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Citation style: Szatanik Zuzanna. (2011). De-shamed : feminist strategies of transgression : the case of Lorna Crozier's poetry. Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

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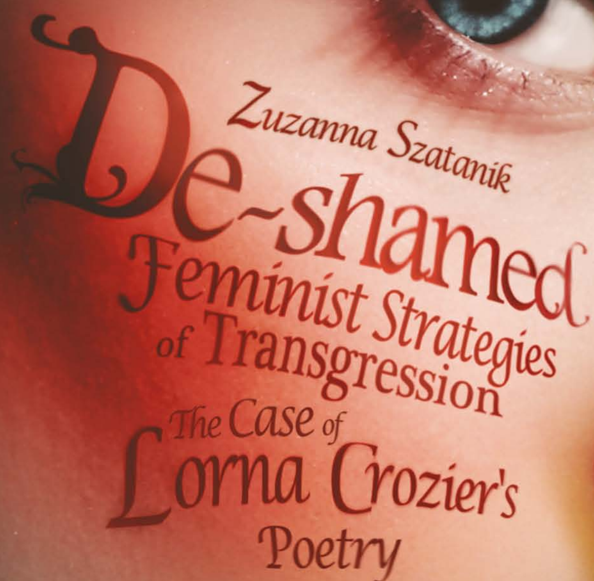

WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU ŚLĄSKIEGO
KATOWICE 2011

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zuzanna szatanik

feminist strategies of transgression: the case of lorna crozier's poetry

WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU ŚLĄSKIEGO
KATOWICE 2011

EDITOR OF THE SERIES: HISTORIA LITERATUR OBCYCH
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REFEREE
Agnieszka Rzepa

NR 2916

When sold out, the publication will be available online at The Silesian Digital Library
www.sbc.org.pl

CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Affect (Psychology).
Affective disorders.
Canadian literature—History and criticism.
Canadian poetry (English)—20th century—History and criticism—Theory, etc.
Canadian poetry (English)—21st century—History and criticism—Theory, etc.
Canadian poetry (English)—Women authors—History and criticism.
Canadian poetry—Prairie Provinces—History and criticism.
Crozier, Lorna, 1948—
Feminism—Poetry.
Feminism—Theory.
Shame.
Self.
Szatanik, Zuzanna, 1976—

for paweł

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THAN

acknowledgments
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acknowledgments

This book would not have seen the light of day if not for the support of my mentors and friends. In particular, I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Tadeusz Rachwał, Head of the Department of English-Language Cultural and Literary Studies at the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, whose advice and patience were instrumental to my work. Likewise, my sincere thanks go to Professor Mirosława Buchholtz (Head of the Department of English at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland) and to Professor Joanna Durczak from the Department of American Literature and Culture at Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin, Poland, whose constructive comments and critical suggestions allowed me to transform an imperfect draft into a consistent text. I also wish to express my profound indebtedness to Professor Agnieszka Rzepa of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, who reviewed the text in its modified form. Her meticulous, eye-opening reading of the book made the final revisions easy.

Central to the project was the friendship and support of my excellent Canadian colleagues and friends: my gratitude goes in particular to Dr. Nancy Earle of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, who selflessly dedicated her time and energy to the careful proofreading of the submitted text, to Professor Edward Możejko and Sheila Steinhauer-Możejko, who were my surrogate family during my four-month stay in Edmonton, Alberta, in 2004, and to Dr. Ruth Dyck Fehderau, who opened up her home and mind to me when I returned to the University of Alberta to continue my research for several months in 2006.

I certainly would not have succeeded if not for the conducive atmosphere created by my superiors and colleagues at my own University. For his kindness, respectfulness, and open-mindedness, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Professor Krzysztof Jarosz, Head of the Department of Canadian Studies and Literary Translation at the University of Silesia, with whom I have had the honour to work over the past four years. Likewise, I would like to thank all my colleagues from the Department for their warm support and intellectual motivation. I am also very grateful to Dr. Eugenia Sojka, Head of the Canadian Studies Centre at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, Univer-

sity of Silesia, who (many years ago) first provided me with the incentive to take up Canadian Studies, and has generously shared with me her knowledge, books, and indefatigable enthusiasm ever since.

The graphic artist and the typographer, whose combined talents transformed a mere printout into a book, deserve a particular acknowledgment. For their brilliant work, I wish to thank Karolina Wojdała, who created the book's haunting cover, and Tomasz Gut, who perfected the book's layout and was responsible for the final shape of the whole.

Special thanks go to Nika, Marcin and Tomaszek: my closest friends, who, in their own (workaholic, sociopathic, or hypochondriac) ways, have always provided me with a sense of stability.

Finally, I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to my husband, partner and companion, Paweł Jędrzejko, who, over the decade together, has invented countless strategies of de-shaming me.

copyright information

A summary of the theoretical chapter together with an earlier version of my analysis of Lorna Crozier's poem entitled "Alice" were published in *Open Letter. A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory,* no. 3 "Mistaken Identity," guest-edited by Lola Lemire Tostevin, (Summer 2007), 91–100. My reading of Lorna Crozier's "Original Sin" and "What I Gave You Truly" was published in *Romanica Silesiana*, no. 5 "Les Transgressions" (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2010), 235–252. My interpretation of Lorna Crozier's "Poem for Sigmund" was published in Polish in *Męskość w kulturze współczesnej*, edited by Andrzej Radomski and Bogumiła Truchlińska (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie, 2008), 220–226. Finally, parts of Chapter Three dedicated to Crozier's "Alice" and "Sometimes My Body Leaves Me" were published in English in *From the Foundation of Quebec City to Present-Day Canada (1608–2008): Retrospections, Path of Change, Challenges*, edited by Krzysztof Jarosz, Joanna Warmuzińska-Rogóż and Zuzanna Szatanik (Katowice: Para, 2009), 191–208, and in Polish in *Er(r)go*, no. 17 "Klonowanie Kanady," guest-edited by Eugenia Sojka, (2/2008), 37–50. I am grateful for permissions to reuse the material above, which, in this book, has been—sometimes very radically—revised and modified.

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gendering shame

T R O ne

The evidence of decades of trans-cultural studies indicates that social codes and moral strictures are socially constructed, but based on nonspecific biological elements. Apparently, we have an inborn capacity for the response we call shame. But we are taught which of our actions are shameful. We cannot become victims of shame until we are taught about shame. Yet, despite the evidence, there is still an insistence among both religious fundamentalists and many sociobiologists that our sense of shame is an unalterable part of a specific moral conscience that we are born with.
A belief in such "inborn" shame
is the basis of the Western mythology
of transgression.

Jamake Highwater, *The Mythology of Transgression: Homosexuality as Metaphor* (11)

Shame is a common sensation. An unpleasant contraction felt when one is caught red-handed, shame is manifest on a blushing face. It makes one feel both exorbitantly aware of *being* and, at the same time, desperate *not to be*: to disappear or hide. As such, it is an antithetic emotion, described in terms of freezing, withdrawal or paralysis, as well as burning, aggrandisement or transgression. Because of the fact that shame is felt *in* and *on* the body, and, at the same time, breaches the body's limits, it makes one feel too large or too small, both indiscernible and overexposed. A shamed person is therefore perplexingly (un)framed. Indeed, the angst inscribed in the experience of shame is that of "losing face": the fundamental "(Who) am I?" becomes inevitable. In this book, the "I" whose identity is thus unfixed is gendered feminine.

Shame, at the same time, is a cultural phenomenon. Inscribed within basic discourses of the culture of the West, it becomes an instrument of power and subjection. As such, it not only merits a full-fledged study, but also calls for a remedy. As a function of the language rooted in androcentric metanarratives, it has detrimentally affected women since the time immemorial—not only at the level describable in terms of sociopolitical dynamics between (traditionally conceived) genders, but also at the level of the *body*: a non-discursive entity beyond language. Born in discourse, cultural shame transcends discourse; yet, even though the body will not lend itself to deconstructions, rhetorical strategies of shaming, which involve the attribution of values to the body, will. The underlying assumption of the argument presented in this book is that, like shame, the rhetorical disempowerment of shaming discourses will manifest itself in and on the shameless body: at home with one's body, the de-shamed self becomes "riftless." No longer politically disciplined or coerced, such a self may seek its own definition beyond inherited categories: Woman's[1] self, no longer determined by the androcentric language, loses rigid fixity imposed by patriarchal categories: instead, it brings a plethora of possible alternatives into play.

It is, obviously, easier said than done: we are born into and raised in a language that has always already defined our reality. And yet, lit-

1 Whenever in my work I refer to "woman" (and/or "man") as generalised, cultural constructs, I start the words with the capital letters or use plural forms. I address complexities inscribed in the concept of "Woman" and her affinity to shame in greater detail in the second, theoretical, chapter of this book.

erature, the testing ground for ideas, remains far from "exhausted." Poised against language, self-conscious and self-reflective, literature has the power of annulling and redefining categories not only by deconstructing fundamental oppositions upon which central metanarratives rest, but also by its capacity of exposing the reader to an experience which in itself transgresses discourse. An act of reading, as well as an act of writing, is an existential act, throwing one into the liminal space where the organising principles of the dominant discourses collapse. It is such an experience, born in my immersion in the literary discourse of Canada, that inspires this book: my theoretical reflection concerning the fundamentals of culture is derived from the "literary testing ground" of Lorna Crozier's poetry, whose intuitive attempts to use language against itself result in the disempowering of the rhetoric of shame without resorting to the use of unyieldingly rigid, acceptable, institutionalised, "intersubjectively verifiable" categories. My book begins where she has left off: it uses Crozier's literary intuitions as a pretext to revise existing theoretical visions of shame in order to propose a non-essentialist theory which would acknowledge the value of metaphorical, non-categorial, poetic language as a means to both describe and create reality.

My study's departure point is, at the same time, a point of convergence of the literary discourses, mainstream feminist theories and psychological studies focused upon the nature of the shame affect. It is upon such a fundament that I aim to translate the psychological theory of shame into the language of feminism, thus working out a set of tools by means of which it would be possible to formulate a gendered theory of Woman's shame. First, however, things first.

1.1. shame psychology: androcentrism in therapy

I knew that I needed to intervene. As I continued to gaze into her face and into her eyes, I said, "Imagine me right there beside you as your ally, right there in that room with you. I want you to picture me standing there. Can you see me?" After a pause, Theresa nodded her agreement, her eyes closed. "Yes ... I can see you ... with me."

Gershen Kaufman, The Psychology of Shame. Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes *(306)*

Shame psychology is a field of study originating in the work of Silvan Tomkins, and further evolving in the writings of such major figures in the field as Gershen Kaufman, Benjamin Kilborne, Michæl Lewis, Donald L. Nathanson, Stephen Pattison or Léon Wurmser. Although, in general, it is unaffiliated specifically to either cultural studies or feminist theory, shame psychology offers the most expansive studies of the eponymous affect, and was one of the first academic disciplines to acknowledge shame as a factor crucial to the formation and development of one's identity. Thus far, as a rule, specialists in the area have mostly focused their attention on the negativity of the experience of shame and its destructiveness to the process of identity formation. In their works, shame has emerged as "the most disturbing experience individuals ever have about themselves"—one wounding the self from within (Kaufman and Raphael xiii). The wound, however, as Gershen Kaufman and Lev Raphæl imagine it, is not mortal: therefore, the researchers have proposed that shame be fought by means of boosting their patients' self-esteem and helping them discover their "inner power." The validity of their therapeutic goals notwithstanding, the clinical practice seems to rest upon theoretical foundations reinforcing, rather than eliminating, the essential reason why their patients became patients in the first place, which claim the following examples seem to confirm.

Gershen Kaufman's description of one of his "clinical [cases]" (305), providing the motto opening this section of my book, involves a story

of Theresa, a patient of his, and a victim of childhood sexual abuse, who suffered consequences of prolonged exposure to shame. "Physically violating the body," writes Kaufman, "invariably generates profound shame; in response to shame one naturally feels to blame" (305). In Theresa's story two different representations of patriarchal power—the father and the therapist—come to perform, respectively, two opposite functions: that of the abuser and that of the saviour. However, most intriguing about the motto is that its rhetoric seems modelled on representations of gender omnipresent in romantic narratives. In her therapist's account, Theresa becomes a damsel in distress, who passively awaits masculine assistance. The man, on the other hand, actively intervenes, by means of penetrating the woman with his probing look and then entering her mind. Evidently, the therapist-patient relationship reflects the agent-patient hierarchy characteristic of the traditional Western order of gender relations.

Other shame psychologists offer similar narratives. For example, in Nathanson's *Shame and Pride. Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*, Michæl Lewis's *Shame: The Exposed Self*, or Léon Wurmser's "Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism," theoretical ponderings of the authors are often intertwined with the personal confessions of their female patients. Regardless of whether these stories are narrated in the first person, or already "appropriated" by the therapist, the patients are presented as coming to therapy in order to seek illumination: an epiphany by the light of the therapist's authority. The process of helping a shamed woman seems to require that she surrenders herself to the authority, or—like Theresa—closes her eyes in an act of therapeutic submission. The three "case studies" below manifest different facets of the complex relationship between a male therapist and a female patient:

> Consider Laura, a young woman who came into therapy to see if she was "crazy," as her father had always taught her. Well, no, she certainly was not crazy, but she seemed frozen inside, the needing and feeling part of her locked deeply away. Therapy proceeded slowly, intellectually, until the fourth session. I sensed she was feeling shame, a prisoner of exposure. She appeared to be feeling acutely self-conscious during our meetings. After she agreed with my observation, I asked her if she was willing to try something. Looking at me quizzically, she nodded. I invited her to relax in the chair and close her eyes, adding that I would close mine and I would not peak. She laughed. (Kaufman 161)

> Sandy and I are well into the initial history, that group of sessions during which a therapist should be the most intrusive. At forty, she has a graduate degree that allows her to make a good living, but is otherwise unhappy with her life. What she wants out of therapy is clear: "I want confidence—believing in yourself. I am so afraid of intimacy that I am afraid if I meet the right person I won't know what to do. Near the end of our first meeting she touched her cheek fleetingly as if to check its temperature, then breathed a sigh of relief and said, "At least I didn't say 'I'm sorry' every five minutes like I used to." . . . We have agreed that, in order for us to learn what lies beneath her symptoms, I will be permitted to ask several deeply personal questions. (Nathanson 315)

> A patient of mine had a sexual encounter with someone outside of her marriage. She told me that this encounter had occurred several years earlier and that she had felt terribly ashamed. She saw herself as violating the family unit and, because of this shame, found herself so unhappy that she finally confessed her transgression to her husband. It is important to note what she reported she felt after she finally confessed. She said, "After I told him, and he said that he understood and still loved me, I felt as if weight had been lifted from me." In other words, confession had redeemed her, since she would confess to the one whom she transgressed against and who forgave her. (Lewis 134)

The first patient, Laura (not unlike Theresa), passes from subjection to one patriarchal authority (the father who proclaimed her "crazy") to another (a therapist whose professional training allows him to verify the father's statement). Laura is "frozen inside" and "a prisoner of exposure." The goal of her therapist, therefore, is to warm her up and make her feel comfortable. The first stage of her therapy—slow and intellectual—is a form of a foreplay followed by a breakthrough: Laura relaxes and places her confidence in the man (she trusts he will not peek). As evidenced by the quotation above, the (supposedly remedial) discursive act of *baring* oneself in front of a therapist resembles "a sexual act based on male norms" (Bernstein 23). The process of free associations in particular requires that "the patient [yields] to psychoanalysis, . . . [abandons herself] to a process, a phrase that implicates the talking cure as a version of sexual seduction" (Bernstein 25). Concurrently, Sandy—the second case study—comes to her therapist for lessons in intimacy, and consents to the man's intrusiveness. The mention of the patient touching her—possibly hot, possibly blushing—cheek and breathing a sigh of relief adds an erotic dimension to Nathanson's description.

The anonymous woman of the third quote is healed through acts of confession: first she confesses her transgression to her husband and then—to her therapist. In order to be cured, she needs to tell a shame-full story twice, a sine-qua-non of the commencement of the process of recovery. Psychotherapy—especially when based on Freudian psychoanalysis—is similar to confession (not only in its demand that the shameful truth be revealed, but also because it is regulated by the hierarchy inscribed between the therapist and the patient). Like confession, also psychotherapy commonly relies on storytelling and interpreting. Both often focus on sexuality, and particularly on "whatever is considered pathological, perverse or illicit" (Bernstein 16). Like confession, psychotherapy promises absolution through purgation.

What is more—to return to the earlier analogy—in order for psychoanalysis to work, the psychoanalyst has to be consecrated as the father confessor, endowed with a "magnified scope of visual, aural, and silent sources of knowledge" (26), an almost godlike ability to read the unconscious. The "talking cure," in other words, requires that the unquestionable superiority of the therapist be accepted by the patient, and therefore the "talking" part of it gives way to the more important notions of control and silencing. In the light of what has been stated so far, it seems apparent that for a shamed woman thus construed psychoanalysis can be used as a way to further subjugation, rather than liberation.[2]

2 A Canadian author who intimates the problematic relationship between a woman and her therapist from the perspective of both, a patient and a feminist, is Janice Williamson. In her *Crybaby!*—a narrative which revolves around the memory of childhood sexual abuse—she anxiously observes how someone's memories can be usurped and either certified or invalidated by instances of power. She also offers an insight into how a woman patient is construed as powerless and hence having no access to the truth. "In our culture"—as Williamson asserts—"the figure of the child has a lot in common with the woman who speaks into the wind; in spite of experience and accomplishments, the problem of legitimacy persists" (176). Correspondingly, a woman who narrates her shameful story is a child-woman who speaks with the child's voice, and as such needs to respond to the authority and judgment of her therapist.

Williamson expresses her doubts concerning the therapeutic "act of telling things" a number of times, most clearly, perhaps, in the penultimate part of the book, titled "Fragments of an Analysis." Although the extent to which the methods employed by her therapists rely on Freudian conception of psychoanalysis is not clearly determined, they depend on verbal expression and require that the hierarchy between the doctor and the patient be maintained. "In spite of many satisfying moments of comfort and the fact that good therapy probably saved my life"—writes

1.2. de-centering androcentrism: toward a reconceptualisation of methodology

Even though the examples quoted above support the intuitive need to revise available theories of shame, I do not aim to propose any alternative forms of individual therapy. Instead, since I am interested in shame as a cultural phenomenon, rather than discussing an apparently neutral concept of a (de)shamed "self," my argument focuses specifically on the phenomenon of the *(de)shaming* of women in the culture of the West. Concentrating upon strategies of transcending shame (which, when translated into the language of popular psychology, connotes "fighting it," or "self-healing"), I am primarily interested in the demarginalisation of possible parallel (subversive) paradigms of reading of cultural texts, which, albeit potentially therapeutic in individual cases, applies, above all, to a wide cultural context. With such a goal in mind, in order to explore the relationship between Woman and shame I examine ways in which the findings of shame psychologists have been read and interpreted by a group of influential theorists critiquing the principles underlying the metanarrative orders that organise Western societies.

In fact, for over a decade now, a number of feminist, postcolonial, and queer theorists have been involved with the debate addressing the theory of shame as related to their own fields of study. This, in turn, has produced a plethora of cultural and literary interpretations re-

Williamson—"sometimes I found myself…resenting the conversation" (176). What she subsequently details are, seemingly, the moments of resistance against the authority of her therapists. She notices repeatedly that these specialists—regardless of their gender—work within the constraints of a limited and limiting patriarchal discourse, that they often reiterate overly simplified formulas, and disregard their patient's intelligence and insight. "Talk about 'the child within' drove me wild with fury"—Williamson declares—"as though history were a series of transparent layers to be peeled off one by one" (176). What the narrator senses at times is that she knows more, knows better, as a feminist, a scholar, and a chronicler of her own past. However, she finds herself "playing dumb" (177), and saying nothing. "Why?"—she asks—"It doesn't make sense" (177).

volving around shame or adopting it as a central concept.[3] For instance, such feminist critics as Simone de Beauvoir or Sandra Lee Bartky emphasise the *paralysing effects* of shame and write about shaming as a cultural mechanism of control, implemented and institutionalised in order to keep women passive. In turn, queer theorists, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Sally R. Munt, focus on the *transgressive* nature of the affect. The parallel existence of these two, apparently contrary, perspectives indicates the paradoxical nature of shame. The above notwithstanding, however, both must be taken into account in order to elucidate the dynamics underlying the two processes of my interest: *cultural shaming*, and *feminist de-shaming* of Woman.

