heroine / villain as a site of wisdom and influence with the power to guide and safeguard the adolescent female against danger. The polymorphously perverse disposition<sup>(13)</sup> of this villainess is indicative of the threat to masculine due order she externalises via the excesses of her physical representation. The sparkle of sarcasm and the knowing look proposes that this woman is somehow synonymous with supernatural force. As the caption of a film poster for the horror film Catpeople reads, desiring femininity is equated with base, animalistic instincts:

She knew strange, fierce pleasures that no other woman  
could ever feel. <sup>(14)</sup>

The 'art' of Glenn Close's representation of De Vil bears close resemblance to the art of the horror film, which, as Morris Dickstein suggests,

even at its most commercially exploitative, is genuinely sub  
cultural like the wild child that can never be tamed, or the  
half-human mutant who appeals to our secret fascination with  
deformity and the grotesque. <sup>(15)</sup>

Cruella is the 'Final Girl' grown up and gone bad - the former 'spunky inquirer into the terrible place' <sup>(16)</sup> (note the allusions to intra-uterine

existence), the one who looks death in the face in order to embody the strength to be a harbinger of mortality's final castrating kiss. At the level of the cinematic apparatus, her distinctly unfeminine manner, in spite of her highly glamorous garb, is indicative of her active, investigating masculine gaze. She positively triumphs in the masquerade which heralds her phallicization. The superficial iconography surrounding De Vil's representation indicates that in the final instance appearance and behaviour do not attest to sexual verities. Indeed, what this villainess demonstrates is that in practice that 'sex is life, a less than interesting given, but that gender is theatre.' <sup>(17)</sup> A declaration which closely follows Joan Riviere's famous (and previously cited) dictum that 'womanliness... [can] be assumed and worn as a mask,' <sup>(18)</sup> enabling the reader to perceive De Vil's visual excess as symptomatic of femininity's psycho-sexual construction. Henceforth, the

emphasis on gender play-acting and the sartorial projection of a feminine superego, the masquerade offers a liberating avenue leading away from biological essentialism: woman can play the woman or not as she pleases. <sup>(19)</sup>

The Disney villainess, from Snow White's wicked step-mother to Cruella to the sea-witch in The Little Mermaid, apes in grotesque fashion the discourse of femininity. This portrayal of the powerful, mature female is ultimately contradictory and utterly ambivalent to feminist sensibilities, for on the one hand, she acts as a 'symbolic cover for the elusive ideal phallus that neither sex ever possesses: '<sup>(20)</sup> that impersonation of the maternal phallus that never is, never was, but is desired by the male subject as Lacanian theory presupposes. On the other, she could be read as defensive in strategy, 'improvised to disguise the dormant power of the female agent in a system

where feminine power is denied by patriarchy: ' (21) a consequence of which would be to recognise the potential for subversion contained within this animated iconography. At the very least this image incorporates a visible manifestation of monstrous female longing which exposes the nature of desire to be, once again, Lacanian in essence:

Desire subsists both within and beyond the realm of the pleasure principle; it cannot be contained by the stable, institutional, public, legality which is marriage. On the contrary, desire, which is absolute, knows no law. (22)

Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*spaltung*). (23)

Jeanette Winterson's heroine gives birth in turn to a 'girl with a mass of hair like the early sun and feet like his...she will draw her lot when the time comes and gamble it all away. How else could it be with such consuming hair?' (24) Winterson's illustration conjures the eroticism and potential for radical subversion signified by a woman's chosen or given hairstyle. The all-consuming locks of this red-headed child mock the Freudian analogy which equates her nature with that of the beasts of the forest. Conversely, among the crimes Joan of Arc was accused of were her 'heretical' cross-dressing and close cropped hairstyle. (25) This cross-dressing codification is a manifestation symptomatic of the territorial displacement of daughters signalling the ongoing struggle with 'hierarchies of meaning, institutional constraints' (26) and

the inevitable castrating closure they attempt to enforce upon the independent female psyche.