And thus, rather than simply due to the fact that the source of my inspiration was the work of a Canadian woman poet, it is mainly via feminist and queer studies that the affect central to this book becomes linked to my third area of interest. The rhetoric of shame, interestingly, seems to harmonise with the language employed by scholars in these fields to address the ever-elusive concept of Canadianness. Yet, while queer theorists emphasise the indefiniteness and unfixedness of Canadian national identity, feminist researchers assert that women and Canadians speak from the same position of the margins. The feminization of Canada, however, precedes the feminist critique of Woman as the Other: for example, in the 19th-century adventure stories set in the Canadian North, the hostile landscape was often addressed by means of the topos of the female body—one which needs first to be tamed and then taken in possession.

Granted, it is in thus gendered Canadian scenery that Lorna Crozier's poems are inscribed. In fact, Crozier's works—including her most recent *Small Beneath the Sky: A Prairie Memoir* (2009) and *Small Me-*

3 These publications include Joseph Adamson's *Melville, Shame and the Evil Eye: A Psychoanalytic Reading* (1997), *Scenes of Shame. Psychoanalysis, Shame, and Writing* (1999), edited by Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark, J. Brooks Bouson's *Quiet As It's Kept. Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (2000), and Ewan Fernie's *Shame in Shakespeare* (2002). The more recent works linking shame studies with feminist, and gay and lesbian studies, respectively, are J. Brooks Bouson's *Embodied Shame. Uncovering Female Shame in Contemporary Women's Writing* (2009) and *Gay Shame* by David Halperin and Valerie Traub (2010). As I was preparing this book for publication, the following works were announced as forthcoming: Timothy Bewes's *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (2011), Neil Seeman's and Patrick Luciani's *XXL: Obesity and the Limits of Shame* (2011) and Amy Erdman Farrell's *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* (2011).

chanics (2011)—have most often been classified as "prairie writing." Yet, even though the seven poems I have chosen as illustrations of my theoretical considerations make no direct references to Canada as a place, they often focus on the female body as markedly "deterritorialised." By means of the same "topographical" rhetoric, which often looms large in poetic descriptions of the space of Canada, Crozier emphasises the body's transformative properties in order to question patriarchal definitions of Woman and effectively points to such a theoretical space where the theories of shame, gender, queerness and Canadianness meet and intersect.

1.3. an ascending spiral: methodology and organisation of the argument

Attaining thus defined goals, however, requires a rather rigid argumentative frame, fashioned, so to say, upon the principle of the "ascending spiral." Rather than dismiss the findings of androcentric shame psychology, I revise the assumptions of this discipline by recontextualising it within frames of contemporary feminist and queer studies. The consistency of a thus proposed theory would rely upon the "gendered" version of the methodological foundations of shame psychology, yet its applications would go beyond individual therapy. Such a theory aspires to offer tools first to recognise and then to interpretively counteract shaming discourses inscribed within cultural texts of the West.

The methodological position I develop translates into the following composition of the book: in chapter two, "Towards a Theory of Woman's Shame," I first present an overview of selected works by the most influential shame psychologists in order to both introduce concepts I employ further in my work, and—more importantly—to indicate the areas these thinkers have left uncharted due to the paucity of their references to women or gender. It is, in fact, my intention to try and fill in these gaps with the use of feminist and queer theories.

Secondly, I characterise the generalised cultural construct dubbed "Woman" and then proceed to define Woman's shame in light of feminist cultural studies. The definition of Woman which I adopt is historically rooted in the now canonical theory proposed by Simone de Beauvoir, the first feminist author to evidence a close relationship between Woman and shame. Western culture, in Beauvoir's interpretation, tends to identify Woman with her body, and to attach multiple, often self-contradictory and objectionable meanings to the Woman/body construct. The Woman's body is visible; it both *makes* her and *is* her; it is a conspicuous object that others examine and evaluate. In Beauvoir's terms, becoming Woman resembles being taught how to play a role in a cultural performance—a role which requires no lines and no movement, but demands that the trainee go on stage with the acute realisation that an audience is there, invisible, yet watchful and judg-

mental. In order to guide Woman off the thus construed stage, in the final sections of the second chapter I offer an insight into shame's transformative and transgressive potential. In light of queer theory and the highly ambiguous concept of Canadianness, it becomes possible to demonstrate that shame may provide the stimulus opening up possibilities of various redefinitions of Woman's subjectivity.

To illustrate the applicability of the theoretical perspective worked out in chapter two, I proceed to the third, interpretive chapter, "Lorna Crozier's Feminist Strategies: Four Studies in Transcending Woman's Shame." It comprises four subchapters illustrating particular ways of de-shaming Woman. In the first subchapter, entitled "Transgressing Transgression. Subverting the Authority of the Biblical Creation Myth ('Original Sin' and 'What I Gave You, Truly')," I demonstrate how the ideas presented in the theoretical chapters relate to the paradigmatic experience of Woman's shame. The subject of my investigation is the Biblical Eve and the Original Shame she brought upon humankind. The analyses of Crozier's poems allow me to trace both feminist and queer strategies which prove efficient as discursive tools facilitating acts of "going beyond shame": in this case, the shame attributed to Eve, one of the prototypical models of femininity in Western culture.

The broad perspective of foundational metanarratives of Judeo-Christianity provides a backdrop against which the analyses included in the second subchapter, "Shrinking the Shrink. Subverting the Authority of the 'Classical' Theories of Sex and Gender (*The Penis Poems*)," gain particular focus. In this section, I propose a reading of Crozier's "Poem for Sigmund" and "Tales for Virgins," which belong to a poetic cycle of twelve verses under the common title of *The Penis Poems*. "Poem for Sigmund" is a feminist response to the Freudian concept of "penis envy" and to the cultural sublimation of the male sexual organ. Employing the rhetoric of feminist re-visions of Freud's theories, I aim to demonstrate central characteristics of Crozier's ironic strategy, and to show how she succeeds in de-shaming Woman's apparent "lack." This, subsequently, leads to the debarring of the "oxymoronic" nature of cultural myths narrating (and thus regulating) virginity and its loss, as well as conditioning the shame inscribed in both. The overall effect of such a strategy is the undermining of the "institutionalised truths" about femininity, legitimised by virtue of their rootedness of androcentric psychoanalytic discourses in patriarchal metanarratives of the West.

The third subchapter, "Gazing at the Gaze. Subverting the 'Ocular Regime' ('Alice' and 'Sometimes My Body Leaves Me')," focuses upon two representations of the Woman's body. The bodies in both poems would commonly be referred to as "normal": there is nothing exceptional about them. And yet, it is in these bodies that shame emerges "naturally" due to the objectifying, shaming look the heroines of the poems adopt as their own. My goal is to examine possible counter-looks, ones that transgress the "self-other" duality.

The ensuing, fourth subchapter, titled "Subjectifying the Subject. Subverting the Western Beauty Myth ('The Fat Lady's Dance')," critically addresses meanings attributed to the female body marked as fat. Since contemporary Western culture has rendered the fat body *particularly* visible, in light of the debate on the troubled relationship between shame and visibility it becomes clear why it is the body of a fat woman that would be burdened with an exceptionally negative weight. Crozier's poem, however, consistently unburdens the Fat Lady—not of fat, but of shame-inducing meanings. The interpretive chapter ends with a short résumé entitled "Kissing and Telling."

The analysis of Crozier's de-shaming strategies, carried out within the frame of the theory worked out in the theoretical sections of this book, leads to its final chapter. Recapitulating findings derived from analyses, the "Conclusions" simultaneously confirm the applicability of the proposed theoretical apparatus to the study of issues relating to Woman's shame and indicate possible paths towards further revision of the existing state of knowledge, as well as—consequently—toward the abandonment of detrimental cultural practices. It is thus without any claims to exhaustiveness or universality that the present book aspires to make a foray into a territory of transgression: working from "within" the dominant patriarchal paradigm, the argument presented here leads towards a space in which shame's defining power would no longer affect either the shape of Woman's self, or that of her body.

TV

toward a theory
of woman's shame

In order to attain goals described above, it makes sense to begin with a critical overview of theoretical stances which scholars have thus far adopted with respect to the shame affect, and to indicate the "blind spots" that need filling if a theoretical foundation for effective strategies of transcending Woman's shame is to be proposed. The present chapter serves this purpose, simultaneously mapping present-day knowledge of the subject and defining central concepts of the methodological framework of this book. (ZS)

2.1. blind spots: psychology of shame and the question of gender

In *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes,* Gershen Kaufman remarks on both gender and culture as factors relevant to analyses of the shame affect. "Shame exerts a powerful shaping influence over the development of gender-specific behaviour," he states, "and that patterning is equally culture-specific" (93). In American culture in particular,

> men have traditionally been shamed for expressing distress affect (crying), fear affect, and shame affect. Men have also been shamed for expressing their need for affirmation, for touching/holding, and for identification, to feel merged with another. In contrast, women in this culture traditionally have been shamed for expressing anger affect and excitement affect, for asserting power, and for expressing their need to differentiate from significant others—to define themselves as distinctly different and separate while placing their own desires ahead of others' desires. (93)

Kaufman's observations clearly imply that both men and women have been shamed for exhibiting behaviours stereotypically ascribed to the other gender. Whereas showing such emotions as distress or fear, as well as seeking close contact and protection, have traditionally been inscribed in the cultural construct of "femininity," expressing anger or desire for autonomy and independence, related strictly to the power of authority and control, have long been considered markedly masculine. "Proper" femininity, shamed for any attempts to differentiate itself from "significant others," should be associated with a physicality (expressed, for instance, in the urge to touch and hold, and to be touched and held) that is fluid: Woman "merges with another." Masculinity, conversely, is understood in terms of differentiation and separation: Man, defining himself clearly and distinctly, protects his clear-cut sense of the self. Furthermore, in Kaufman's view, it also appears undeniable that within Western culture both men and women who do not fit in the respective accepted categories of either masculinity or femininity, have often been subject to shaming (suffice it to mention

the stereotyping of gay men as passively effeminate, or of feminists as equal to lesbians, and as butch and hence unattractive). However, what I find particularly interesting in Kaufman's laconic remarks is the suggestion that men are typically shamed for "expressing shame," which, in light of his own observations, may suggest that shame is a markedly feminine experience. Blushing, averting one's eyes, and, most importantly, succumbing to the power of someone else's gaze, are all desirable—and supposedly attractive—features of femininity.

Kaufman's study, however, seems to be only a case in point. The scholar explains that within the sphere of psychology, the growing interest in shame (originating in Heinz Kohut's Self-Psychology and developing into shame psychology "proper" in the second half of the 20th century) is a result of "the recent acceleration of addictive, abusive and eating disorders" (4), in which the feeling of shame plays a central role. Along with Kaufman, the most acclaimed shame psychologists, such as Donald L. Nathanson or Léon Wurmser, base their definitions of shame upon the description of the affect system conceived by Silvan Tomkins. Wonderstruck by the fact that his new-born child *knows* how to cry—crying being a complex set of behaviours—Tomkins postulates the existence of a number of innate patterns of expression, or "the group of 'hard-wired,' pre-programmed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us and are responsible for the earliest form of emotional life" (Nathanson 58). The scholar distinguishes nine affects, among which some are positive (interest/excitement, enjoyment/joy and surprise/startle) and others negative (distress/anguish, fear/terror, shame/humiliation, dismell, disgust and finally anger/rage).[1] Interestingly, what distinguishes shame from other affects is that

> [it] appears to be triggered neither by variations in the shape and intensity of nonspecific internal neural events… nor by the detection of specific noxious chemicals, as in the case of the attenuators dismell and disgust. Shame-humiliation is an inborn script, an attenuator system that can be called into operation whenever there is an impediment to the expression of either positive affect. It depends on the remarkable ability of highly organized, advanced life forms to assemble the data of perception into patterns and to compare those patterns to whatever has been stored as memory. In certain situations, as, for instance, when a pattern mismatch is detected while we are in the midst of interest or enjoyment, the affect shame-humil-

1 All the affects are described as pairs, the first element of which is the mildest version of an affect, the second its most extreme version.

iation attempts to reduce the affect that had held sway a moment before. (Nathanson 135)

Shame, then, is "an auxiliary to the positive affects, rather than a true innate affect" (Nathanson 138). Whenever there is interference in the experience of joy/excitement, shame appears, and "the more excited the organism, the more shame is triggered when the impediment is sensed" (139). In other words,

> [o]nly something or someone that has interested you can produce a flush of shame. Someone looks at you with interest and you begin to be interested, only to realize she's looking at someone else. Or, as Tomkins notes, "One started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger." (qtd. in Probyn ix–x)

In Elspeth Probyn's reading of the relation between shame and love, the fact that "shame highlights different levels of interest" translates into its reaching "to the heart of who we think we are" (x). It is the experience of being ripped of the interest and enjoyment you once felt, and the subsequent "sheer disappointment of loss" that "attacks your sense of self" (xii).

The close relationship between shame and identity is also postulated in Kaufman's *The Psychology of Shame*. Paraphrasing Tomkins, Kaufman defines an individual as an "information-duplicating organism." Consequently, he sees

> the self [as] organized around scenes it later reproduces, and identity [as] organized around scripts.[2] Identity is the highest order class of scripts. All scripts first evolve from scenes, but then scripts increasingly produce or determine scenes. Multiple and competing identity scripts coexist with the self in either a fragmented, patched-together, or integrated manner. (101)

The scenes of shame are, therefore, internalised, and then internally reproduced; re-enacted and relived, they replicate the original shame-based scenes. In contrast to the *defending scripts*—aimed at avoiding further deprecatory experiences—the negative *identity scripts* are directed inwards; they are "turned against the self" (Kaufman 102). In other words, instead of preserving the border between the self and the outside world, the identity scripts blur this very threshold by means of questioning the self. The internalisation of shame scenes

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2 The scripts constitute, in Tomkins's words, the "individual's rule for predicting, interpreting, responding to, and controlling" affective scenes (qtd. in Probyn 83–84).

leads to the creation of multiple negative identity scripts, such as self-blame, comparison-making and self-contempt, which in turn develop into the disowning of self, splitting of self and, finally, into shame-based identity.

However, it is not only in the process of identity formation that shame acts as a central force: it is as important in the development of psychopathology. This new understanding of shame, based on the affect and script theories, induces, therefore, the reformulation of psychopathology. Among the syndromes which need to be analysed from the perspective of shame, Kaufman lists compulsive syndromes (physical and sexual abuse, addictive disorders and eating disorders), schizoid, paranoid and depressive syndromes, phobic syndromes, sexual dysfunction syndromes, splitting syndromes (borderline, narcissistic, and multiple personality disorders), as well as sociopathic and psychopathic syndromes. Interestingly, even though many of these disorders have been analyzed with reference to the concept of gender (notably, eating disorders, depression, as well as certain phobias which have been connected specifically to femininity), shame psychologists often tend to disregard gender differences, or, in line with the idea that shame is innate and genetically determined, focus only on the biological differences between the sexes. Such considerations are of little help in attempting to connect the theoretical notions of "shame" and "Woman" as they tend to inscribe both concepts into the realm of the (biologically determined) body.

Accordingly, in the chapter titled "Size and Shape" of his *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex and the Birth of the Self*, Nathanson states that "in the world of shame and pride size comes to be a metaphor of tremendous importance" (167). Building his ideas on the fact that a shamed person feels lesser, or diminished, Nathanson connects largeness with pride and smallness with shame: "[what] we experience as small children carries with us throughout life—big means pride, and small means shame" (164). According to Nathanson, the apparent craving for the gratifying greatness of the body makes itself manifest through bodybuilding, men's concerns about the size of their penis, and the surgical augmentation of women's breasts. Importantly, the chapter emphasises the significance of bodily appearance in the experiences of both pride and shame. What it entirely misses, however, is the differentiation between men's and women's relationship to largeness and pride. Specifically, it disregards the fact that Woman—under-

stood here as a product of Western culture—is not supposed to be large, nor is she expected to be proud.

However, the most striking ideas binding women and shame together are presented by Nathanson in a short section of the chapter "Shame, Pride and Sex," simply titled "Women." Nathanson starts with the bold statement that "[to] grow up female is to learn that you will be embarrassed at moments when nobody knows why you are uncomfortable" (295). In other words, "women are discomforted in areas about which men know little," as "[for] many girls, the vagina calls attention to itself by leaking some sort of discharge." The psychologist explains further that

> [s]tained underpants call to mind the shame of urinary dyscontrol and all the frailty of early childhood; the fear that one has contracted some deadly disease may follow in rapid succession. As Gail Paster has commented, women often think of themselves as "leaky vessels" that spill whatever liquids are entrusted to them. Menstrual blood, male ejaculatory fluids, even the secretions accompanying the sexual arousal, place women at risk of exposure and shame. With the leakage of fluid also comes odor—thus *a woman is subject to both self-dismell and self-disgust merely because she is female*. These affects, of course, keep company with shame. (296; my italics)

Nathanson thus binds femaleness with the lack of self-control and indispensable presence of self-dismell, self-disgust and, consequently, shame. What he earlier referred to as mysterious, secret, and unknown to *anybody*, suddenly becomes the site of the hazardous exposure of the *natural* female effluvium. Notably, Nathanson clearly misinterprets Paster's point: in fact, she suggests that presenting women's bodies as (either secretly or revealingly) "leaking" is a *strategy* oriented toward *shaming* these bodies. In her *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*, Paster claims that such a strategy has a long history. The Renaissance discourse, she observes,

> inscribes women as leaky vessels by isolating one element of the female body's material expressiveness—its production of fluids—as excessive, hence either disturbing or shameful. It also characteristically links this liquid expressiveness to excessive verbal fluency. In both formations, the issue is women's bodily self-control or, more precisely, the representation of a particular kind of uncontrol as a function of gender. … Representations of the female body as a leaking vessel display that body as beyond the control

> of the female subject, and thus as threatening the acquisitive goals of the family and its maintenance of status and power. (25)

It is the apparent conspicuity of women's incontinence that Nathanson finds threatening and shameful. Like little Karen from Hans Christian Andersen's "Red Shoes," whose story I discuss in the interpretive chapter, Woman has no control over the shameful transgressions in which her body loses itself. By means of closely binding the female body with shame, Nathanson, in fact, secures the position of this body in the old patriarchal rhetoric of female monstrosity, and therefore presents it as torn between two extremes: it is both disgusting and alluring, unambiguous in its blatant physiology and enigmatic. Correspondingly, further on in the same chapter, the scholar returns to the issue of women's breast-pride and asserts that

> [f]emale dress is a dialectic between hidden and shown. But it is not from women that breasts are hidden, for all of this affect is generated in terms of male fascination. There is no better way to guarantee interest than to hide something—that girls cover their breasts and giggle among themselves helps set boys on fire. However a girl may feel about her size and physical power relative to the boys who interest her, she has power over them *simply because she has breasts* that will remain hidden from them as long as she wishes. . . . Even now, when women appear at the beach in bathing costumes that expose all but a symbolic area of breast surface, the female breast is treated as if it were invisible. . . . Think then about woman who has by some fluke of nature been denied the development of mature breasts. She will experience some degree of shame relative to other women, some lessening of her power over men, and significant interference with her ability to admire herself. (296–297; my italics)

The quotation implies that female breasts are there to sexually arouse/subject a male audience, and that in order to perform this function they must remain hidden. Woman who happens not to be endowed with large breasts not only has no power over Man, but also experiences shame. Indeed, the size of the body, menstruation and the insufficient "development of mature breasts" are likely to trigger Woman's shame. However, the relationship between body size, menstruation, breasts and Woman's shame is not—as Nathanson implies—obvious or natural. In Paster's words, "[the] idea of a body oppressed by the weight, volume or poor quality of its own liquid contents . . . has obvious ideological import for the metaphor of the body politic

and the material means of its reproduction" (78). Woman's shame is thus not merely a result of one's bodily dissatisfaction, but a powerful means of repression.

Another work on shame which is both grounded on essentialist understanding of Man's and Woman's identity and openly anti-feminist, is an anthology, one of the series titled *Focus on Men*, devoted entirely to the phenomenon of men's shame. *Men Healing Shame,* edited by Roy U. Schenk and John Everingham, combines twenty articles written by men who "desire to speak in male voice, with the male mode of feeling" (Everingham 3). The assumption of the collection is that "something is quite different about the way men and women experience, process, and seek to avoid shame" (4). Yet, according to Everingham, the only clear difference is that "women tend to be ashamed of their bodies, whereas… men are more ashamed of [their] feelings" (4). Indeed, rather than focusing on differences, the authors note multiple similarities between Man's and Woman's shame. For instance, in his article titled "Shame in Men's Lives," Schenk claims that "men seem… locked in self-destructive gender roles" (15) and notes that the "shame used to enforce gender role expectations" (16) is shared by Man and Woman:

> Through a wide spectrum of shaming actions, attitudes, words, and expressions, we make our disapproval very clear to growing children when they deviate from gender role expectations. The word "tramp" exemplifies this shaming process. In one sense, the word means the same thing whether it is applied to male or to a female: it means a person who deviates from the expected gender role. For a man, it involves failing to be an achiever; for a woman, it means failing to maintain moral superiority. The roles are different for men and women, but the shaming message is the same. (16)

Whereas it is impossible to measure the intensity of shame experienced by women and men when they are called "tramps," it is interesting that the word only gains sexual connotations when used with reference to Woman. Words such as "tramp" or "whore" are sometimes understood as markers of Woman's identity: once fallen, she can never regain her chastity. Such words are also used on a great variety of occasions to denote a number of behaviours,[3] rather than to castigate

3 For example, apart from meaning "prostitute" and "a promiscuous girl," the word "tramp" may also be used with reference to "a girl who goes with many different men, getting or attempting to get 'what she wants' out of him and then leaving";

a particular behaviour. The word “tramp” meaning “somebody who is poor,” appears to be more limited in its semantics, and is neither definitive nor descriptive of the person’s character. The “shaming message” behind the word “tramp,” consequently, appears to be quite different for Man and for Woman.

However, Schenk’s “male voice” takes the most misogynist tone in his claim that “feminists have tended to explain every difference between men and women as an expression of supposed female inferiority, [and] they have therefore promoted women as victims” (17). By means of such promotion, they have incited man’s shame. Contrary to feminist claims, women, according to Schenk, “are seen as the authorities on morality” (17) and their moral authority “extends to æsthetics, nurturing, relationships, attitudes, motives, spirituality, feelings and values” (17). Here Schenk seems to disregard the patriarchal history of Western culture and misinterprets the basic tenets of the feminist movement whose aim, in the most general terms, has been to *unmask* Woman (one of the masks being that of a moral authority) and, by means of contesting women’s secondary status, to change their position in Western culture. It seems, hence, that rather than contributing to a discussion on the relationship between gender and shame, *Men Healing Shame* reproduces gender stereotypes. Yet, when one takes into consideration the emotional and often offensive tone of some of the articles, the collection may also be seen as the mark of a shift in gender-related power structures, which, as Schenk indirectly admits, is due to the effectiveness of feminist de-shaming strategies.

Even though in the field of shame psychology no publications are devoted entirely to the nature of Woman’s shame, there are a number of texts from this domain which I have found helpful in my attempt to determine its characteristics. The four works that I discuss here link shame to body size, body image, and bodily exposure. In *Shame: The Exposed Self*, for example, Michæl Lewis cites the Biblical Creation Myth and, specifically, the Biblical version of the origin of shame.

“a sexually promiscuous but unattractive or downright nasty girl or woman, not hot enough to be a bimbo …”; or “a girl with none or lower class values” (World Wide Web <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=tramp> (04.02.2011). The word “whore,” on the other hand can, surprisingly, “be turned around to be a term of affection, since ‘whore’ comes from an old root meaning ‘to like’ …” (World Wide Web <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=whore&page=4> (04.02.2011)). It can, therefore, be used among friends in a complimentary way (“you look like a total ho,” meaning, “you look hot”).

In Lewis's words, "the Old Testament story of Adam and Eve's creation, their freedom to obey or disobey God's injunction, their disobedience, judgment by God, and punishment signify the importance of shame" (85). In the Biblical story, curiosity (interest) leads to disobedience and knowledge, which in turn results in the realisation of one's shameful exposure in the eyes of God. One has to *know* (rules and one's behaviour in regard to these rules, as well as *oneself*) in order to feel shame. The story of creation is also a starting point for Lewis's analysis of the importance of gender differences in relation to shame: it is the woman who is held responsible for the first sacrilege.

Therefore, in the chapter titled "The Socialization of Shame: From Parent to Child," Lewis writes about mothers' resorting to humiliation, disgust and contempt in the process of bringing up girls:

> The socialization literature indicates that mothers tend to be more punitive toward their daughters than their sons, but that they use more physical punishment with their sons. I think that this data on mothers' punitive behavior reflects their use of disgust/contempt more with their daughters than their sons. If mothers punish daughters more than sons, but employ physical punishment less frequently for girls than for boys, mothers must use other forms of punishment, including more shame, on daughters than on sons. The special relationship that seems to bond mothers and daughters may have as one of its components the use and transmission of shame for behavioral modification. Moreover, the lack of similarity in the shame experience between mother and son, as a reflection of the difference between males and females, may find its origin in maternal differential use of disgust/contempt. (113)

In the section titled "Individual Differences and Shame Fights Between Couples," Lewis points to further differences between men's and women's relation to shame and claims that Woman is more likely to experience shame than Man, while Man is more prone to experience guilt.[4] Whilst Man's guilt develops into anger, Woman's shame often transforms into depression. Importantly, as Lewis asserts, women are particularly prone to feel ashamed of their appearance; in the most extreme cases, the appearance-based shame evolves into eating disor-

4 In Silvan Tomkins's terms, guilt is about "what one did," whereas shame is more about "what one *is*." In other words, "... guilt can be understood as feeling disappointed in oneself for violating an important internal value or code of behavior. Shame over a failure also feels like a disappointment in self. But here no value has been violated" (Tomkins qtd. in Kaufman and Raphael 41).

ders. In Lewis's words, "physical appearance can be the source of a stigma [and] for females, the stigma of being overweight is a very powerful social marker" (195). The second most shame-provoking situation for Woman is a failure in interpersonal relationships. Importantly, "females' moral sense... is influenced more by their relationship to others and how others might feel and react than it is to internal standards and rules" (179). Lewis further claims that "women's moral standards are consistent with the types of situations which, for them, are likely to elicit more shame" (179).

Yet, the author does not restrict his observations to the "ætiology" of shame alone. He also suggests a variety of ways of healing shame, one of which is confession. Contrary to Foucault's understanding of confession as an act taking place within a power relationship (a position I adopt in the interpretive part of this work), Lewis construes confession as a ritual of bonding between the confessor and the confessant:

> In a sense, confession is like laughter. The degree to which people confess their transgressions to others is the degree to which they join in with the others in observing themselves. This allows the self to move from the self, that is, from the source of shame, to the other. This, in turn, allows the self as the "confessee" to look upon the self as the object rather than the subject. ... By admitting to a past error, the person is able to move from the site of the observed to the site of the observer. (132)

In Lewis's terms, therefore, the act of confession enables the speaking subject to swap positions with the confessor and join him/her in the compassionate look directed at the depersonalised object of shame. Such a view, though optimistic, ignores the concept of Woman as an object that is fixedly looked at.

"Looked-at-ness," and its relation to shame, is emphasised in Léon Wurmser's "Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism." Namely, the author concentrates on the importance of being *looked at* and—more interestingly—of *looking at others*, as triggers of shame. The fear of being seen, as well as the fear *to see*—both manifest in the act of averting one's eyes and looking down, or away—are inextricably related to the mechanism of the affect. As Wurmser suggests, it is often through the memory of the shaming gaze of another person that one comes to realise the "devouring" power of the look. The scholar relates the words of his woman patient:

> I saw how my parents were killed by the shock of seeing me because I looked so dead. I saw things being disorganized all over the world because of me. I dreamed I was eating the eyes of the world. I was eating the eyes of Christ, blinding him by my eating and drinking. My eating created the darkness. (79)

The dread of being looked at may realise itself in *orality*: devouring looks of others translates into a "gorging binge" (81). Consequently, the urge to counteract the devouring looks of another person may find its expression in bulimia, or symbolic vomiting of the hateful stares. Whether or not the fear of looking/being looked at leads to eating disorders, it does "create darkness," or lead to the metaphorical death—the "icy withdrawal" (78)—i.e., passivity, isolation and silence:

> The condign punishment for exhibitionism . . . , one then meted out by the superego, is: to freeze up, to become an inanimate object, like a statue or a picture, a puppet without life, to become rigid and expressionless. The commensurate punishment for scopophilia . . . is: to be blinded, unable to perceive, to deny, and to be blocked in taking in what is happening and to turn into the horror, into the monster itself, to identify with what has been looked at illicitly. . . . Such punishment is anticipated and preventively employed against oneself by the defence of shame as the reaction-formation: "I myself am the first to block all my attention and communication; I show myself but as frozen, wooden, stiff mask in order not to suffer the fate of freezing, dehumanizing shame anxiety." (82)

As shame blocks joy/interest, a person exposed to the recurring experience of shame becomes indifferent and disinterested. By getting rid of any interest in others, one avoids the risk of being shamed again; by becoming blind to other people's looks, and hence saving them from being looked at, one escapes the fate of merging and disappearing into others' eyes. Absenting oneself is the only way to "protect the world and self from the magical powers of perception and expression" (80). Such a withdrawal, however, deforms one's personality. By means of closing one's eyes to the information about who one is that come from others, one, by extension, ceases to exist. At the same time, as the scornful look is internalised and directed inwards, one becomes

> split in half: on the one side the spirit of self observation—pale, watching, cold, contemptuous—and on the other side the empty spectacle of [one's] actions—feelingless, unreal, a meaningless role. And the self-observation itself is watched, in endless perspective of watcher being watched—the well-known endless sequence of shame about shame. (80)

The experience of being looked-at appears to be an important component of Woman's shame, as she has traditionally been identified with her "looks." Correspondingly, Benjamin Kilborne, a "psychologist of appearance," devotes one chapter of his work *Disappearing Persons: Shame and Appearance* to the already mentioned connection between size and shame. The chapter, titled "The Contempt of the Queen's Dwarf: On Psychic Size," focuses upon the size symbolism in such literary works as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* or Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. In these analyses, Kilborne incorporates case studies of his own patients. Although the author does not distinguish between men's and women's approach to the concept of size—and, disappointingly, throughout the whole book hastens from one clinical/literary example to another paying little attention to the gender of the patients/ characters—some of the hypotheses he introduces seem useful in the process of determining the specific relationship between Woman, appearance and shame. For instance, instead of assuming, like Nathanson, that in the context of identity discourses "big" invariably denotes "shameless," and "small" is synonymous with "shameful," Kilborne postulates, in the first place, that "size is an internal or shared experience of *relative* size, dependent upon standards of judgment and comparison" (10). Instead of talking about "physical size," therefore, Kilborne prefers to use the term "psychic size" when tracking the relationship between size and shame. As he replaces the notion of "objective measurements" with one of subjective "body image," the author recognises that "[being] large can be perceived both as an asset and a basic flaw. Similarly, being small can be a symbol of endearment … and a symbol of insignificance. … [The] primary reality is psychic reality" (12–13). Furthermore, in a short section titled "Size Symbolism and Fantasized Measurement," Kilborne states: "[what] matters is not who is objectively taller or smaller, but rather whose size is experienced to be the standard by which the other is measured" (17). Evidently, the standard against which Woman is measured is very nonstandard, because it is an elusive ideal of perfect beauty/thinness. As Woman is (or feels forced to be) constantly in the course of physical transformation, her body image is "ever-fluctuating" (18), which may induce, as Kilborne claims, pathological shame: "[just] as healthy narcissism can be associated with a stability in what [the author has] termed *psychic size*, so pathological narcissism (and pathological shame) may be related to an instability in psychic size" (Kilborne 21).

I assume, therefore, that Woman's shame remains in a close relationship with her body image.

A number of ideas proposed by Nancy Lindisfarne in her "Gender, Shame, and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective" will also reemerge at a later point in this work. For example, even though the author refers to Arabo-Islamic culture and writing, her brief considerations about how "parts or aspects of human beings ... can be objectified, owned, and alienated, sold, or exchanged" (249), and how this is related to the experience of shame, prove relevant to analyses of consumerist Western societies. What I find particularly interesting in Lindisfarne's reading is the idea that the antithetical notions of shame and honour are closely linked to the female body, and that this body—or its gendered attributes, for example, a virgin's hymen—"can be used to define and evaluate all dimensions of [her] personhood" (249). The author's discussion revolves around a pair of concepts—"virginity" and "virility"—and their affiliation to the notions of honour and shame for women and men, respectively. She writes that

> [r]hetorically, the virgin's unbroken hymen is an attribute which stands for a unitary individual, and, at that moment when chastity is proven, it defines that individual's gender as entirely and unambiguously female. Hymenal penetration also creates an unambiguously gendered and honourable man: it is the means by which a man makes known his virility to himself and others. Finally, hymenal penetration effects a radical transformation: the womb thus acted upon is transformed and can be made to realize its fertile potential and, by extension, that of the man. (257)

Correspondingly, the female body—when viewed as a cultural commodity—is to be controlled not so much for the sake of safeguarding its own "reputation" (the term which often replaces the dignified notion of "honour" when femininity is being discussed), but in order to assure the honour of Man.[5] In light of the assumption that an unbroken hymen creates the identity of a reputable woman, it seems understandable that the surgical repair of the hymen (hymenoplasty) has been rapidly growing in popularity also in Western cultures. However, as "virginity" of Woman translates into "virility" of Man, some of the more common reasons for the surgical reconstruction of the hy-

5 In fact, in the case of Woman, the notions of virginity, reputation, and shame appear to be strangely connected as, in Ewan Fernie's words, the "basis of female shame is unchastity or a *reputation for unchastity*" (84; my italics).

men are “to surprise your partner,” or to present “a gift to your husband.”[6] Appropriately, one of the internet slogans advertising “revirgination” reads: “You wouldn’t want your boyfriend/future husband to feel ashamed because your hymen no longer existed.”[7]

Theories proposed in the four texts introduced above—Lewis’s *Shame: The Exposed Self*, Wurmser’s “Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism,” Kilborne’s *Disappearing Persons: Shame and Appearance* and Lindisfarne’s “Gender, Shame, and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective”—correspond to ideas I propose in the theoretical section of this book. Even though in interpretive parts of my study I focus both on the transgressive potential inscribed in shame itself, and on the experience of going beyond shame (or de-shaming), I begin my deliberations by discussing shame’s benumbing properties. What interests me primarily is the relationship between shame and femininity defined as a cultural construct which requires Woman’s passivity. The notion of “Woman’s shame” emerges in my work as an interpretive tool, applicable for the purpose of elucidation of both discursive and non-discursive relations between Woman and Western culture. Originating in the shaming gaze—which objectifies Woman’s body and concurrently teaches her what Woman is—Woman’s shame is internalised and accepted as a necessary component of Woman’s identity. This, in turn, as suggested by many of the shame psychologists whose work I have addressed in this chapter, may lead to one’s dissociation into a censorious observer and his censored victim. Since such a shamed Woman is preoccupied with reviewing and restricting her own behaviour, feminist theory appears to be, either directly or indirectly, a counter-response to the paradigm of Woman’s shame. More importantly, feminist theory becomes a necessary complement to the existing instrumentation of contemporary shame psychology, since the psychological argument, divorced from the distinctive, gendered perspective, will not suffice if one endeavours to first understand and then explain the significance of shame in the culture of the West.

6 “Restore Virginity with Plastic Surgery. Details about Hymenoplasty or Hymen Repair Procedure.” World Wide Web <www.mynippon.com> (27.01.2011).
7 “Revirgination.” World Wide Web <www.revirgination.net> (27.01.2011).

2.2. shame-less voices: woman's shame in light of feminist studies

I protested that I was not a suitable third voice, since I was born a woman and remain a biological and gender-identified woman.
Joan Nestle "Genders on My Mind" (3)

Joan Nestle's protest asserts that Woman necessarily lacks subversiveness implied in the theoretical notion of *thirdness*: limited by both—her (apparently cultural) femininity, and her (apparently biological) femaleness—she *essentially* speaks in the voice of the *second* sex. The concept of Woman, relying upon notions of biological and cultural limitation, resuscitates the central postulates of Simone de Beauvoir, adopted and further developed by such feminist thinkers as Susan Bordo or Sonia Kruks. In Beauvoir's terms—Woman denotes a dubiously theoretical space where cultural inhibitions defining femininity mingle with biological constraints unique to the female body. The body, in turn, "is the instrument of [women's] grasp upon the world, the outline of [their] projects" (Beauvoir 34) and, therefore, "to become a woman is to find oneself in a world in which possibilities close down rather than open up, in which the field of free action narrows even… to the point of disappearing" (Kruks 47).

Beauvoir's concept of Woman as the Other—marginalised, estranged, and silenced—corresponds to the image of a shamed person who is no longer *himself* or *herself.* The above parallelism's obviousness notwithstanding, it is surprising how seldom has the subject of shame been dealt with by feminist theorists. While a multitude of works address issues indirectly connected to Woman's shame (particularly texts deconstructing Woman's relationship with her body, or addressing her appearance), only few of existing analyses refer directly to shame. In the ensuing section, I contextualise my search for a viable theory of Woman's shame by presenting a network of reference composed of what I believe are the most intellectually productive feminist analyses of the shame affect, encapsulating the most valid observations on the

interdependency between the concepts of "Woman" and "shame." Such an overview simultaneously allows me to indicate theoretical foundations of the notion of "Woman's shame" as I use it in subsequent chapters of this book, and thus properly—albeit without universalist pretensions—define it for the purpose of my argument.

Expressed in *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the unequivocality of the relationship between Woman and shame relies upon the observation that "[o]ne is not born, but … becomes, a woman" (295) through the shaming shock of adolescence, during which Woman surfaces on a teenage body and stigmatises it with inferiority, brands it with Otherness. The realisation that one has somehow (unwillingly) been teleported into a world in which one is the Other is unambiguously characteristic of shame-experience: the feeling of shame is inextricably blended with the feeling of loss. What is "lost" is precisely what one used to experience as a coherent "self." The process of "Womanisation"—in the course of which the "self" loses cohesion—involves

> an awareness of one's "permanent visibility," learning continually to view oneself through the eyes of the generalized (male) inspecting gaze and, in so doing, taking up as one's own project those "constraints of power" that femininity entails. (Beauvoir qtd. in Kruks 58)

Woman's shame is thus incited by a sudden realisation that her physicality is immoderately exposed. Beauvoir presages this observation by pointing out that

> [w]hen the breasts and the body hair are developing, a sentiment is born which sometimes becomes pride but which is originally shame; all of a sudden the child becomes modest, she will not expose herself naked even to her sisters or her mother, she inspects herself with mingled astonishment and horror, and she views with anguish the enlargement of this firm and slightly painful core, appearing under each nipple, hitherto as inoffensive as the navel. … Under her sweater or blouse her breasts make their display, and this body which the girl has identified with herself she now apprehends as flesh. … The young girl feels that her body is getting away from her, it is no longer a straightforward expression of her individuality; it becomes foreign to her; and at the same time she becomes for others a thing: on the street men follow her with their eyes and comment on her anatomy. She would like to be invisible; it frightens her to become flesh and to show her flesh. (332–333)

Woman is prone to experience shame, since her body *makes* Woman. Whilst Man, in Beauvoir's phrasing, *does* the looking/judging/

thinking, Woman merely appears; *being* Woman entails *showing* Woman, as *she* looms, swells, and peeps out from underneath her clothes. Subjected to the omnipresent phallic gaze, Woman's body becomes the object of shame: terrifying, unwanted, and open not only to view, but also to sexual penetration.