The most interesting and productive recent films dealing with the feminist problematic are precisely those which elaborate a new syntax: thus speaking the female body differently, even haltingly, or inarticulately from the perspective of a classical syntax. (27)

## Popular Matter: Revisioned Heroines in Film and Animation.

### 8: Frontier Gals: a.k.a. The Bride Wasn't Willing. Bastard Daughters And Heretics

1. American and British titles of the same film, a western directed by Charles Lamont, 1945.
- 2 Cruella De Vil (Glenn Close) delivers this memorable line to the young designer (played by Joely Richardson) in the recent live action re-make of Disney's 101 Dalmatians, 1995.
- 3 For example, see Clover, C., pg. 232, 234-235. Men, Women And Chainsaws: Gender In The Modern Horror Film, 1996.
- 4 See Kuhn, A., Alien Zone: Cultural Theory And Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema, 1995 & Creed, B., The Monstrous-Feminine, 1997.
- 5 Tasker, Y., pg.91. Working Girls: Gender And Sexuality In Popular Cinema, 1998.
- 6 Tasker, Y., pg.68. 1998.
- 7 The Aliens trilogy has become subject to a great deal of film and feminist debate. Excellent interpretations of these films and the personification of the action heroine, as played by Sigourney Weaver, can be found in academic work by Annette Kuhn and Yvonne Tasker. See Kuhn, A., Alien Zone: Cultural Theory And Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema, 1985. & Tasker, Y., Working Girls: Gender And Sexuality In Popular Cinema, 1998: & Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre And The Action Cinema, 1993.
- 8 Ripley's dialogue, as spoken by the actress Sigourney Weaver, is taken directly from the film Alien 3.
- 9 Winterson, J., pg.120. Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 10 Atwood, M., pg.17. Survival, 1982.
- 11 Harris, T., pg. 338. The Silence Of The Lambs, 1991.
- 12 Warner, M., pg.71. from The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 13 Freud, S., pg.268. in Gay, The Freud Reader, 1995
- 14 Hardy, P., pg.79. 1985. Catpeople film poster, directed by J. Tourneur in 1945.
- 15 Dickstein, M., pg.34. The Aesthetics Of Fright, quoted in Clover, C., pg. 11. Men, Women And Chainsaws, 1996.
- 16 Clover, C., pg. 39. 1996.
- 17 Clover, C., pg.58. 1996.
- 18 Burgin, V., Donald, J., Kaplan, C., pg. 38. Formations Of Fantasy, 1986.
- 19 Burgin, V., pg. 37.1986.
- 20 Butler, J., pg. 52. Gender Trouble, 1990.
- 21 Wright, E., pg. 243. Feminism And Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary, 1992.
- 22 Lacan, Ecrits., pg.311. 1977.
- 23 Belsey, C., pg. 287. quotes Lacan 'The Signification Of The Phallus' 1958. 1994.

24 Winterson, J., pg.150. The Passion. 1988.

25 Warner, M., pg. 371. From The Beast To The Blonde. 1995.

26 Campbell & Harbord., David Marriott, pg. 124. Psycho-Politics And Cultural Desires.  
1998.

27 Vice, S., pg.204. Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader. 1996.

### Conclusion: Heroine Addict.

Now-a-days ladies read all sorts of books, history, politics, and even such as concern religion. ...They should therefore be able to discern truth from falsehood. (1)

Over The Years I did my best to win a prize; some wish to better the world and still scorn it. But I never succeeded; there's a formula, a secret, I don't know what, that people who have been to public school or Brownies seem to understand. It runs right the way through life, though it starts with hyacinth growing, passes through to milk monitor, and finishes somewhere at half-blue. (2)

If this thesis has fulfilled any single part of its original proposition, then at least, it can be said to have extensively demonstrated Cixous' observation that:

As subjects for history Woman always occurs simultaneously in several places. (3)

This project has also sought to examine the feminist methodology which calls for the dismantling of phallic structures by focusing upon the perpetual contradictions apparent throughout cultural history within the representation of the female form itself. As the 'Laugh Of The Medusa' proposes, following in many respects a Lacanian model, (masculine) logic, or the desire for rational and rigidly defined borders is always superseded in the text, whatever cultural form that may take, by the proliferation of desire, as discussed throughout this thesis. As Susan Sellars communicates:



How terrible it is that we spend precious months of our existence trying to give 'proofs', falling into the trap of critical interpretation, allowing ourselves to be led before the tribunal where we are told: give us proof, explain to us what feminine writing or sexual difference is. And if we were more courageous than I am, we would say: A flute for your proof, I AM ALIVE. (4)

The answer, as most women already know, is to define yourself, to write about life and experience on your own terms. This is a philosophy clearly influencing the work of Jeanette Winterson, whose novels have been a pivotal focus throughout this study. Hence the inability of literary theorists and critics alike to classify Winterson's work as 'uncompromisingly lesbian' which as Paulina Palmer points out (5) lends itself to the task of defying conventional attitudes on many levels. Lesbianism within Winterson's work is only one of many different gendered and sexual identifications represented by the author. These include, as previously detailed, bisexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality, celibacy, incest and sadomasochism. This multiplicit role playing links to the generic indeterminacy associated with her novels which serves to heighten the ambiguousness. The trick to appreciating Jeanette Winterson, if there is to be one at all, is to recognise the repetition with which the author reminds the reader, from novel to novel, that the philosophical principles concerned with perspectival multiplicity are forever implicit within the human psyche:

Our lives could be stacked together like plates on a waiter's hand. Only the top is showing, but the rest are there and by mistake we discover them. (6)

Winterson, as demonstrated in detail throughout the first part of this thesis, rejects any unitary model of interpretation and subjectivity in favour of a

delineation of the self through the representation of differing fantastical, fairy tale, historically specific and more contemporary creations. In effect, it is like taking pictures of the angles of a human soul - it cannot be captured and proven to exist and as such can never be singularly defined. Hence, she creates for the reader a series of polymorphous, transformative, characters whose individuality supersedes for the most part the importance of their gender. Indeed gender displacement is crucial to the narrative progression in terms of highlighting the universality of the dominant binary power relationships, as exposed between parent and child, man and woman, slave and master. This work has diligently pursued and examined the notion that

There is always more than one way of reading a narrative, and identity does not consist, either psychically or socially, of only one register of meaning (7)

Do I demonstrate revision? Yes and no, because as I have shown via my chosen subject area, any definition which lends itself to the terms of the poststructural revisionary project has to take into account that which has gone before. This thesis articulates how these figural representations throw out long, deep roots which tap into archaic mythologies, ancient history and centuries of religious discourse. For every contemporary heroine equipped with subversive tendency has an ancestor in some long-past cultural form. What they share is a common ground - that marginal space much debated within feminist politics.

What this scholarly consideration does draw previously unnoted attention to, is that the revisionist heroine appears where one would least expect to find her. As the reader will recall this project proposes that revisionary models of heroinism are explicitly placed within the

contemporary narrative structures of film genres often considered sexist by prevailing feminist critique - namely Disney animation and the slasher / horror film. It is also interesting to note that in this most masculine of film genres there is a questioning of the relationship between sexuality and its expression. As demonstrated, the horror genre highlights the instability of male identity. Scream as the pinnacle of the poststructuralist tenacity for self-referentiality mocks with a mix of inflected affection and postmodern irony the very genre which gave it life. Sidney Prescott, the protagonist who will become the focus for the killer's charms, bemoans how the adolescent world is dominated by trashy, video nasty culture: 'I don't watch that shit ...psychos chasing some big breasted chick - it's insulting.' The teenage film geek, Randy, lists the rules that have always applied to the slasher movie genre whilst participating in the very film which actively breaks with the traditions those plot devices set in place, leaving the 1990's viewer of the schlock horror with a new kind of female hero to consider - a virgin who fucks. These rules include the premise that the Final Girl always remains a virgin: as Randy says, 'only virgins can outsmart the killer.' The teenager who wants to survive can never have sex, as sex equates with death. They are also forbidden to drink or take drugs as this is an extension of the former rule, the sin of intercourse. The player must never say 'I'll be right back,' because you won't, unless of course this is the plot of Scream, in which case, you will be, because this line is uttered by one half of the murderous adolescent duo himself. Hence, questions of desire and sex are foregrounded in narratives which procure a process of investigation defined by a distinct lack of distance between hunter and hunted. Indeed, the juxtaposition is so closely aligned as to blur the boundary which kept this original patriarchal opposition in place.

This is demonstrated when Billy and Sidney consummate their relationship in a manner reminiscent of Angela Carter's story 'The Company Of Wolves:'

[she] took off her scarlet shawl, the colour of poppies,  
the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses, and since her  
fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid.

What shall I do with my shawl?

Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won't need it again.  
.....She saw how his jaw began to slaver and the room was full  
of the clamour of the forest's Liebestod but the wise child never  
flinched, even when he answered:

All the better to eat you with.

The girl burst out laughing....(8)

This laugh leaps from literature to film as Sidney's wise young maiden maintains sovereignty whilst negotiating various levels of identification with the (feminine) victim and the (masculine) captor. Her adolescent body, (as argued in the opening chapter of Part Two) is a site of ambivalent interdiction. This is a proposition this work has sought to explore through a multitude of literary and filmic examples in order to finally show that:

The adolescent body becomes the space where so-called interior, self-encapsulated narratives of psychic development become eternally displaced into more external narratives of the social. However, the writing of the adolescent body is where so-called historical events are placed as the crucial narrative underpinning of psychic processes, moved to the very heart of bodily and psychic identity. (9)

The schematic revision at work in both Carter's enigmatic literary tale and Williamson's less subtle screenplay sets in motion the dissolution of the

aforementioned female stereotype, whilst also breathing new life into a genre which Carol Clover dismissed as, to all intents and purposes, dead.