While Jean-Paul Sartre's claim is that one can always return the shaming look and thus regain puissance, "Beauvoir suggests that what distinguishes the situation of a woman from that of a man is precisely her inability to do so" (Kruks 63). Woman *is* as long as she *is seen* by Man, devoured by his invincible, shaming gaze, immobilised and silenced.[8] Although the "emphasis on the other suggests … that shame is … an externally regulated emotion" (Adamson and Clark 9), it is, in fact, internalised by Woman "through identification with the shamer" (Adamson and Clark 10). In consequence, she experiences "the unreality of [her] own being," as she is "defined by the identity of the other" (Wurmser 74).

A more recent feminist account of the relationship between Woman and shame comes from Sandra Lee Bartky. One of the chapters of her *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, titled "Shame and Gender," examines what Bartky refers to as "women's shame." In order to define the affect, Bartky searches into explications provided by Jean-Paul Sartre, John Deigh and John Rawl. In Bartky's perspective, women's shame is

> not so much a particular feeling or emotion (though it involves specific feelings and emotions) as a pervasive affective attunement to the social environment, … women's shame is more than merely an affect of subordination but, within the larger universe of patriarchal social relations, a profound mode of disclosure both of self and situation. (85)

Shame both reduces and reveals; it "requires the recognition that I *am*, in some important sense, as I am seen to be" (86), as well as "involves the distressed apprehension of oneself as a lesser creature" (87). Even though Bartky associates shame with the act of being displayed/inferiorised, women's shame, as she defines it, goes beyond the mere concern with one's body. It "is manifest in a pervasive sense of personal inadequacy that, like the shame of embodiment, is profoundly disempowering; both reveal the 'generalized condition of dishonor'

8 "[S]he must pretend to be an object, and a fascinating one, when she senses herself as an uncertain, dissociated being, well aware of her blemishes" (Beauvoir 380).

which is woman's lot in sexist society" (85). Shame, therefore, in Bartky's reading, marks the oppressed and "isolates the oppressed from one another and in this way works against the emergence of a sense of solidarity" (97).

In *Blush: Faces of Shame*, Elspeth Probyn asks the question of whether shame feels different for women than for men (82). Unlike Beauvoir and Bartky, Probyn is interested not only in women being shamed, but also in women shaming others. In her analyses, she references John Braithwaite's *Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*, in which study he puts forth the claim that "females will more often be the objects and instruments of … shaming" (qtd. in Probyn 90). In his view, Probyn writes,

> living in patriarchal society means that women go from one set of interdependencies to another (from family to marriage). Within these structures women are socialized by reintegrative shaming and then become adept at using it to socialize others. Boys, on the other hand, are given the freedom of "time out" from the family. They are also more likely to be the objects of stigmatization. Boys, according to Braithwaite, will more often be thrown out outright, whereas mothers will seek to reintegrate their sons into the family by shaming them into good behaviour. (90–91)

On a similar note, Probyn quotes Wade Balder who claims that "feminism has shamed men into silence in the political sphere" (qtd. in Probyn 80), which is reminiscent of Roy U. Shenk's position on the matter. Braithwaite and Balder both suggest that women use shaming in order to gain control. However, whereas Balder sees them as manipulative power mongers, Braithwaite suggests that women's tendency to shame others is a result of a prolonged shaming to which they have been subjected themselves. Connectedly, Probyn asserts that

> [i]t is undeniable that repeated exposure to scenes of shame reactivates and feeds the individual's capacity to experience shame. It's equally undeniable that a collective history of being shamed will affect the scripted responses to shame of individuals within the shamed group. (85)

Shame is thus an experience which creates bonds between women, even though these bonds do not create the positive sense of solidarity of which Bartky writes. What connects women in shame—a unique version of the affect which Ullalina Lehtinen's calls *the underdog's*

shame[9]—is shared vulnerability to its effects: "for women there is seemingly no possibility of defying [the feeling]" (Lehtinen qtd. in Probyn 85). I feel connected to other women, which is why "I feel another woman's shame" (Probyn 85) and "[am] ashamed that [I am] ashamed" (Lehtinen qtd. in Probyn 85). In light of the above, shame appears to be contagious and "particularly attaching, it is gluey, with a revolving cycle of separation-attachment-disattachment . . . . [S]hame's energy can be shaped in loops and spirals, waxing and waning as it moves" (Munt 24).

Clearly, in her analysis Probyn refers to a number of common, stereotypical representations of Woman: as emotional rather than reasonable ("mired in the body's feeling and [contrasted with] men as masters of reason" (81), as morally superior to Man, and as "more socially integrated" (90) than men. In particular, the identification of Woman as emotional has traditionally bound her to shame, since "[w]ithin Western traditions of psychology and psychoanalysis a healthy person is one that knows how to manage and contain 'their' emotions within the individual self. The masculine bounded self has become ubiquitously aspirational, its reverse is found in the feminine . . ." (Munt 13). The "masculine bounded self" resides in the masculine bounded body—classical, monumental, closed to the world. Its reverse—the feminine self that is unrestrainable—resides in the body that is unclosed and therefore prone to both experience and evoke shame.

The shame-based disruption of Woman's sense of self is often experienced as inner splits. Both the conception of shame as transformative, and the idea that a shamed Woman not so much *breaks down* as she *breaks up,* can be linked to the fact that the experience of shame is remarkably traumatic. A predictable reaction to being "pinned down" by someone's authoritative gaze is the need to escape from the shaming look:

> The primary motivational instruction of shame is the impulse to get out of the interpersonal realm, usually by hiding. Ashamed people frequently wish to get up and run out of the room, which they sometimes do. At other times, they simply look down, avoid eye contact, and lower their shoulders, seeming to shrink in size. (Janice Lindsay-Hartz qtd. in Pattison 75)

9 Lehtinen differentiates between "the aristocrat's shame" and "the underdog's shame." She uses the concept of an aristocrat to describe a privileged person, "who [has] not been shamed by their gender, class or race . . ." Underdog shame characterises a person who is "socially subordinate" (qtd. in Probyn 85).

When, however, it is *your* eyes that shame *you*, the escape is never easy. Resultantly, a common effect of self-shaming is the inner split into the shaming and the shamed, or the "alienation of self from self" (Fernie 9). In Helen Block Lewis's words,

> here is a sense of being split between the "other" and the self, between affect and cognition. This inhibits the functioning of the self. Self-functioning is usually smooth, "silent," unnoticed and unproblematic; one is unaware of one's self most of the time. In shame, however, it is disrupted so that the self becomes "noisy" and the sole focus of attention. There is an acute sense of dividedness or doubleness as the self evaluates itself. (qtd. in Pattison 73)

Similarly, Mary Daly refers to Woman "divided... *par excellence*" (1973: 48) and links the psychological notion of "divided consciousness" with the concept of Woman's oppression. In Daly's perspective, the oppressed—these "contradictory, divided beings"—"do not fully grasp the paralyzing fact that the oppressor, having invaded the victims' psyches, now exists within themselves. They are caught in a web of self-defeating behavior" (1973: 48). Both Bartky and Daly point to an enemy within, a hostile component of Woman's self which carefully watches/judges her, with "male chauvinist eyes" (Daly 1973: 49):

> What occurs is not just the splitting of a person into mind and body but the splitting of the self into a number of personae, some who witness and some who are witnessed, and ... some internal witnesses are in fact introjected representatives of agencies hostile to the self. Woman has lost control of the production of her own image, lost control of those whose production of these images is neither innocent nor benevolent, but obedient to imperatives which are both capitalistic and phallocentric. In sum, women experience a twofold alienation in the production of our own persons: the beings we are to be are mere bodily beings; nor can we control the shape and nature these bodies are to take. (Bartky 1990: 42)

The fact that thus defined shame originates in Woman's "generalized condition of dishonor" (85) within Western culture, suggests that shaming might be an effective tool of disciplining other "dishonoured" groups oppressed by "sexist societies." While the answer to Elizabeth V. Spelman's question concerning Simone de Beauvoir's definition of a generic woman—"Just Who Does She Think 'We' Is?" (1988: 57)—necessarily reveals that Beauvoir's woman is not only white and

middle-class, but also axiomatically heterosexual, other theorists, including Elspeth Probyn and Sally R. Munt, suggest that in Western societies certain experiences—such as cultural shaming—are shared by women and homosexuals (both gays and lesbians). These authors suggest that we "move away from an exclusive focus on only one system of oppression—gender oppression—and ... begin thinking in terms of multiple, interlocking systems of oppression" (Calhoun 3). The starting point for the ensuing section is, therefore, the assumption that it is the marginalised position of gays and lesbians in the heteronormative Western culture that could have triggered the considerable interest in the shame affect (and hence also shame psychology) among theorists in the fields of gay and lesbian, as well as queer studies. The main goal of the next section is to explore the concept of "queerness" as a means to further investigate the concept of shame and to seek to formulate a theory which could provide a foundation for strategies of transcending it.

2.3. queering shame: toward the empowerment of the language of the margins

... shame, lost in guilt's shadow, has been unjustly ignored as the underlying cause of most modern and postmodern psychic misery and malaise—poor shame, unfairly forgotten, unsexy, and dowdy, and utterly in need of a makeover.

William Ian Miller, Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence *(131)*

Queering ... empowers us to think what is often the unthinkable, to produce unthought-of pasts [presents and futures].

Thomas A. Dowson "Why Queer Archeology? An Introduction" (163)

In colloquial usage, the terms of "queer," "shame" and "Canadianness" seem to have uncomplicated designates. "Queer," more frequently than not, denotes "gay and lesbian," "shame" is a label attached to the unpleasant feeling ensuing a transgression, and "Canadianness" signifies nothing more than Canadian national identity, i.e., an identity shared by Canadian passport holders. Concurrently, in the fields of cultural, literary, or queer studies, the three notions are often conceived of as transgressive: they loom rather large as concepts defying clear-cut definitions and have evidently commanded much critical attention.

Unsurprisingly, as both unfixed and unfixing, "queer," "shame" and "Canadianness" share certain common rhetorical denominators. Indicating the points where these discourses meet and intersect seems a necessary step toward the explanation of the use of language typical of the descriptions of the Canadian landscape for the purpose of exploring "queer marginalisation" in order to eventually work out a theory in light of which the rhetoric determining the reality of a shamed self could be revised.

It therefore seems in order to open the present section with the observation that the transformative potential of the shame experience has long been an important subject of analyses in the area of queer

studies. Originally, queer theorists' interest in the shame affect had historical roots: it sprang from the realisation that since the 19th century, when shame "became a code word for homosexuality and queerness" (MUNT 86), the cultural shaming of queers has been continually exercised. Yet, bearing the assumptions of the present book in mind, more important than the historical rootedness of the theoretical involvement of the queer scholars with shame is the fact that queer readings of the affect emphasise the *subversiveness* of both shame and queerness, and upon such grounds interpret these categories as parallel.

In fact, rather than signifying a particular form of desire (e.g. homosexual as opposed to heterosexual), "queer" is often theorised as an anti-category which "represents the possibility of blurring and/or exploding categories" (NEWMAN 132) and suggests that *any* desire is, basically, non-normative. "Queer"—"a site of permanent becoming" (EDELMAN qtd. in: GIFFNEY 73)—is

> transgressive, rude-positive, non-accommodationist, risky. Queer is anti-assimilationist, defiant, "in your face," aggressive, unapologetic celebration of difference ... The potential of queer seems to be that we do not come together around an assumption of sameness, but around the critique of "the normal." ... What is brought to the fore by "queer" is how much stasis is required for the development and survival of identity—any identity. (NEWMAN 132)

Correspondingly, in "Queer Sex Habits (Oh, no! I mean)," Kosofsky Sedgwick builds her understanding of "queer" upon the etymology of the term. The word "queer," the scholar explains, "itself means 'across' and it derives from the Indo-European root *twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* ("transverse"), Latin *torquere* ("to twist"), English *athwart*."[10] Like shame, therefore, queerness is "permeable, multifarious [and transformative]" (ALLAN 144), and hence "queer" "can be understood more broadly as a project of defamiliarization, a sexed-up version of the Russian Formalists' conception of *ostranenie*" (MUNT 23).

To explain the interrelatedness between "queer" and "shame", however, the thus-far introduced dimensions of the discussion on the affect central to this study—a discussion whose focus to this point has mostly been on a designedly limiting experience in which shame becomes a form of punishment based on inhibition and restraint—fail to suffice.

10 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Sex Habits (Oh, no! I mean)." World Wide Web <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/media/journals/queer-e-v1.n1/article.3> (09. 08. 2004).

The postulate of the parallelism between "shame" and "queer" necessitates bringing the fact that shame is not simply about "what I *did*" to the forefront of attention. If, as I indicated in sections above, one remembers that shame is *simultaneously* about "what I *am*," the affect may be conceived of as a realisation of "an intimate relation of myself to myself. Through shame, I have discovered an aspect of *my* being" (Sartre 301–302; italics in the original).

Such a discovery may motivate one to try to redefine oneself, or to *bring oneself together* again. This possibility of a new, desirable redefinition inspirits Sally R. Munt's novel reading of shame as "a variegated emotion with effects and practices that are not necessarily negative" (3). She sees the energy that shame produces as useful in two interconnected contexts: in an abstract framework of re-identifications, and in a more practical context of tangible political changes. Shame, Munt explains, "can stimulate an energy that has a restorative, creative force, it can mobilise the self and communities into acts of defiant presence, in cycles of disattachment and reconnection" (216). Consequently,

> [w]hen you no longer care that you are being shamed, particularly when horizontal bonds formed through communities of shame can be transmuted into collective desires to claim a political presence and a legitimate self, that new sense of identity can forge ahead and gain rights and protection. (4)

Simultaneously, however, in light of the posthumanist conception of transformative subjectivity, Munt sees the experience of shame as opening up the possibility of a perhaps less palpable, yet none the less real, inner metamorphosis:

> Shame puts us out of place, but the spaces of subjectivity are not wholly fixed or predetermined; shame's loss carries uncertainty, but it also presages a desire for reconnection. It is this desire for re-attachment that has the precarious potential for violence, or love. As we know from Butler's reading of Levinas on the face, the face is the vehicle for the self, an embodied metaphor for what it is to be human (2004). The face turned away—or in shame's case *both* faces turned away (that of the shamer and the shamed)[11]—

11 I understand that Munt sees the shamer turning his/her face away from the person s/he shamed out of disgust, and/or due to the contagious nature of shame (I turn my face away not to feel the shame experienced by someone else). At the same time, the act of shaming requires that one is looked at, and the "turning away" from shame can happen only after the shaming gaze has been cast.

> involves some loss of representability, that "loss of face" involves a risk of dehumanization. This is the volatility of shame, that it allows the subject to momentarily step outside linguistic determinability; it can then fall into abjection, or it can unfix itself and rise, in radical unpredictability. (103; italics in the original)

It is in view of the volatility—or a performative nature[12]—of both concepts that in her *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Kosofsky Sedgwick expressly correlates "queerness" and "shame." In her reading, the principal characteristic of shame is that it "makes identity" (36):

> In fact, shame and identity remain in a very dynamic relation to one another, at once deconstituting and foundational, because shame is both peculiarly contagious and peculiarly individuating. … In the developmental process, shame is now often considered the affect that most defines the space wherein a sense of self will develop … . Which I take to mean, not at all that this place where identity is most securely attached to essences, but rather that is the place where the *question* of identity arises most originally and most relationally. (36–37; italics in the original)

When analyzed as "queer," shame undergoes a re-definition, and thus loses the status of a punishment: it becomes *a force capable of transforming identity* (and not necessarily in a negative way). "Shame" and "queer" remain in an active relation with each other, owing to which they are "available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, [and] *trans*figuration…" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003: 63; my italics).

Inextricably linked to the prefix *trans* is the third concept central to this study—as amorphous as "shame" and "queer," generating as multiple readings and as constantly redefined—the concept of "Canadianness." This connection is clearly testified to by the particular choice of the name for one of the most influential institutions fostering Canadian Studies: the TransCanada Institute, established by Smaro Kamboureli in 2007, and by the obviously non-accidental decision Kamboureli and Roy Miki made in giving the important volume of essays they edited in the same year the meaningful title of *Trans.Can.Lit:*

12 "Performativity… carries the double meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential.'… Performative [therefore] carries the authority of two quite different discourses, that of theater on the one hand, and of speech act theory and deconstruction on the other" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003: 7).

Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature. These intuitions are confirmed by the introductory text published on the Institute's website:

> The "Trans" in TransCanada … echoes the various processes—historical, political, national, economic, global—that impact on Canadian literature as an institution that has gone through various stages of development: from being ignored as a colonial product, and thus seen as inferior to the British and American literary traditions, to being reified as a national, read "white," literature, from encompassing, under the ægis of multiculturalism, diasporic authors, to becoming indigenized and reaching international acclaim to being studied in the context of the Humanities.[13]

The prefix "trans-" opening up space to analyze "Canadianness" in terms of "transformation" invites "transgression" as a revisionist, "re-situating," strategy. Though the already signaled affinity between the notions of "Canada" and "Woman" will be discussed in detail in the interpretive chapter of this book, at this point it is important to emphasise the *queer potential* inscribed in the "gray, protoplasmic fuzz outside [the American] borders" (Atwood 1996: 171)—"the snowbound Canada suffering from the borderline non-definability" (Szatanik 2006: 59). The infamous Canadian identity crisis stems from the fact that "there has always been a plurality of cultures competing for national attention" which is why "instead of a universal Canadian identity, the universal is now seen as a contested site of power… " (Sherbert 2–3). Whereas such authors as Margaret Atwood or Katherine Monk have claimed that it is "emptiness—or negative space—[that] becomes a defining principle in the Canadian psyche, Canadian art and Canadian film" (Monk 89), others argue that the theoretical concept of Canadianness cannot be comprehended through simple dichotomies (self-other, absence-presence, negative-positive)—it is transgressive as it goes *across*, in "no direction home."[14]

The intersection of the discourses of "shame," "queer" and "Canadianness" becomes obvious when one considers the language common to, shared and interchanged among the three. An illustrative example, which allows one to employ the postulated connection to literary studies on transgressive shame and, at the same time, offers a conve-

13 World Wide Web <http://www.transcanadas.ca/institute.html> (07.02.2011).
14 "TransCanada, Literature. No Direction Home" is an essay by Stephen Slemon included in the collection titled *Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki.

nient link with the interpretive part of this study, is offered by Terry Goldie. In his comment on Voltaire's shaming statement that Canada is but "a few acres of snow [*quelques arpents de neige*]," Goldie asserts that "snow can be very important. Especially when it's pink" (Goldie 2–3). Snow, in itself, is *trans*formative: in Goldie's study it represents the queer potential of Canadian fiction and the de-shaming potential of the queer rhetoric, and thus it becomes comprehensible why Can. Lit., Canadian cinema, as well as the Canadian society, have often be referred to, or celebrated, as queer.[15] Like queer theorists interested in the shame affect, present-day critics of Canadian national identity also focus on a process, rather than a state, on an unfixing and reframing of, rather than a determining of, identity.

15 For example, in *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context* (2001) edited by Terry Goldie, Peter Dickinson's *Screening Gender, Framing Genre: Canadian Literature into Film* (2006), or in *Canadian Cultural Poesis: Essays on Canadian Culture* (2005), edited by Garry Sherbert, Annie Gérin and Sheila Petty.

2.4. subversion\transgression\language: a feminist theory of woman's shame

Even though the majority of texts discussed so far focus on shame as experienced in the body, the affect *must not* be discussed solely as a bodily phenomenon. Instead,

> [w]e need to think through shame's passage from the physiological level to the sphere in which it becomes political . . . . Shame is a powerful instance of embodiment, but it is also called into being by, and then inflicts, historical and political circumstance . . . . Shame gets named and positioned within concrete political and social spheres. The questions remain: What is the point of shame? What can it do and not do? (Probyn 79)

Where shame becomes an issue, the bodily bleeds into the discursive, as much as the discourse affects the body. Even though such a claim may well prove applicable to a variety of cultures of the world, the "political and social sphere" of my interest is that of Western culture alone. As for "what it can do," Woman's shame—alongside such a culturally productive concept as the Beauty Myth, defined by Naomi Wolf—can keep the existing power relations intact,[16] since "shame might be a type of feedback loop that continually connects the individual and her environment" (Probyn 83).

This observation seems to conveniently bridge my reflections concerning the uncharted areas of the psychological studies of shame with the limitations of contemporary cultural studies adopting shame as their object. Shame psychology, undoubtedly, rests upon consistent methodological foundations of clinical psychology, yet fails to account for the uniqueness of the cultural conditioning of Woman's psyche. At the same time, contemporary culture studies addressing the problem of shame, albeit highly conscious of gender and its discursive entanglements, seem to lack a cohesive methodological frame grounded in shame-oriented psychology. Therefore, revising both disciplinary approaches in their mutual light, I propose a theory defining Woman's shame as a *pathological state* originating in what Woman is taught

16 After all, to quote Léon Wurmser, the shamed woman is "metaphorically dead" (65).

about *herself* (through the lasting, shaming gaze, which conditions socialisation she undergoes), and what she consequently adopts as *her self*. I also assume—echoing Beauvoir—that Woman's awareness of her *self* is closely linked to her awareness of her *body*. Hence, when I refer to Woman's shame, I do not have in mind the common sensation that is a result of a single infraction, or a *natural* response to a sudden disruption of joy/interest as postulated by Tomkins. Instead, I understand Woman's shame as a lasting state instilled in Woman, one which disrupts and (mis)shapes her sense of subjectivity.

Thus, building my gendered theory of Woman's shame upon the methodological grounds of shame psychology, I postulate that the link between "physiological" and the "social" faces of shame is that of the metanarrative; it is language with its culturally meaningful rhetoric that creates realities and undoes them. For this reason, it is in the existential acts of reading and writing that transgressive strategies of subversion, empowering Woman by disempowering shaming discourses, may manifest themselves. It is around the concept of transgression and the almost "tactile" rhetoric of blurred borders it entails, that various strategies of transcending Woman's shame revolve. The ensuing part, dedicated to Lorna Crozier's poetry, shows these dynamics in action.

THR

lorna crozier's feminist strategies: four studies in transcending woman's shame

If severe feelings of shame
compel us to hide and conceal
inner reality from others
and from ourselves, it is often countered in the writer by the creative ideal,
a defiant and even ruthless decision
not to turn away or to lie, a courageous and almost shameless will
to see and to know that which internal and external sanctions conspire
to keep us from looking at
and exploring.

Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark "Introduction: Shame, Affect, Writing" (29)

chapter

Feminism has always been trangressive. Whether one considers feminism as a label for the movement associated with activism, resistance, and empowerment of women or, more specifically, whether one thinks of it in terms of feminist theory—whose key-words involve a significant number of *re*-s (re-visioning, re-reading, re-writing)—it seems beyond question that since its inception feminism has aimed to challenge the basic tenets of Western culture. Acts of defiance, reifying the challenge, have regularly triggered shaming as a patriarchal countermeasure, and this seems to be a rule valid till this day. And just as *Punch* magazine in the 19th century would recurrently ridicule the Suffrage Movement, also the present-day common stereotypes of a feminist are perpetuated to perform a similar, shaming function. As a result, in casual usage, "feminine" and "feminist" are commonly assumed to form a binary opposition: unsurprisingly then "a feminist" continues to be construed as masculine, lesbian, ugly, aggressive, unkind, or even monstrous—and almost always grotesque. In order to be *normal*, Woman needs to be feminine—which is why many women are wary of the other f-word. The shaming strategy, if not foolproof, is undoubtedly effective.

And yet, in the world of academia it is common knowledge that the concept of "feminism" denotes a multitude of meanings. Divided into waves, disintegrated through the use of hyphens and prefixes, this umbrella term encompasses a plethora of diverse standpoints and voices. For instance, to some feminists it would be "feminist" to challenge negative stereotyping and un-demonise feminism by means of entering the mainstream culture of TV shows in high heels and with an equally high awareness of the "enmeshed relationship of femininity to a feminine appearance" (Holland 41). Others, however, would critique such choices as indicating adherence to, and reiterating the patriarchal models of femininity: they would claim that in order for feminism to be subversive, it has to remain on the margins and avoid mingling with the centre. More profound, critical discrepancies within feminism *sensu largo* have been triggered when such factors as race or sexual orientation surface in discussions about women's inferiorisation. In view of the essential non-homogeneity of feminism as an intellectual and social formation, it is important that the concept of "feminist strategies" in interpretations of Lorna Crozier's poetry, which I propose to employ in the next chapter, be disambiguated.

My primary investment in this study is in the space of feminist cultural and literary studies. Although I do occasionally refer to feminist works rooted in psychoanalysis,[1] I mainly draw inspiration from feminist research offering critical insights into narratives and metanarratives of Western culture and, specifically, its literary manifestations. Correspondingly, the strategies of transcending Woman's shame that I trace in Crozier's poems epitomise the "subversion of cultural assumptions," which "is an event that takes place… in the reading of [a] text" (Bordo 1995: 292). Therefore, centrally, the transgressive acts that I discuss below involve subverting metanarratives, retelling cultural myths, and questioning patriarchal authorities. These strategies have long been employed by feminist writers and critics, although usually without any clear references to shame or de-shaming.[2]

According to Joanne H. Wright, "rejuvenating [the myths] of the lost matriarchy" (127) was central to radical feminists of the 1960s and 1970s. Elaine Showalter elaborates, "Over the centuries, we find that women have turned to mythology and religion for clues to the feminist epic life, reaching back to the Amazons, Diana of Ephesus, Cassandra, Penelope, Minerva, or Isis. They have sometimes sought in history a Feminist Messiah, a saint or savior …" (Showalter 15). Unsurprisingly, the scope of artistic and academic positions aimed at the revision of androcentric narratives expanded fast, giving rise to a plethora of feminist texts subverting patriarchal authoritarianism *beyond* the foundational metanarratives of Western culture. Among these, some texts level their criticism at discourses of "institutionalised androcentrism," including the (traditionally masculine) authority of academia.[3]

1 For instance, stances associated with the so-called French feminism.

2 Myths and fairy tales, for example, have been revised and rewritten by such distinguished authors as Anne Sexton, Angela Carter or Margaret Atwood. Anne Sexton (1971) retold a number of the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales, often with the use of colloquial language and references to the 20th-century Western culture, in order to reveal these aspects of the tales—e.g., sexuality—which were invisible in their traditional versions. Angela Carter (1979), in a more radical way, reshaped such tales as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Little Snow White" and "Puss-in-Boots." In probably the most famous of her re-tellings—"The Company of Wolves"—the protagonist of "Little Red Riding Hood," reckless in her naiveté, is transformed into a self-confident, strong character, and the act of eating her up by the wolf becomes a sexual act in which she actively participates. In Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), it is Penelope who tells the story of her, rather than Odysseus's, life. The strategy of giving voice to the silenced was also famously employed by Jean Rhys in her *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

3 See, for example, a collection titled *The Madwoman in the Academy: 43 Women*

The following section opens a series of interpretations of subversive poetic acts of literature which, apart from instantiating feminist defiance against oppressive discourses, demonstrate a unique consistency in the use of rhetoric de-shaming Woman. Such de-shaming rhetoric functions both as a metanarrative cure and as a strategy of empowerment, allowing me to propose a congruous theory of Woman's shame born as a result of convergence of shame psychology (now genderwise revised), feminism and queer studies, its distinctiveness looming large against the background of Canadianness and its particular rhetoric.

The point of departure for the argument central to this section is the analysis of two poems addressing what has traditionally been regarded as the highest authority: God/the father. The myth retold is "the dominant creation myth in the Western tradition," whose "rendition of gender relations continues to hold sway over… modern conceptions" of gender roles (Wright 8). The object of transgression is thus the concept of transgression itself, the central notion underlying coercive shaming of Woman.

Boldly Take on the Ivory Tower (2003), edited by Deborah Keahey and Deborah Schnitzer, or Carol Shick's *The University as Text: Women and the University Context* (1994).

3.1. transgressing transgression. subverting the authority of the biblical creation myth

("original sin" and "what i gave you truly")

The concept of transgression, as construed within the dominant meta-narrative of Judeo-Christianity, is an exponent of the more general conceptualisation of the mechanisms of power, central to the symbolic system, constructing—and organising—the order of the Western world. More specifically, however, despite its seemingly neutral etymology, the term in question seems to have been functioning predominantly as a rather unequivocal value judgment: for centuries, it has solely referred to acts of defiance with respect to accepted norms, which, in the Christian narratives, translates into the God-given Law. As such, transgression becomes a term shedding light upon the *modus operandi* of the Judeo-Christian normativity: that which is transgressive is both sinful and evil because it questions the "unquestionable" order, and thus imperils the stability of the structures of power.

The menace of transgression, therefore, needs to be counteracted. In the Judeo-Christian, patriarchal, phallogocentric tradition, the term itself has become laden with negative connotations and thus also a part of a larger "failsafe mechanism," invoking "pre-emptive measures" of shame and anxiety. This subchapter seeks to demonstrate how these measures are overcome on the basis of an interpretation of two poems by Lorna Crozier: "Original Sin" and "What I Gave You Truly," which, offering a poetic re-reading of the traditional (canonical) exegesis of the Judeo-Christian myth of Origin, *epitomise* the transgression. As such, they invite an interpretation rooted in the revisionary discourse of contemporary feminist and queer studies, which provides the methodological framework for the ensuing, tripartite, argument.

"what is it that you have done?"[4]
a (theo)retical introduction

It is common knowledge that the Biblical narrative of the Original Sin and the Fall of Adam and Eve is, cardinally, the story of an archetypal transgression—the first people break the one law devised for them by God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Within the Garden of Eden, transgressions are not to be tolerated: such acts question God's order—the archetypal Law-of-the-Father—which is hierarchical, patriarchal, heteronormative, and, significantly, established by and in language. In fact, in the stories of creation presented in both Genesis and the Gospel according to John, it is language that is a "precondition of identity" (Gilmore 165).

Within such logocentric theology—formed by the "acts of dividing and knowing through opposition" (Gilmore 165)—Woman is created as *other than* Man. It is, in fact, the "man's lack, his insufficiency unto himself revealed by his need for a helpmeet [that] generates the necessity for woman" (Gilmore 167). Eve, therefore—in Leigh Gilmore's words—is to be unavoidably associated with both *the lack* and *the wound*: "When the name/thing 'helpmeet' is discovered to be lacking, God performs the first surgery and extracts a rib from the man to serve as a foundation for a rather peculiar birthing fable that links woman with wound" (167). Through this act of violence, God creates the *Wo-Man* who stands in a "metonymic relation to the man" and is secondary to him, "morally weaker… and… thus prey to the forces of corruption" (Gilmore 170). As such, she cannot use the power of language but, conversely, falls victim to it:

> The first three chapters [of Genesis] establish naming as the significant and signifying action and make clear Eve's place in this order. She names nothing, creates nothing. Perhaps in this narrative we could say that Eve was the first to experience the relationship between signifier and signified as arbitrary. Her transgression (which should primarily be understood as the desire for knowledge, the desire to know what God knows), which results in the exile from the garden, initiates only a more formal exile than the one she already lives. Her exclusion from language carries tremendous consequences, and this first revolution of the dispossessed (she does not own her name, hence, her self) concludes God's experiment in the garden.

4 Gen. 3:13

> When God first speaks directly to the woman, it is as a judge, and the first trial is initiated: "What is it that you have done?" (Gen. 3:13). (Gilmore 170)

Importantly, the first sentence that Eve directs to God in response to his question is, in fact, an act of confession—"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13)—which is traditionally understood to be "an injunction to render into language what is often culturally unspeakable" (Bernstein 17)—or shameful. Its purpose is to transcend the (shameful) experience through redemption granted by an authority. The presence of the authority—God being its ultimate representation—is, therefore, necessary in this discursive ritual. As such—in Michel Foucault's words—confession "unfolds within a power relationship" (61).[5] A confessant bares himself/herself in front of the confessor who is, at the same time, the sole bearer/barer of the truth, and "enjoys interpretive privilege" (Bernstein 17). The experience of verbalising the unspeakable unburdens the confessant of shame only if it is "authorised" by the confessor.

The position of Eve as a "confessee" is particularly problematic, as she is not only construed as secondary and marginalised, but is also "silenced in the construction of [the] story of transgression" (Bernstein 23). In Bernstein's reading, in fact, confession only reinforces power relations and, consequently, the only "subject that confession affirms is implicitly gendered masculine and heterosexualized male" (21).[6] It is, therefore, Man whom the act of "telling things" empowers, and it is Man who—in the binary world of patriarchy—is assigned to the dominant position of the confessor.

5 In Michel Foucault's phrasing: "The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also the ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority that requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation" (61–62).

6 Bernstein supports her reading of confession by referring to Sigmund Freud's theory. In Freud's terms, catharsis is granted by the very fact of "telling things" which "discharges tension so that excitation gains an outlet" (22–23).

The patriarchal character of the Biblical order is further manifest in the fact that even though both Adam and Eve are disciplined by God, it is Eve who is believed to carry the blame for their loss of innocence. It is Eve, too, whose body is a locus of punishment devised by God. The fifth chapter of Genesis, therefore, in Gilmore's reading, is the story of another creation: one of the female body as "the site of labor and pain" (170–171).[7] Clearly, the new reality of an exile forces Woman to further subordination: "God… predicts the future of heterosexuality with the constituents of desire and childbearing and prescribes the female role in it" (Gilmore 171).

Importantly, even before the actual punishment is pronounced by God, the disobedience of Adam and Eve results in the sinners' sudden awareness of their nakedness: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). In a more down-to-earth interpretation by Richard Klein,

> [a]fter the Fall, scales fell from their eyes and they perceived that they were not nude, but naked as peeled shrimp. The pious Christian ideal of beauty starts there, in the humiliation of the flesh. It bespeaks a hatred of every fleshy thing that prevents the soul from instantly achieving its spiritual destiny. Flesh was no longer the blessed stuff in which the gods became present among humans. The beauty of its forms was censored by Judeo-Christian taboos surrounding graven images, and its seductions were demonized by Christian morals. The landscape of the human body was no longer deemed to enact the mysteries of creation, proposing to the eye of the dazzled spectator an incomparable vision of tension and ease, force and yielding, strength and softness. (28)

Even though the term Klein uses is "humiliation," it is clear that Adam and Eve's realisation of their nakedness is concurrent with the mind-altering experience of shame. In Sally R. Munt's phrasing, "[s]hame is fundamental to the originary myth of Judeo-Christian societies, as Adam and Eve were shamefully expelled from Eden to discover their fallen humanity, in the world" (80). In fact, the Original Sin can be read not only as a transgression *on* God's law, but also as a shame-induced transgression *into* a new corporeality. Such a sudden

7 God tells Eve: "I will greatly multiply your grief and your suffering in pregnancy and the pangs of childbearing; with spasms and distress you shall bring forth children; yet your desire and craving shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16).

shift is experienced as an immediate, unexpected transfer from a familiar, stable reality to a slippery maze, where

> [this] unexpectedness is more than suddenness in time; it is also the astonishment at seeing different parts of ourselves, conscious and unconscious, acknowledged and unacknowledged, suddenly coming together, and coming together with aspects of the world we have not recognized. Patterns of events (inner and outer) of which we are not conscious come unexpectedly into relation with those of which we are aware. (Lynd 34)

The world they are *shamed into* takes Adam and Eve by an unpleasant surprise: merged in confusion and incongruity, they wish to hide from the new reality. The disappearance/invisibility they long for is, however, unattainable, as in this "divisive, shame-ridden consciousness" (Fernie 32) they fell into, Adam and Eve are not only separate, but they become "his naked body and her naked body" (Jacoby 19), the conspicuous objects of desire, and manifestations of difference. In other words, in the Biblical Creation Myth, shame is presented as a negative experience, a prelude to mortality and a foretaste of future pain.

One of the feminist strategies of transcending shame, as suggested earlier, is re-telling the foundational patriarchal narratives. In her collection titled *Apocrypha of Light*, Lorna Crozier re-visions numerous Biblical stories, including the Creation Myth. Her poem titled "Original Sin" queers up and perverts the Biblical account of the Sin and the Fall, by means of introducing a *third* character into the story of the first couple.

"of adam's first wife, lilith, it is told."[8]

transgressions in/of "original sin"

The traces of Lilith have been markedly wiped away. Erased from the Biblical translations, Lilith found her place in the Rabbinic midrash, and was created in the course of the interpretation of the following Biblical verse: "…male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).[9] In the midrashic reading, the original human was a hermaphrodite composed of Adam *and* Lilith. Such interpretation corresponds to the pre-Christian myth of the origin of the human nature, introduced by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. The Adam/Lilith whole can be read, therefore, as the representative of the "third sex": "[the] single combination, comprising both male and female" (Plato 33). However, for the reason that "this posture made locomotion difficult, and conversation awkward" God "divided the androgyne and gave each half a new rear" (Graves and Pathai 69).

The partition generated the story of Lilith as the archetype of the Evil Woman: separated from Adam, she did not try to return to the state of the original oneness, but—on the contrary—she refused to make due love to him, which left Adam longing for a new wife. Lilith, in turn, banished to the Red Sea and relegated to the textual realm of Jewish folklore and fantasy, was described as the queen of demons and the prototypical "whore." Moreover, her rebelliousness formed the grounds for the differentiation between the motherly Eve and the murderous Lilith (for instance, while Eve would have procreative sex with Adam and gave birth to his children, Lilith would drink blood of human infants).

In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's reading of the myth of Lilith, she is the one who—having taken the shape of the snake—seduces Eve, thus bringing about the Fall. The present interpretations of the figure of the first woman, however, often reveal her feminist potential.[10] Manifestly, Lilith invites readings, in which she is construed as the first rebel

8 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Lilith." World Wide Web <http://lilitu.com/lilith/lilpoem.html> (01.02.2010).

9 The earliest form of the legend of Lilith comes from the anonymous midrashic work titled *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, written between 7th and 11th century. The oldest reference to Lilith, however, appears in the Ancient-Sumerian story of Gilgamesh.

10 See: *Which Lilith? Feminist Writers Re-Create the World's First Woman,* edited by Enid Dame, Lilly Rivlin, and Henny Wenkart (1998) or Siegmund Hurwitz's *Lilith: The First Eve: Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Dark Feminine* (1992).

against the patriarchal power, the first victim of this power, and the first "feminist" threat.

In Crozier's "Original Sin," Lilith—the third, the queer—disturbs the (structured, binary, heterosexual) reality of the Garden. The poem redefines the nature of the Original Sin and, at the same time, locates the origins of the humankind in Aristophanes's myth. Concurrently, the poem creates Eve anew—freeing her from the burden of sin and shame—and allows Lilith (who in the Bible signifies only absence) to tell her own story.