The slasher film proper has died down (even the sequel activity has subsided), not least because its salient contributions have been absorbed into the mainstream. [ e.g. Silence Of The Lambs and Thelma & Louise] .... Revenge movies thrive in the action genre, but rape-revenge movies have all but disappeared. <sup>(10)</sup>

To give Clover her due, this end-note to the 1996 re-issue of her ground breaking study Men, Women And Chainsaws precedes the plot shenanigans contrived by Wes Craven and Kevin Williamson in the script of Scream. This film has spawned a whole new line of imitators from I Know What You Did Last Summer and its inferior sequel I Still Know What You Did Last Summer to Urban Legend and The Faculty, which boasts another Kevin Williamson script replete with the token self-referentiality which is now definitive of this genre.

This thesis has also maintained throughout that popular culture must always be worthy of academic consideration by virtue of its mass appeal. To place representative examples from popular culture alongside imagery taken from literary sources, as I have done, has proved crucial to a proper understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the subject matter, which in turn is enhanced and complemented by the pluralistic approach to cultural theory defined as poststructural in strategy.

This project has occasionally felt like an exercise in stating the obvious - the critical methodology applied throughout, remains, as do all empiricist tools, open to interpretation and contradiction - but that in itself complements the subject matter when considering the overall nature of this

scholarly deliberation. This project cannot challenge dominant cultural values completely as they remain engrained within the limiting composition of classical narrative structure.

Needless to say, the demands of a capitalist society require the financial success of the mass phenomenon that is cinema, and the audience / consumer in turn demands that the experience be principally a pleasurable one. As Philip Green proposes:

A truly resistant film will be one which rejects conventional myths of unity without allowing them to be recuperated, resists interpolation by refusing to ingratiate itself, and allows spectators no sense of moral familiarity when confronting its structure unless [the film creates] the Brechtian effect of alienating the audience from the relaxation's of pleasure in order to subvert our passivity. <sup>(11)</sup>

A focus on contemporary cultural discourse helps to strip philosophy to its bare roots: popular culture throughout the history of (man)kind has sought to communicate fundamental human constants and conventionally these are bound up with notions of love and honour, respect for one's family and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Comic book in essence these simple philosophies may be but perhaps the deconstruction of philosophy itself can be no bad thing for feminist thinking and contemporary discourse generally. As Michelle Le Doeuff has stated, philosophy remains an elitist institution, 'the last bastion of male dominance'<sup>(12)</sup>; it dismisses womankind from the outset with its continual exclusion of female thinkers as subjects for historical study and as participants in the philosophical debate generally from its intellectual canon. It only grudgingly accepts Simone de Beauvoir, and only

after pointing out to the reader of The Second Sex that Ms. De Beauvoir came 'second' only to her long time partner Jean-Paul Sartre at the Sorbonne in 1929. <sup>(13)</sup> The attraction this thesis has had for the basic strategies at play within popular culture answers in part Le Doeuff's call to oppose the mystification which surrounds the philosophical discipline :

by the paradox that a practical application of philosophy is necessary in order to oust and unmask the alienating schemas which philosophy [has] produced. <sup>(14)</sup>

As this project has strived to demonstrate, Le Doeuff elaborates her proposition by highlighting the fact that we are surrounded by masculine-feminine divisions within phallogentric culture and that philosophy with its ultra status as the apex of intellectual thought has sought to articulate and refine these oppositions. Overall, I believe this thesis has moved away from 'abstract lamentation' <sup>(15)</sup> when it comes to the discussion of and critical appreciation of the female image within art. This project has also remained vigilant as to the position and representation of womankind within the western cultural repertoire and achieved a measure of success as to the deciphering of basic philosophical assumptions which are both prevalent and latent in discourses concerned with femininity. Part of the aim of this work has been to brave the path Rousseau deemed unfit for the female voyager. Recall that Rousseau in Emile: Part V <sup>(16)</sup> described the appropriation of philosophical knowledge in terms of danger, mutilation and of degradation for the woman. This thesis, however naively on occasion, has foregrounded both the threat to the curious and intelligent protagonist by focusing on the threat to her physical self as well as her mental well-being, and emphasising her triumph over adversity and her persistence within cultural history in spite

of the proliferation of murdered, imprisoned and dismembered female figures which haunt her journey through the ages. As Italo Calvino declares:

I am accustomed to consider literature a search for knowledge. In order to move onto existential ground, I have to think of literature as extended to anthropology and ethnology and mythology. (17)