"Original Sin" is composed of two parts—"The First Woman" and "The Fall of Eve." The first part—narrated by Lilith—portrays the genesis of the human race derived from Aristophanes's speech. In Crozier's Lilith's story, however, the original person is not a hermaphrodite, but a perfect female form:

> We were mothers giving birth
> to each other, or we were sisters,
> our home the night's vast womb.
> We orbited inside its silky
> Black cocoon. …
> I felt her grow beside me, her spirit curve
> against my bones like cream inside a spoon.
> We were one creature then,
> four-legged, perhaps a fawn
> whose hooves had not grown hard,
> a calf so strange we would be kept
> inside a jar. (20)

Lilith's description of the four-legged, queer creature bears a striking resemblance to Aristophanes's portrayal of the original human as "a complete whole, spherical, with back and ribs forming a circle [who] had four hands, four legs, and two faces, identical in every way, on a circular neck" (Plato 33). Aristophanes's ingenious woman—analogous to Lilith/Eve whole—was perfectly complete, self-sufficient and "remarkable for [her] strength and vigour" (33). Both in this pre-Christian myth and in the Biblical one, it is the first humans' shameless ambition that brings about gods'/God's punishment. Having "tried to make a way up to heaven, to attack the gods" (33), Aristophanes's original humans were cut into severed halves and thus rendered powerless. From then on, "each half [has gone] round looking for its other half," longing to "restore [themselves] to [their] true human form" (35).

This is why, as Aristophanes suggests, people are naturally inclined to love. Daughters of the earth,[11] Lilith and Eve are driven by their earthly desire to "[wind] around each other" again (Crozier "Original Sin" 21).

Although perfectly complete as one, in the Garden of Eden, Lilith and Eve are destined to be disunited: inevitably, they will be split into the first and the second wife of Adam. In Crozier's poem God is the master of numbers and labels; since there is no name for the "double brightness" (21), Lilith and Eve have to be separated, which is why Lilith is marked:

> My hand reached out
> and to prove I was the first
> the angels tied it with a strong red string
> the origin of scarlet as a curse. (21)

Through this signifying act, which connotes not only condemnation but also transformation, Lilith becomes other-than-Eve, although she "[clings] to the womb / with [her] nails and teeth" (21). Lilith is *signed* first, and then *sins*: her refusal to leave the state of harmony and *jouissance* is punished ("[She], not Eve, brought pain into the birthing room" (21). The Original Sin, in other words, is Lilith's refusal to be separated from Eve. In the next stanza, Lilith confesses that she sinned again:

> . . . I wouldn't lie placid
> as a hooked and fatty fish under Adam,
> my wings pinned back. For punishment
> God banished me and turned my sister into bone,
> honed away everything she'd been
> when we lay together among stars. (21)

The second woman is, therefore, punished for the lapse of the first one (which institutes the hereditary nature of the Original Sin), and is turned into Adam's rib, so that she could be forever at his side.

Transformed into Adam's complement, Eve loses the memory of the past, but walks to the edge of the Garden, led by the unconscious desire of "poetry and silence" (22). It is in the liminal space, be-

11 "The reason for having three sexes . . . was this: the male was originally the offspring of the sun, the female of the earth, and the one which was half-and-half was the offspring of the moon . . . ." (Plato 33).

tween the Garden and the Wasteland which Lilith inhabits, that Lilith and Eve briefly find each other. During the encounter described in the second part of the poem it is Eve's body that *remembers* the feeling—or *feels* the memory—of the perfectly sensual union with the other woman:

> Beside the hawthorn hedge, the forbidden
> tart on my tongue, I said *Lilith*
> though I didn't remember
> what it meant, then I said *Beloved*
> and something like a breath lifted
> the hair on the back of my neck. (22; italics in the original)

Like in the Biblical story of the Fall, in Crozier's poem it is also the taste of the forbidden that leads to the knowledge of the body as erotic and sexual (while God, enraged "[roars] through the leaves" (22)). And like in the Biblical myth, such knowledge marks Eve's Fall from amnesic innocence to the painful awareness of the lost unity:

> My own arms rose and I know
> the way you know your own sorrow
> on this earth, once I was that dear,
> that close to her,
> once I too could fly. (23)

Through the introduction of Lilith to the Garden of Eden, Crozier *queers* the Biblical Creation Myth, which, as I will shortly demonstrate, is in itself the strategy of de-shaming Eve. At the same time, Crozier *de-shames the queer*, by means of referring to the Ancient Greek text. According to Aristophanes, "the name of… desire and pursuit of completeness is Eros, or love" (Plato 37). Such love does not distinguish between "good desire" and "evil desire": the pursuit of wholeness—irrespective of whether one may originally have been the child of the sun, the earth, or the moon—is both natural and *good*. The myth presents the genesis of homosexuality in a way which renders its character natural or, indeed, defines homosexuality as *superior* to heterosexuality:

> [Women] who are part of an original woman pay very little attention to men. Their interest is found in women; lesbians are found in this class. And those who are part of a male pursue what is male. As boys, because

> they are slices of the male, they are fond of men, and enjoy going to bed with men and embracing them. These are the best of the boys and young men, since they are by nature the most manly. Some people call them immoral—quite wrongly. It is not immorality, but boldness, courage and manliness, since they take pleasure in what is like themselves. (Plato 36)

In Aristophanes's myth, homosexuality (male homosexuality in particular) is, therefore, construed as "normal," or, in fact, elevated. It seems, however, that the aim of Crozier's poem is not to sublimate homosexuality, but rather to oppose the binary logic of the Garden, founded upon the hierarchical distinction between Man and Woman. The poem contests (patriarchal) dualisations by means of inserting the third element in between the proper two. Owing to the "queerification" of the Biblical myth, "shame" loses the magnitude of a life sentence, and acquires the trangressive/transformative potential.

To conclude, "Original Sin" *queers* the Biblical Creation Myth in a variety of ways. Firstly, it draws upon the pre-Christian past, and thus undermines the Biblical *truths*—particularly those concerning the nature of Woman and the heteronormativity of the Garden of Eden. Secondly, the poem contrasts meaningful creation with the pre-symbolic state of the perfect unity. Previous to the first act of divine signification—the "transfusion of the living body into language" (Oliver xvi)—Lilith and Eve find themselves in the semiotic space of the body.[12] In this pre-linguistic state, Eve and Lilith are, accordingly,

> … mothers giving birth
> to each other, or … sisters,
> [their] home the night's vast womb. (21)

At the same time, Crozier's portrait of this "maternal" pair is evidently eroticised. For instance, in the last stanza of "The First Woman" Lilith complains that Eve has forgotten

> [their] one smell
> As [they] wound around each other,
> [Eve's] fingers in [Lilith's] mouth, [Lilith's] hand
> Holding [Eve's] heartbeat. (21)

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12 It was Julia Kristeva who, in her *Revolution in Poetic Language*, famously distinguished between the symbolic and the semiotic elements present in the process of signification—the former referring to all that which is "proper," "grammatical," "structured," "meaningful," "masculine," and the latter to "bodily drives," "tones," "rhythms," "the pre-meaningful," "the maternal" and "the subversive" (22–106).

Crozier's portrayal of the pre-linguistic, homoerotic womb is particularly congruous with the vision of motherhood presented in Kristeva's "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini," which links maternity with homoerotic desire:

> By giving birth, a woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself. She thus actualizes the homosexual facet of motherhood, through which a woman is simultaneously closer to her instinctual memory, more open to her own psychosis, and consequently, more negatory of the social, symbolic bond. (303)

Such a homosexual bond between two women is, however, only temporary: for Woman, the image of the mother is, necessarily, "paradise lost" (Kristeva 1997a: 304). The story of Lilith and Eve, however, finishes at the point of Eve's awakening, and therefore, the consequences of the subversion of God's law remain unclear. Rather, as "narratives of transgression present descriptions of domination that might be starting points for questioning the rhetoric and structure of power" (Bernstein 32), this subversion remains there as a promise of a change. The poem, in other words, *uncloses* the concepts of transgression and shame against the way in which they structure the Judeo-Christian discourses.

"moments and margins."[13]
transgressiveness of eve's confession

The power of lies derives, paradoxically,
from the centrality of truth-telling …
John Kucich, The Power of Lies:
Transgression in Victorian Fiction *(3)*

"What I Gave You Truly" is a poetic monologue of the Biblical Eve, who announces a new *truth* about the Original Sin. The poem is Eve's confession: no longer a figure in someone else's story, she narrates her own testimony. However, since Eve's *relation* with language is dubious, her blasphemous *relation* of what happened in the Garden of Eden is even more so. Consequently, the question if, and under which conditions, a confession can become the narrative territory of compensation and shame-less freedom for Crozier's Eve inevitably arises.

In "What I Gave You Truly" time is sorted into "before" and "after," and space is divided by the "bramble bush" into two (opposite) sides: in-side and out-side. The Garden—conventionally orderly, organised and regulated—is a private territory, a *center* which is harmonious and æsthetically enjoyable for its Master/Gardener, and from which Eve—imperfect and immoral[14]—is excluded. She is banished to margins and, as such, she speaks

> … from the other side
> of the bramble bush, the side where nothing
> grows but wheels and cogs and the loneliness
> of exile on this earth. (39)

Moreover, Eve is deprived of her own voice and uses one that she borrows from "thorns," "wire," "crow" and "rain," although *before* she was

> A softness longed for
> at the end of the day, its vesper song,
> mothering the weary. (39)

13 Susan David Bernstein, *Confessional Subjects: Relations of Gender and Power in Victorian Literature and Culture* (38).

14 In fact, the words "integrity" and "morality" are etymologically linked. The root of "integrity" (Latin *Integritas*) implicates not only "wholeness" but also "honour," "honesty" and "virtue."

Apparently, through the Fall—this divisive event—Eve lost her *mother tongue* and her motherly/virginal qualities as such, and became a model temptress, punished and condemned to exile and loneliness. Although she recognises the sweetness of "before" and the bitterness of "after," the feelings of shame, guilt and responsibility for the Fall are absent from her speech: what she says she "gave man / without a lie and truly" (39), is merely an apple: "Gravenstein, Spartan, Golden Delicious" (39). The act of offering the fruit to Adam and enticing him to "*Eat this*" triggers the conversion into a new reality which, however, contrary to the Biblical account, appears to be faultless and shameless:

> Eat this, I say, and your eyes open
> as mine did then, all things innocent, unused,
> my new man naked before me.
> Remember that.
> I give you the apple and you see
> your lover for the first time, this wonder
> repeated in the flesh. (39)

The new reality that Eve transports Adam to is evidently sexualised; indeed, the tasting from the Tree of Knowledge can be interpreted as the first sexual act, or the first realisation of sexual desire.[15] That is why, according to Stephen Pattison, it is "[since] the incident of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden [that] sexuality and the body have been seen as particularly sensitive sites of shame…" (267). The lyrical I of Crozier's poem, however, is not the authoritarian *seer*: the unexpected nakedness she witnesses is unworldly and incorrupt. Eve's confession, in other words, locates shame "somewhere else"—shame is instituted upon her instead of being *naturally* rooted in Eve's apparent lewdness. Ewan Fernie observes that in the Judeo-Christian discourse the "basis of female shame is unchastity or a reputation for unchastity" (84). In the feminist discourse, conversely, Eve is neither promiscuous nor ashamed. Her confession appears to be, therefore, a form of resistance against the dominant story which creates the definition of Woman. The purpose of Eve's speech is, seemingly, to give a blasphemous testimony of what happened in the Garden of Eden ("without

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15 In Hebrew the word "know"—*yada*—is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Likewise, in psychoanalytical terms, "the desire to know is [always] constructed from sexual desire and curiosity" (Brooks P. 5).

a lie and truly"), the testimony which "[contends] to challenge the sovereignty of male (that is, objective, distant, abstract)... discourse" (Bernstein 31). Eve voices what is "culturally unspeakable": her innocence. However, since it is Man who is the designated confessor (i.e. both a listener and a potential redeemer), the question arises whether such a pronouncement *makes sense*.

For numerous feminist writers—such as Sarah Kofman, Mary Daly and Sandra Lee Bartky—confession is an act in which Woman is "forced to replicate [her] disenfranchised social status" (Bernstein 36). Empowering Man solely and requiring the redemption by patriarchal authority, confession cannot serve as a means of resistance against the patriarchal power. Eve's blasphemous confession, therefore, can be read as the narrative of transgression which is *meaningful* only in the sense that it is a "transformative activity" (34) and "a mode of going through the change" (Felman and Laub 15).[16]

The subversive and transformative nature of Eve's confession reveals itself in the lyrical I's contesting of the notions of truth and objectivity. Crozier's Eve urges the confessor to "Remember *that*"—to recognise a story which is different from the traditional "this." Such an idea evidently questions the concept of memory as the faithful inscription of objective facts. Every memory—and every confession—is necessarily imperfect, as it is necessarily incomplete. Such incompleteness, in Bernstein's view, "allows space for divergent accounts, for competing perspectives" (37). At the same time, in confession "emerge varying vested interests in defining the transgressor, the transgressed, and the transgressive" (37). Confession, therefore, is an indefinite discursive territory of action and change, where linear truths are fractured by "moments and margins" (38).

The interchange and indefiniteness are evidently detectable in Crozier's poem; on the one hand, Eve belongs to the reality which is neatly arranged into "before" and "after," in-side and out-side, action and reaction, cause and effect. Apparently, she confesses the truth which subverts the dominant Biblical account of the Original Sin. Apparently,

16 Felman and Laub distinguish between "confession" and "testimony" and define the former as mute, silent, secret and reductive. Testimony, on the other hand, is—in Felman and Laub's phrasing—active, open and unconscious. For the sake of coherence—and for the reason that I do not use Felman and Laub's theory as an interpretative tool—I do not make the distinction between "confession" and "testimony," and continue to use the former term.

she claims herself innocent, is a transgressor, a defendant and a subject of defence. On the other hand, however, another testimony slips in between the lines of Eve's monologue. Eve tells the story of the past, Man, and the apple, and, at the same time, she tells the story of the present, "you" and the apple:

> I give you the apple and you see
> your lover for the first time . . .
> *Eat this*, chew more sweetness before the bitter seeds,
> the hard star at the core. I am speaking
> in the voice of crow, the voice of rain. Stark naked
> I am out here in the large and lovely dark,
> the taste of you, the taste of apple in my mouth. (39; italics in the original)

In Eve's confession, "Remember *that*" contends against "Eat *this*"; the justice-seeking victim matches a tantalising seductress who nibbles "you" while her speech opens itself, invites and entices, over and over again like a siren song. The *truth* Eve tells is elusive and amorphous, as Eve is inscribed into the continuous process of seducing and falling, opening and being misunderstood, and it is another *truth* she tells. Eve's monologue cunningly engages "you" in the game, in which "you" discover "you" are being seduced, and what seduces "you" is not the *truth* "you" finally learn from the *real* Eve, but the ancestral and textual *Eat this*. "What I Gave You Truly," as suggested earlier, questions the very concept of the "truth," instead of replacing one "fact" with another. Thus, in Crozier's poem, Eve becomes a "linguistic" subject that is ambivalent (as, concurrently, she is the object of another story) and transformative. Her shame is transcended not through redemption granted by an authority, but through the subversion of the very concept of the authority, as well as the notions of truth, memory and identity. Eve's monologue, therefore, becomes an "experimental site" within which Eve's sin and shame turn open to transposition.

toward a feminist metanarrative

In her *Gyn/Ecology: The Metæthics of Radical Feminism,* Mary Daly compares the well-known fairy tale "Snow White"—in which a beautiful princess seemingly dies having eaten a poisonous apple—to the poisonous fruit itself. In Daly's words,

> the child who is fed tales such as *Snow White* is not told that the tale itself is a poisonous apple, and the wicked Queen (her mother/teacher), having herself been drugged by the same deadly diet throughout her lifetime (deathtime), is unaware of her venomous part in the patriarchal plot. (1978: 44)

To borrow Mary Daly's analogy, the Biblical Creation Myth can be interpreted as the forbidden fruit, consummation of which leads directly to the experience of shame. Myths—in Daly's phrasing—are said to "open up depths of reality otherwise closed to us. [What] is not usually suggested [however, is] that they close off depths of reality which would otherwise be open to us" (44). While participation in patriarchal reality requires the constant repetition of "mythical models to *reactualize* them continuously" (45), *transforming* this reality depends upon the metamorphosis of its mythic narratives. The purpose of my interpretations was, accordingly, to point out the transformative qualities of Crozier's poems, as it is my belief that Crozier "[a-mazes] tales that are phallic" (47) and by doing so advocates the redefinition of "shame" and "transgression" into open—and subversive—categories.

3.2. shrinking the shrink.
subverting the authority of "classical" theories of sex and gender

(*the penis poems*)

In a typical urban landscape, phallic shapes line up as far as the eye can see—light posts, church steeples, high-rises, chimneys, antennæ. All these phalluses reach and stretch up into the sky as humans walk around below toting their cigars, ice creams and huge camera lenses.

Manne Forssberg, Sex for Guys *(9)*

Just as a cigar is sometimes more than a cigar, sometimes the penis is more than just a penis, too.

Susan Bordo, The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private *(94)*

The shame of nakedness/sexuality that Adam and Eve discovered seems, so to speak, "topologic." Significantly—as the Biblical account illustrates—the body itself is divided into more and less shameful parts. The "most naked" parts of Adam and Eve's shamed bodies are, evidently, their sex organs, actually referred to as "shame-parts" in many languages (Jacoby 9): the Biblical first people hastily cover them with fig leaves. Even though the act of concealment couples the sinners in the shaming eyes of God, contemporary Western culture sets *what is covered* apart. Genitalia are the most direct indicators of one's sex, dichotomised into the categories of "maleness" and "femaleness" (which, similarly to "masculinity and femininity," have been instituted as antithetical). Interestingly, however, "it was not until the Victorian period that females and males were viewed as opposites; prior to this, Western scientists and natural philosophers tended to assume that females were an inferior copy of males" (Scott-Dixon 16). Opposing the two concepts did not change the inferior position of Woman in Western culture: femaleness and, by extension, female genitals have been construed as different *and* secondary.

The superiority of the penis has been reflected in the (English) language. In his *The Lover's Tongue: A Merry Romp Through the Language of Love and Sex*, Mark Morton lists 1,300 words used over the centuries to refer to the penis, which is contrasted with a radically smaller number of words describing the female reproductive organs. Strikingly, many of these penis words "[equate] the penis with something dangerous—that is with something designed to puncture, cudgel, or explode" (Morton 99). Many common male first names—such as Roger, Thomas, Dick, Peter, Willie, Stanley, or Johnson—have also been used to denote the male member. The two formal words which are employed most frequently for this purpose, are *penis* and *phallus*. As Morton reveals,

> [t]he word *phallus* was adopted from Greek in 1613 [and] was not used to denote flesh-and-blood penises but only their symbolic representations, such as the erotic carvings carried during the festivals of Dionysius in ancient Greece. It was not until 1924 that *phallus* was used to denote a real life penis. . . . As for the word *penis,* it was adopted from Latin in 1676, as a learned counterpart to another long-standing penis word. That other word was *tail*. . . . Fifty years after the adoption of *penis*, English also borrowed the term *membrum virile* from Latin, literally meaning *virile member*. The virile part of this term derives from the Latin *vir* meaning *man*, which also developed into the word *virtue* thanks to the confused notion that being manly is synonymous with being virtuous. (104–105; italics in the original)

Even though nowadays, at least within academic discourses, the original distinction between the phallus and the penis has been reinstated, the positive meanings attached to the male organ spring, to a great extent, from confusing the phallus ("the creation of the cultural imagination") and its "anatomical double" (Bordo 1999: 84). The phallus, in Susan Bordo's words, "is the penis that takes one's breath away—not merely because of length or thickness . . . but because of its *majesty*. Those who gaze upon it immediately feel themselves to be its subjects" (1999: 87). The greatness of the phallus/penis amalgam manifests itself, on a different level, in colloquial expressions: "In English, when you're talking about a brave, strong man, you say, 'He's got balls.' In Swedish, you say, 'He has a boner,' when a guy distinguishes himself. In Bolivia, the Laymi people say, 'He has a fantastic penis,' to describe someone who has achieved something really major" (Forssberg 10).

As for the words pertaining to female genitals, they are surprisingly unspecific and usually "[do not] denote just the labia or the vulva or the vagina, but rather [gesture] vaguely to the whole anatomical ensemble" or point to what is "down there" or "down in the valley" (Morton 131). Many of these words equate female sex organs with a wound, or a scar, suggesting that Woman is not only injured, but also—to return to the metaphor of the leaking vessel—embarrassingly *open* (or *opened* by the powerful male organ). Perhaps with the exception of "Mary Jane" or "Lady Jane," other common expressions for female genitals are names of various animals. Even though they might be perceived as terms of endearment, they also denote the apparently animal, or lower, nature of a "pussy," as contrasted with the human qualities of a "Roger" or a "Johnson." Moreover, whereas the penis has been construed as virtuous, the vagina has often been perceived as threatening and unknown, which is most clearly reflected in the idea of *vagina dentata* ("toothed vagina"), "a neurotic fantasy that was first identified by the psychoanalyst Otto Rank in his 1924 book *The Trauma of Birth*." The scientist claimed that "many men fear the vagina. They feel inexorably drawn to it, like a siren of Greek mythology, and yet they leave the vagina depleted of their semen, as if a vampire or lamia has sucked out their vital essence" (Morton 141–142). The danger inscribed in the female sex organs is detectable in the word "*snatch,* which implies that Woman's genitals will grab hold of a man and devour him." The shameful nature of female private parts, on the other hand, can be traced in the word "pudendum" which "derives from the Latin verb *pudere* meaning to cause shame" (Morton 132).

The apparent inferiority of female genitals should be read in the context of a more general inferiorisation of the construct "Woman." Importantly, in the past centuries, "sex was not viewed simply as a matter of differentiation between men and women: through a corresponding gender system, it became an elaborately constructed rationalization of the male subordination of women, maintained in part by the claim that women lacked the capacity to reason" (Currie and Raoul 3–4). "Femaleness" and "femininity," which correspond to the concepts of "sex" and "gender," respectively, were traditionally perceived as equally "natural" and mutually dependent. The idea that it is natural, or normal, for females to be feminine, resulted in naturalisation or normalisation of various, often contradictory, "feminine qualities" (and, by extension, in stigmatisation of the unfeminine ones). For

example, the origin of the most famous of feminine disorders—hysteria—was believed to be physical: "Woman's uterus (*hystera*) was prone to running amok through the body or shrivelling when women studied fields such as mathematics" (Scott-Dixon 21). Along the same line, 19th-century craniologists claimed that the smaller size of female brains reflected their limited intellectual capabilities.

It was, therefore, crucial for feminist theory to separate biological sex from cultural gender, and hence de-naturalise the feminine woman. Resultantly, many feminists of the second wave veered toward social constructivism, and the biological body has become a problematic term for feminist studies. Toward the end of the 20th century, although feminist theories still tended to discuss the body as metaphorical and abstract, more attention was paid to the bodily experiences.[17] In present-day texts, importantly, sex is rarely discussed as clearly dimorphic:

> … like gender which varies over time, place and contexts, biological sex may be thought of as a spectrum rather than two firmly divided categories. … Now we know that there is a lot of diversity even in something as apparently simple as sexual development. Early in development, male and female foetuses look the same, and their reproductive organs diverge from the same common origin. In a small percentage of people, one or more elements of biological sex are ambiguous; people with these indeterminate biological markers are called intersex. (Scott-Dixon 16–17)

Rather than use the term "intersex," however, in her *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans/Feminist Voices Speak Out*, Krista Scott-Dixon employs the term "trans people," which she does not limit to transsexual or transgender people, but uses it in a broad sense to denote the transgression of the stereotypical confines of gender.

Such feminist efforts to transgress sexual and gender dichotomies notwithstanding, the following section is built upon the assumption that common cultural differentiation between the two sexes, and the resulting shame-less glorification of the phallus, presuppose the apparent shame-fullness of the female body. The section is composed of two parts, comprising, respectively, my interpretations of Lorna Crozier's "Poem for Sigmund" and "Tales for Virgins." Both belong to Crozier's series of twelve verses entitled *The Penis Poems*, included in the collection *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence.* Together with *The Sex Life of Vegeta-*

17 See: Linda Birke, *Feminism and the Biological Body* (1999).

bles from the earlier collection *The Garden Going On Without Us*, *The Penis Poems* have been labelled particularly feminist (i.e., offensive and controversial). Crozier herself responds to the zealous reactions of her readers thus:

> It isn't a girl masturbating, or carrots 'fucking the earth,' or a tongue finding peas clitoral "as it slides up the pod," that makes some people go berserk. It is women writers saying—hey, here's another way of looking at things you thought were wrapped up, tied with string, stored in the basement. We're going to open the packages and surprise you. We're going to tell you some secrets and expose some lies. We're going to peel some vegetables and show you what's underneath the skin. (1990: 92)

In light of Crozier's explanation, *The Penis Poems* can be read as examples of deliberate, feminist "peeling" and "exposing," whose aim is to countermand woman's shame. Whereas the feminist strategy of de-shaming that Crozier implements in her "Biblical poems" might be referred to as one of *re*mythologising—as Crozier creates new myths in place of the Biblical ones, or replaces Christian truths with the pre-Christian stories—*The Penis Poems* de-mythologise the (symbolic) phallus by means of profaning its biological "counterpart." The strategy of de-idealising the penis that Crozier employs is one that prevents penis envy, since "[p]enis envy is always envy of an idealised penis" (Torok 92).

"'so proud!' … 'and so lordly! … like another being!'"[18]
on (de)mystification

There is no resemblance at all…
Resemblances are the shadows
of differences.
Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire
(qtd. in Bruhm 138)

Where women are enigmatic,
men are recognizable.
Naomi Segal, "Echo and Narcissus" (172)

Lorna Crozier's "Poem for Sigmund" is dedicated to Sigmund Freud, a theorist so influential "not only in the field of psychoanalysis but in the wider culture, [that] many of his ideas are today treated as commonplace" (Brooks C. xi). Since, in her short verse, Crozier refers specifically to the idea of penis envy, it is only in order that Freud's instrumental essay entitled "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925) (in which the theorist defines femininity as an unfortunate consequence of envy) should loom large in the structure of the argument organising this part of my book. In my analysis, however, Freud's concepts, supplemented by more of Donald L. Nathanson's ideas concerning the "shame of femaleness," are interlaced with their feminist revisions, and thus Crozier's poem, cited toward the end of this section, becomes a reflection of the feminist critique of the father of psychoanalysis.

In a sense, Freud, like Beauvoir, believes that one is not born, but becomes Woman. When the little girl in Freud's essay first discovers that she has *nothing*, she naturally develops a "masculinity complex": "she has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (22). The overwhelming envy transfers her straight into the space of the "substandard": she lands in the middle of a bumpy road toward femininity. Thus, as is easy to infer from Freud's theory, the essential lack is a prerequisite, defining trait for Woman: she develops around the *no-thing*, motivated solely by the urge to fill in the emptiness. Her search for *the thing* is compulsory and dissatisfying, as pleasure—in Freud's terms—is exclusively penile.

18 D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (qtd. in Bordo 1999: 95).

The little girl transforms into the envious woman gradually. Freud's essay indicates the following six stages of the development of the "masculinity complex": first, the boy sees male and female genitals and, on recognising the female's horrifying absence, experiences the fear of castration. Then, the girl sees male and female genitals, and, as she feels inferior and envious, she rejects sexual pleasure, finds herself stuck in the Oedipus/Electra complex, and becomes, finally, the (bad) woman. Importantly, Woman starts materialising as a result of a boy's gaze: "… it is the boy who looks and is horrified first, and that is the little girl who merely doubles and confirms by reduplication what he supposed to have seen. Or not seen" (Irigaray 78). The gaze, therefore, that construes Woman as "nothing to see" (Irigaray 76) is necessarily phallic. Although Freud's essay implies that a naïve little girl merely compares male and female genitals, and views the penis—*naturally*—as the object of her envy, she is, in fact, "already an adept (albeit unconscious) reader of complex cultural signs" (Smart 163), able to recognise the inferior position of Woman. Yet, in Luce Irigaray's view, Freud's psychoanalysis actually renders the "naïve little girl" utterly impossible:

> … female sexuality can be graphed along the axes of visibility of (so-called) masculine sexuality. For such a demonstration to hold up, the little girl must immediately become a little boy. In other words THERE NEVER IS (OR WILL BE) A LITTLE GIRL. All that remains is to assign her sexual function to this "little boy" with no penis, or at least no penis of any recognisable value. Inevitably, the trial of "castration" must be undergone. This "little boy," who was, in all innocence and ignorance of sexual difference, *phallic*, notices how ridiculous "his" sex organ looks. "He" sees the disadvantage for which "he" is *anatomically destined*: "he" has only a tiny little sex organ, no sex organ at all, really, an almost invisible sex organ. The almost imperceptible clitoris. The humiliation of being so badly equipped, of cutting such a poor figure, in *comparison* with the penis, with *the* sex organ, can only lead to a desire to "have something like it too," and Freud claims that this desire will form the basis for "normal womanhood."[19] (77; italics and capitals in the original)

19 In *Three Essays of Sexuality* Freud states that "The assumption that all human beings have the same (male) form of genital is the first of many remarkable and momentous sexual theories of children. … We might lay it down that the sexuality of little girls is of a wholly masculine character" (qtd. in Oliver 200).

The gaze that shames the female genitalia into "nothing" is—to repeat it once more—one of "the boy who looks and is horrified first" (Irigaray 78). The little girl, "forsaken and abandoned in her lack, default, absence, envy, etc., ... enters into the castration complex in the same way as a boy, like a boy" (78). This little girl, consequently, desires to be *like* Man, as "the 'fact of castration' will leave her with only one option—the semblance, the mummery of femininity, which will always already have been to "act like" the value recognised by/for the male" (78). During the first three stages of her feminisation, hence, the girl adopts the phallic gaze and directs it onto herself. This gaze, in turn, castrates her—deprives her of *some thing*—and predetermines her not only to envy men, but also to inflict the fear of castration in men.

The transformation of the little girl into an injured little boy pushes her into the next stage, where she denies herself any sexual pleasure. Devoid of *the* sexual organ, she recognises the *fact* that masturbation is a masculine exercise.[20] The girl "turns violently against that pleasurable activity" (Freud 24), apparently led by

> her narcissistic sense of humiliation which is bound up with penis-envy, a reminder that after all this is a point on which she cannot compete with boys and that it would therefore be best for her to give up the idea of doing so. Thus the little girl's recognition of the anatomical distinction between the sexes forces her away from masculinity and masculine masturbation on to new lines which lead to the development of femininity. (Freud 24)

In order to transform into "a little woman," hence, the girl has to acknowledge the sullen inferiority of her genitalia. This realisation, in turn, transforms her smoothly into the victim of the Oedipus/Electra complex:

> ... now the girl's libido slips into a new position along the line—there is no other way of putting it—of the equation penis-child. She gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a wish for a child: and with that purpose in view she takes her father as a love-object. Her mother becomes the object of her jealousy. (Freud 24)

20 In Freud's phrasing "the elimination of clitoral sexuality is a necessary precondition for the development of femininity" (24).

Woman's essential lack, therefore, translates primarily into her being an envious, a-sexual mother-to-be. Importantly, however, it also presupposes her moral deficiency: Woman is *altogether* bad. Freud confesses:

> I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women—that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility—all these would be amply accounted for in the formation of their super-ego . . . . (26)

Therefore, the penis—conspicuously present, forthright and handy—is illustrative of the (positive) masculine values as such. The vagina, on the other hand, is to be viewed as "the wound to [Woman's] narcissism" (Freud 23), a source of contempt and the sphere of shameful absence. Femininity, "as the negative term in sexual difference, is constructed in relation to the phallus; and the thoroughly natural, essentialist penis lends itself to the representation of the phallus" (Brennan 7). In other words, the biological penis is "elevated" to the symbolic phallus—a representation of (white, heterosexual) masculine authority and a pillar of the Western culture.

Significantly, Freud's phallus/penis—(omni)present and *straight*—realises its superior power only in heterosexual intercourse. The concept of the powerful phallus *and* that of heterosexuality, integrate into manifestations of unmatched "normality":

> Freud's theory of heterosexuality made this orientation "normal" and not simply natural. This is an important distinction . . . because nature and the natural were not necessarily seen as moral, nor capable of self-reflection. Freud's heterosexual was a moral, self-reflexive being who had achieved normality. The aim of bodily pleasure was normalised and it is clear that Freud did not imagine that the sole goal of heterosex—for men anyway—was anything other than pleasure. (Smart 172)

"For men anyway," the pleasure of heterosex arises from penetration. For Freud's Woman, conversely, submittal to penetration is a sign of "mature femininity" (Smart 164). The *normal* Woman, in Freud's

terms, succumbs, and "penetration [is] a crucial part of [the] process of subjection" (Smart 165). As such, both heterosexuality and its central subjecting demonstration have been viewed by numerous feminist writers as "defining [elements] of oppression" (Smart 165). Such autocratic establishment of heterosexuality as the system of "domination and subordination" (Smart 166) is another way to "deny [heterosexual] women pleasure and bodily autonomy and empowerment" (Segal qtd. in Smart 175).

Curiously, Freud does not associate his lacking Woman with shame in any straightforward manner. In fact, shame is almost exclusively absent from Freud's writings in general. According to Stephen Pattison, however, much of what Freud states about guilt refers to the shame affect. The absence of shame from Freud's theories has been explained as a result of Freud's being particularly shame-prone himself: "Perhaps he was ashamed of being a Jew in anti-Semitic Vienna, or because he perceived himself to be ugly, ... [he] made [himself] blind to shame in his clinical practice" (Pattison 44). Still, the experience of femininity as he describes it is evidently shame-bound, as the feelings of inferiority, mutilation, humiliation and contempt that he ascribes to femininity are the constituents of the shame affect. Freud's woman, in fact, is *normal* just enough to recognise her abnormality and immerse herself—to borrow Donald L. Nathanson's term—in the "shame of femaleness." The very fact that she has a vagina, hence, makes Woman both an uncontrollable "leaky vessel" and a non-phallus; her inferiority, therefore, seemingly secures both biological and symbolic dimensions.

Nathanson's reading of Woman actually rephrases Freud, as it shows with a startling clarity how the female body is constructed as shame-bound. Even though—as Nathanson claims—shame is founded upon exposure, and display of genitals is, hypothetically, most shameful, the *invisibility* of female organs must not be read as advantageous. In order to support his claim, Nathanson construes the vagina which is not simply *invisible*, but disguised and deceptive. While the penis straightforwardly erects at times, the vagina secretly leaks and reeks, so that "Woman is subject to both self-dismell and self-disgust [which], of course, keep company with shame" (296).[21] Evi-

21 Moreover, in the heteronormative world of Nathanson's theory it is Woman who is held responsible for Man's sexual arousal, which is visible and hence risky. Consequently, Nathanson summons Woman to "learn how to handle the effect [she] makes on men lest that effect cause confusion, embarrassment and anger" (295).

dently, in both Freud's and Nathanson's theories, Woman's "nothing to be seen" is exposed, visible and analysed: as Nathanson declares, "there is no better way to guarantee interest than to hide something" (296). Therefore, in the phallic/symbolic reality in which Woman finds herself, "this nothing to be seen" (Nathanson 296) onto which the phallic gaze is fixed, *is* nothing and must remain nothing:

> The idea that a "nothing to be seen," a something not subject to the rule of visibility or of specula(riza)tion, might yet have some reality, would indeed be intolerable to man. It would serve to threaten the theory and practice of the representation by which he aims to sublimate, or avoid the ban on, masturbation. Auto-eroticism has been permitted, authorised, encouraged insofar as it is deferred, exhibited in sublated ways. All this is endangered (caught in the act, one might say) by a *nothing*–that is, a nothing the same, identical, identifiable. By a fault, a flaw, a lack, an absence, outside the system of representations and autorepresentations. Which are man's. (Irigaray 78–79; italics in the original)

Hypothetical "symbols for the state of this 'nothing to be seen'" (Irigaray 78) could threaten "the process of production, reproduction, mastery, and profitability, of meaning, dominated by the phallus–that *master signifier* . . . ." (Irigaray 79; italics in the original). Most evidently, therefore, critical analyses of Freud's definition of genders and the creation of the female sexual symbols have been necessary assignments of the feminist movement. Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, notably, first "broke the link between biology . . . and power" (Smart 163), splitting the (symbolic) phallus from the (biological) penis. Following this tradition, Crozier restores the penis to a simple status of an organ, and describes it as functional, pleasurable, funny, sometimes ridiculous, but certainly not powerful. The lyrical I of the poems takes the (de-idealised) penis in her hand, examines it, smells it and tastes it. Her examination—although tender—degrades the penis to a

> . . . funny thing
> a Brontosaurus with a long neck
> and pea-sized brain, only room
> for one thought and that's
> not extinction. (76)

The first part of the poem, therefore, introduces the penis as "peeled" of the phallus: there is nothing particularly threatening, authoritarian or admirable about the "funny thing." Importantly, Crozier separates

the penis from its male "carrier": the (lyrical) penis of the poem is driven by its own logic. The second (and last) part of the poem unveils the expectations of this simple "animal" and, simultaneously, redefines and blasphemously mocks the apparent sacredness traditionally related to the phallus and to heterosexual desire:

> No wonder I feel fond of it,
> its simple trust of me
> as my hands slide down your belly,
> the way it jumps up
> like a drawing in a child's pop-up book,
> expecting me
> to say "Hi!
> Surprised to see you,"
> expecting tenderness
> from these envious woman's hands. (76)

In line with feminist strategies discussed so far, "Poem for Sigmund," together with other verses in Crozier's poetic series, redefines Freud's notion of the phallus. Undoubtedly, the feminist re-definition of the (sexual) norms, and the subversive surfacing of queer perspectives, have acted as unparalleled anti-*oppressants* within the realm of the feminist theory. *The Penis Poems* "deflate the phallus discursively, … deconstruct this mythic status of unitary, transhistorical heterosexuality and start to talk of heterosexualities … ." (Smart 166).[22] Interestingly, the gaze directed at the penis in Crozier's series expresses not only the critique of phallogocentrism, but also (heterosexual) desire. Crozier's woman, however—unlike Freud's—does not yield to the penetrating penis, but, on the contrary, has the power to *tender* pleasure. The concept of the powerful "male thrust"[23] as the proper manifestation of heterosexual desire is, in "Poem for Sigmund," replaced with the "male trust" in Woman. Since the penis in the poem is de-idealised and non-phallic, it does not evoke any envy or trigger any "masculinity complex" in the lyrical *her*. As the penis is exposed, the phallus is *phalling*. In the non-phallic reality, consequently, there is no reason for the "shame of femaleness."

22 In a similar way, in *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private* (1999), following her 1995 *Unbearable Weight* devoted to the female body, Susan Bordo casts a close look at the male body and opens it up for analysis.
23 "Male Thrust" is the title of one of Crozier's poem, a humorous response to Anthony Burgess's statement that he "can take no pleasure from serious reading… that lacks a strong male thrust" which serves as the epigraph to Crozier's verse.

“never trust an animal that has tasted blood.”[24]
lies, truths, the virgin

And what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive.

Luce Irigaray, “And One Doesn’t Stir” (qtd. in Hirsch 137)

Sweet between my thighs,
you burrow there, the animal
I long for,
the animal I fear.