This work has sought to emphasise the fragmentary, dislocated inscription of woman onto western culture through a fusion of iconography and the written word throughout discourse. The style and content may have on occasion appeared disparate - but this has been a deliberate considered methodology which has hopefully served the original intent of the thesis: to explore images connoting femininity which may, as a consequence, be discerned as transgressive or revisionary in essence. The written style mimics the slipping in and out of history of the subversive warrior child. As Baudrillard summarizes on the back cover of his work Cool Memories 111:

Fragmentary writing is, ultimately, democratic writing. Each fragment enjoys an equal distinction. Even the most banal finds its exceptional reader. Each, in turn, has its hour of glory. Of course, each fragment could become a book. But the point is that it will not do so, for the ellipse is superior to the straight line..... (18)

methodology is often not per se either revolutionary or reactionary, but open to appropriation for a variety of different usages. (19)

The poetics of artistic creation ought to be sublime - whether image, music or the carefully considered word, the measure of the medium's ability to touch



our souls depends in the final instance on the artist's ability to communicate something about the human condition to an audience /individual that is recognised and appreciated. Therefore, any amount of limiting phallogocentric dictatorship will still fail to contain that which will be spoken - the overriding nature of stubborn desire. This is a motif which threads together the collected works to date of Jeanette Winterson - a desire which she demonstrates subsumes gender roles and sexuality. It is her initial intent and creative vision that places a piece of art before us, and therefore whatever interpretation you choose to make of an artefact the critical theorist must always respect the source. Consider the wisdom of the poet and writer Eavan Boland's definition of the first principle of an imaginative life:

For what is applauded and who sets the terms of the recognition and acceptance are always in question. Nor are the measure and weight of those terms assigned fixed values; unlike the statutory yards and metres kept safe in government vaults, they can and do change. Creating and contributing to the inhabited culture is not just a matter of individual creative genius, the exceptional masterwork. We, (audience) are part of the story's future as well, its patterns are rising under the pressure of your palms, our fingers too. (20)

The End.

## Conclusion: Heroine Addict.

- 1 Warner, M., pg.293. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995. Mme. Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711-1780)
- 2 Winterson, J., pg. 45, Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit 1991.
- 3 Cixous, H., pg.56. 'The Laugh Of The Medusa' New Literary History, 1976.
- 4 Sellars, S., pg.20. 1988.
- 5 Palmer, P., pg.103. Contemporary Lesbian Writing. Dreams, Desire, Difference, 1993.
- 6 Winterson, J., pg.90-91, Sexing The Cherry, 1989.
- 7 Campbell & Harbord., Croft, J., 'Writing The Adolescent Body' pg. 200. 1998.
- 8 Carter, A., pg.117-118. The Bloody Chamber And Other Stories, 1981.
- 9 Campbell & Harbord, Jo. Croft., pg. 201. 1998.
- 10 Clover, C., pg. 235-6. 1996.
- 11 Green, P., pg. 172. Cracks In The Pedestal: Gendered Ideology In Hollywood Cinema. 1998.
- 12 Le. Doeuff, M., pg.179 Philosophy And Psychoanalysis: French Feminist Thought 1985.
- 13 de Beauvoir, S., The Second Sex, 1987. In the title page biographical synopsis the editor and translator, H.M. Parshley, ironically, fails to mention her mother: 'Simone de Beauvoir was born in Paris (above the Cafe de la Rotonde in Montparnasse) in 1908. Her father was a lawyer of conservative views. She took a degree at the Sorbonne in 1929 and was placed *second* to Jean-Paul Sarte, who became her life-long friend. [my italics]
- 14 Le Doeuff, M., pg. 182 Philosophy And Psychoanalysis: French Feminist Thought. 1985.
- 15 Le. Doeuff, pg. 183. 1985.
- 16 Rousseau, J.J., Emile, 1989.
- 17 Warner, M., cites Calvino, pg. 413. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.
- 18 Baudrillard, J., Cool Memories, 1990.
- 19 Kaplan, A., pg. 204. Women And Film Noir, 1983.
- 20 Warner, M., pg.411. From The Beast To The Blonde, 1995.

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Kilroy. Great Britain. B.B.C. 1, 1996 - 1997.  
Leeza. U.S.A. Broadcast within the United Kingdom by Channel 5, 1997- 1999.  
Oprah! Harpo Production Company, U.S.A. Broadcast within the United Kingdom by Channel 4 and B.B.C. 2, 1993 - 1997 and by Channel 5, 1998.  
Ricki. U.S.A. Broadcast within the United Kingdom by Channel 4, 1996 - 1999.  
Vanessa. Great Britain. Broadcast within the United Kingdom by The I.T.V. Network, 1998.

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