Lorna Crozier, “Ode” (93)

The organ sounded and the children’s voices echoed so sweetly through the choir. The warm sunshine streamed brightly in through the window, right up to the bench where [she] sat. Her heart was so overfilled with sunshine, with peace, and with joy, that it broke. Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven, and no one there asked about the red shoes.[25]

Hans Christian Andersen, “The Red Shoes” (25)

In “Tales for Virgins”—a lengthy poem which, together with “Ode,” closes *The Penis Poems* cycle—the eponymous virgin is a central figure, while the penis’s role is secondary. However, unlike the organ inspected in “Poem for Sigmund,” in “Tales for Virgins” the penis is a danger. Even though in the realm of (virgin) tales the penis can only be imaginary, it poses a very *real* threat: in the course of defloration, the penis *kills* a virgin. In the ensuing section I will focus on various readings of Woman’s virginity (commonly equated with the concepts of honour, virtue, and integrity), and of its shameful, albeit perceived as inevitable, loss.

In “Tales for Virgins,” the penis is a lethal weapon, inflicting pain and soaking in blood; it is what Marie Bonaparte referred to as a “banging rod” (86).[26] The first stanza/tale emphasises this characteristic

24 This line comes from the last poem in Crozier’s *The Penis Poems* series, titled “Ode.”

25 Hans Christian Andersen, “The Red Shoes.” World Wide Web <http.//hca.gilead.org.il/red_shoes.html> (08. 09. 2003).

26 In her *Female Sexuality*, in a chapter titled “Essential Feminine Masochism,”

by reference to two narratives, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Hans Christian Andersen's "The Red Shoes," here interlinked:

> ... Her first time,
> she bleeds all over the bed,
> soaks through the towels
> she wears like a diaper,
> fills up her shoes
> (talk about red
> dancing slippers),
> then bleeds all over the taxi
> that takes her to the hospital –
> her mother
> out there somewhere,
> waiting. (89)

Andersen's tale (repeatedly hinted at in Crozier's poem) elucidates Plath's narrative—and, by extension, "Tales for Virgins." It structures the whole poem around the themes of immorality, shame, subsequent punishment and necessary repentance. Consequently, by reason of the narrative fusion, the red shoes become the symbol of shameful defloration. In Crozier's tales, the story of little Karen who loses common sense in her passion for beautiful red shoes, and for this is condemned to dance an endless dance (humiliated and banished from the church, she may only end her agony by begging to have her feet chopped off) is both a lesson and a warning for virgins. Significantly, all *modern* "Tales for Virgins" related by Crozier, revolve around the same motif: the uncontrollable, dreary dance of the shoes filled with blood.

The sense of such a symbolic consistency becomes clear when one takes into account that, like in Andersen's "The Red Shoes," in Crozier's "Tales for Virgins" defloration *incites* the experience of shame. First of all, the loss of virginity gives vent to disgraceful, uncontrollable excess. In Crozier's retelling of Plath's narrative, this excess is manifested in superfluous, conspicuous leaking.[27] Virginal blood overflows and stigma-

Bonaparte states that Woman's natural enjoyment of pain is reflected in language: "Is not the penis termed 'rod,' and is it not spoken of as 'banging'? In any case, popular wisdom has it that women like 'being beaten'" (86).

27 In Andersen's tale, on the other hand, it is the outrageous redness of the girl's shoes that brings the other's gaze and shame upon her. When little Karen goes to church in her wicked shoes "[everybody looks] at her feet, and the whole

tises Woman, leaving a flagrant, bloody path behind her. Blood—although usually "not classified as body's excreta" (Paster 64)—becomes excremental (i.e., shameful and impure) when specifically *female* (i.e. menstrual, virginal or released at childbirth):

> [Woman's] bleeding signifies as a particularly charged instance of the female body's predisposition to flow out, to leak. Menstruation comes to resemble other varieties of female incontinence—sexual, urinary, linguistic—that served as powerful signs of woman's inability to control the workings of her own body. It is not too much to argue that these historical signs of uncontrol bear implications for the ideology and politics of reproduction that we live with still. (Paster 83)

Although the forms of female blood mentioned above have traditionally been perceived as filthy, Woman's blood *as such*, was often—as Gail Kern Paster suggests—thought of as *worse* than Man's. According to the humoral axioms, for instance,

> females were considered naturally plethoric. . . . Their bodies . . . were naturally less soluble, since by virtue of its colder temperature their blood tended to be slower moving, clammier, grosser. . . . It follows . . . that the finest female blood was less pure, less refined, less perfect than the finest male blood and . . . the more inclined to corruption. (79)

Paster uses Mikhail Bakhtin's concept in order to theorise Woman's body as grotesque: one which is "not a closed completed unit [but] is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" (Bakhtin qtd. in Paster 14). Woman is viewed as "naturally grotesque—which is to say, open, permeable, effluent, leaky." Man, on the other hand, is "naturally whole, closed, opaque, self-contained" (92). In "Tales for Virgins" the discomforting female incontinence translates into sexual uncontrollability. Not only is the first sexual act potentially embarrassing and life-threatening—the second tale relates the story of Duch-

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of the way from the church door to the choir it [seems] to her as if the ancient figures on the monuments, in their stiff collars and long black robes, [have] their eyes fixed on her shoes" (Hans Christian Andersen, "The Red Shoes." World Wide Web <http.//hca.gilead.org.il/red_shoes.html> (08. 09. 2003). This first *lavishness* results in uncontrollable, murderous dance—the perfect representation of the shameful excess mentioned above. In other "Tales for Virgins," similarly, loss of virginity means loss of control which results—as discussed further on—either in death, unwanted motherhood, or sexual promiscuity.

arme who "rammed [his penis] right through a woman / and killed her" (89)—but a girl who "goes all the way" either ends up "with babies / folding diapers in front of game shows" or "goes bad" (90). "Tales for Virgins," therefore, give virgins three options: "remain a virgin / to save yourself" (91), or fall into (unwanted) motherhood, or (shameful) whoredom. "Going all the way," in other words, is the sin that is always evident and never goes unpunished.

"Tales for Virgins"—"The Red Shoes" included—are, significantly, stories of mothers and daughters. In Andersen's tale, disastrous red shoes are offered to the little girl first by her mother and then by her foster mother[28]—and in both cases the fatal footwear becomes the cause of the respective mother figure's demise. In symbolic correspondence with the metaphorical red shoes, "Sylvia Plath's [heroine's]" shameful leaking, similarly, causes symbolic death, sending her mother "out there somewhere" (MacPherson 59).[29] The mother in Crozier's poem is, therefore, both a contradictory and a tragic figure: she simultaneously designates the daughter's destiny (the red shoes are hereditary) and guards her purity; as Woman, "she sacrifices all to [her daughter] who [is the stand-in] for her absence" (Wilkie-Stibbs 87). The mother also remains silent; she does not *share* any experience with her daughter, although—at different moments in time—their experiences are *the same*. The vague relationship between mother and daughter presented in the poem corresponds to Beauvoir's depiction of this ambivalent bond. In Beauvoir's view, the mother "saddles her child with her own destiny" (309) and "greets [her daughter] with this ambiguous curse: 'You shall be a woman'" (533). The lack of actual communication between the two—devised by the mother—aims, according to the French feminist, at keeping the daughter innocent and inferior, as it is intolerable for the mother "to have her daughter boldly assert herself as an *other*, an independent person" (535; italics

28 The first pair of red shoes is made for Karen by "an old shoemaker's wife" who *simply* does not have any other material. The girl first wears her shoes "on the day of her mother's funeral," the day she is also spotted and adopted by "an old lady." The woman burns Karen's red shoes (which she thinks of as "hideous") but then—unwillingly as she cannot see very well—buys the girl another pair of red shoes. The girl's sinful fondness for her red shoes results, in turn, in her departure from the old woman and the woman's consequent death.

29 It has been argued that *The Bell Jar* may be read as "a daughter's case of matrophobia, [and it is] Esther's fear and hatred of her mother [that] entrap her within a misogynist version of motherhood that is potentially lethal" (MacPherson 59).

in the original). In Irigaray's less judgemental terms, the lack of communication is due to the fact that the mother, "perceived solely in the light of her relationship with her child… no longer has an access to her own female identity" (qtd. in Wilkie-Stibbs 87). The mother is, therefore, "[exiled to] motherhood" and remains in the state of "symbiotic paralysis" (87) with her daughter. The daughter, on the other hand, "must keep company with her mother to learn how to become a woman" (88), but in fact she "can not learn anything more than to become a mother" (Wilkie-Stibbs 88).

The term "symbiotic paralysis"—descriptive of the constant exchange of silence established between mother and daughter as it is—is not capacious enough to embrace another shame-full aspect of the mother-daughter relationship brought into light by Crozier's poem: the connection between the mother and the abject. In Kristeva's terms, in order to enter the Symbolic, one has to renounce *jouissance*: the sensual and primary pleasure rooted in corporeal closeness of the mother. The mother's body is thus removed—together with all that is improper, disgusting and repulsive (like, for instance, "a piece of filth, waste… dung, … defilement, sewage and muck" (1982: 12))—into the liminal space in between nature and society, the margins of consciousness.[30] The removal, however, is not entirely successful, as the abject forever threatens the "'I' of the socialized, *signifying*, and speaking subject," and manifests itself as "repugnance and disgust" (Wilkie-Stibbs 85; italics in the original).

The abject belongs to peripheries and borders, primarily ones of the body, and, therefore, is "paradigmatically fluid: pus, menstrual blood, vomit, the decomposing corpse" (Jantzen 124). The bodily fluids that incite the feeling of abjection are necessarily *polluting* and

30 In Kristeva's phrasing: "The abject confronts us… within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before existing outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. … The difficulty a mother has in acknowledging (or being acknowledged by) the symbolic realm … is not such as to help the future subject leave the natural mansion. The child can serve its mother as token of her own authentication; there is, however, hardly any reason for her to serve as go-between for it to become autonomous and authentic in its turn. In such close combat, the symbolic light that a third party, eventually the father, can contribute helps the future subject, the more so if it happens to be endowed with a robust supply of drive energy, in pursuing a reluctant struggle against what, having been the mother, will turn into an abject. Repelling, rejecting; repelling itself, rejecting itself. Ab-jecting" (1982: 13).

> fall, schematically, into two types: excremental and menstrual. Neither tears nor sperm, for instance, although they belong to borders of the body, have any polluting value. Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death. Menstrual blood, on the contrary, stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalisation, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference. (Kristeva 1982: 81)

Kristeva associates both types of polluting objects with "the *maternal* and/or the feminine" (1982: 71).[31] Whereas, in Kristeva's words, the connection between menstrual blood and femininity "goes without saying" (1982: 71), the relationship between the maternal/feminine and excrement might seem less transparent. The scholar provides two arguments to support her point: first, that "the anal penis is also the phallus with which infantile imagination provides the feminine sex," and second, that "maternal authority is experienced first and above all . . . as sphincteral training" (1982: 71). In other words, Kristeva's mother "shapes [the child's] body into territories having areas" (1982: 71), some of which are "proper-clean" and some "improper-dirty." The mother herself appears to be both "proper-clean" and "improper-dirty": an agent of pollution and guardian of cleanliness.

The contradictory nature of the mother figure that shapes Crozier's poem deserves a closer scrutiny. In Andersen's "The Red Shoes" and Plath's *The Bell Jar* mother figures are simultaneously daughter figures' supervisors and abject characters. In Andersen's tale mother figures are old, and either make the red shoes and offer them to little Karen or forbid the girl to wear them. Consequently, mothers in "The Red Shoes" represent menstrual blood, (constrained) sexuality and death. In Plath's narrative, on the other hand, Mrs Greenwood

31 Importantly, it has been argued by numerous feminist authors that there is no "natural" link between femininity and its apparent polluting nature, and that Kristeva stays within "the symbolic structure in which the mother is already seen as polluting" (Jantzen 126). Jantzen criticises Kristeva for linking "semen with . . . purifying tears, [and] menstrual blood . . . with shit" (125). In Jantzen's phrasing, "the reason menstrual blood can be threatening when semen is not is that the female—sexual and maternal—is *already* perceived as threatening and the male is not" (126; italics in the original).

is both the proper "suburban wife-and-mother" (MacPherson 41) and a site of repulsive physicality.[32]

Because of her highly oxymoronic nature, the mother in Crozier's poem may also be viewed as the embodiment of the Virgin Mother: pure, religious, and elusive.[33] The first sexual act—one of "killing the virgin"—is a lethal weapon in the daughter's hands, aimed against the Holy Mother. Therefore, in Andersen's tale, the act of putting on the red shoes not only ends the lives of the mother figures, but it also condemns Karen to exile from the Church: even when her feet are finally chopped off, the red shoes (with the little feet in them) hop at the church door blocking the way, so that she cannot get in.

Religion—as presented in the poem—is to relieve virginal anxiety. What it offers as salvation is eternal chastity, which is ridiculed by Crozier in the third Virgin Tale:

> Though Protestant,
> when I turned thirteen
> I dreamed of becoming a nun
> wed to Jesus
> who never had a penis.
> Or even his mother Mary
> wouldn't be so bad.
> She only had to do it once
> and in the ear. (89–90)

The stanza points at the unattainable continence of Christian icons: Jesus is Godly thus penis-less, while Mary—the Christian ideal of Good Woman—is impregnated *spiritually* by the Holy Ghost. In Mary Daly's words, "[so] spiritual was the whole affair that Mary remained a virgin…before, during and after the birth" (1978: 83). In consequence, Mary is "officially [set apart] from all other women as utterly unique, an impossible 'model'" (1973: 82), leaving them "essentially identified

32 In *Reflecting on The Bell Jar*, Pat MacPherson indicates the following fragment of the novel in which Esther's mother is directly associated with "sphincteral training," and thus, in the light of Kristeva's theory, with excrement itself: "My mother was the worst. She never scolded me, but kept begging me, with a sorrowful face, to tell her what she had done wrong. She said she was sure the doctors thought she had done something wrong because they asked her a lot of questions about my toilet training, and I had been perfectly trained at a very early age and given her no trouble whatsoever" (Plath qtd. in MacPherson 60).

33 The girls who "end up with babies" are not referred to as "mothers."

with [shameful] Eve" (1973: 81): Mary "*had to* do it once," but only for the most immaculate and substantiated of reasons: she was chosen by God to give birth to Jesus, the saviour of humankind. As Daly suggests, designation of Mary as (an entirely improbable) standard of Good Woman serves the purpose of shaming Woman into the all-inclusive category of moral looseness.[34]

The lyrical I of Crozier's poem is, accordingly, scared/shamed into aching for eternal virginity. At the same time, she wishes to be relieved from her condition in a way which "connects directly to romantic narratives" (Giddens 241). Romantic fiction is, in the words of Jane M. Ussher, "perhaps the most pervasive and avidly read form of literature aimed at women [which] throws… women head first into a pit of passion and longing for the phallic hero who will make her a complete woman" (43). Indeed, the girl presented in the poem studies the fables which display to her the world of restraints, from which she can be freed solely through romantic love:

> …we waited for the boy
> we couldn't say no to,
> though he might hang in the morning,
> though we might walk
> across our mothers' spotless floors
> in bloody shoes. (91)

In romantic fiction, to which the stanza alludes, Woman is passive: she waits to be seduced. Overwhelming romantic affect makes her helpless: she simply *cannot* say no. In fact, "within the codes of romance, she can have [sex: this death-dealing, matricidal venture] only

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34 Bonnie MacLachlan, in her *Virginity Revisited: Configurations of the Unpossessed Body*, looks for the origin of the cult of the Virgin Mary in a mistranslation: "It is not without some degree of irony that the foundation of the veneration of Mary as Virgin Mother derives from the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew *almah* as *parthenos*, 'virgin.' The text in question is the prophecy found in Isaiah 7.14, that an *almah* would conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel. The Greek *parthenos* rendered by the Septuagint does not cover the entire range of meanings of the Hebrew word; *almah* ('young woman') could refer equally to young widows, concubines, or prostitutes. Although the range of meanings for *parthenos* was more restricted, it was still a term with much more elasticity than the English 'virgin.' *Parthenos* was a term applied usually to an unmarried young woman, but on occasion it could denote a young mother…" (6–7).

if she is seduced...and that must happen only when she has received his promise of love" (USSHER 44).

"Waiting to be overpowered"—popularised by romantic narratives—connects directly to the idea of Woman's masochism, advocated, among others, by Sigmund Freud and his followers, such as Helen Deutsch and Mary Bonaparte. Freudian woman cannot *have sex*; she only can *have it done* to her: naturally passive, she is—in Bonaparte's interpretation—an enlarged version of the ovum, whose mission is to "await the... active, mobile spermatozoon, to come and penetrate it [/her]" (BONAPARTE 78). Penetration, in turn, "may entail destruction: death as much as life" (78). It is by wounding her that Man both impregnates and deflowers Woman, and it is wounding that, in Freudian understanding, constitutes female sexuality as such: Woman, after all, has a passive-masochistic bleeding "wound" where penis/phallus ought to be. She, therefore, does not *take* pleasure: satisfaction "must be inflicted upon her" (BARTKY 1990: 53).

Interestingly, Woman is so passive and transparent that even in Freudian accounts on the nature of her innate masochism Woman's subjectivity is erased; she serves, as Nick Mansfield argues, only "to produce male subjectivity" (72):

> This is a direct replication of the way the masochistic subject encounters his own subjectivity in the form of an hallucinated double, by way of creating and manipulating the subjectivity of the feminine other, in role-play, the dominatrix. The truth of the masochistic subject is discovered by constructing, controlling and annihilating a female subject. Only by owning femininity in this way can masochism reveal itself. ... In... Freudian texts, femininity was merely the point of exchange in the commerce between male subjectivities. (72)

Mansfield's concept of Woman's masochism/passivity seems to lend itself very well to the interpretation of the figure of Virgin/Mother. Firstly, as Mary Daly argues in *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary—*the* Virgin Mother—can, and often has been, read as the paragon of passivity.[35]

35 Daly argues that "[i]t should not be imagined that Mary had any real role in this conception and birth. Although some Christians like to call the 'virgin birth' a paradigm of parthenogenesis, it is not that. As Helen Diner points out, it is really the opposite of parthenogenesis, for in the myth of the Virgin Birth, Mary does nothing, whereas in parthenogenesis the female accomplishes everything herself" (83). It is, however, possible to interpret Mary independently of her relations with male figures, which I explain later on in this section.

Secondly, the Biblical story of Mary's impregnation might be viewed as one of the rape of the Goddess—"an almost universal theme in patriarchal myth" (Daly 1978: 84):

> The rape of the rarefied remains of the Goddess in the Christian myth is mind/spirit rape. In the charming story of "the Annunciation" the angel Gabriel appears to the terrified young girl, announcing that she has been chosen to become the mother of god. Her response to this sudden proposal from the godfather is…nonresistance: 'Let it be done unto me according to thy word.' Physical rape is not necessary when the mind/will/spirit has already been invaded. In refined religious rapism, the victim is impregnated with the Supreme Seminal Idea, who becomes the Word made flesh. (Daly 1978: 85)

Mary, in other words, was raped "through the ear." Like Mansfield's (masochistic) woman, Mary—the Virgin and the Mother—is reduced to a mere "point of exchange in the commerce between male subjectivities" (Mansfield 72). Her role, therefore, is "utterly minimal; yet she is 'there'" (Daly 1978: 85).

Apart from her proper and absolute chastity, the one aspect of the Virgin Mother that seems to particularly appeal to the lyrical I of Crozier's poem is the figure's freedom from the dilemmas that the lyrical I, "poised on the brink of moral excellence and moral decay" (Foskett 59), faces. Provided she is "taken out of the [Christian] context" (Daly 1973: 84), the Virgin Mary can be interpreted as a symbol of independence and "female autonomy" (1973: 85) because "the woman who is defined as virgin is not defined exclusively by her relationships with men" (1973: 84)—she is "a woman (*gyn*) like a man (*vir*)" (Wall 12). "As an iconographic motif"—writes Kathleen Wall—"the image of Mary standing on a globe that rests upon a serpent has conveyed to the Christian world the unambiguous association of power—temporal and spiritual—with virginity" (5). The term *virgin*, consequently, denotes "not a physical state but a social one, a relational one, one that evokes the qualities of social autonomy and potency" (7). In the same vein, within Western culture, due to "the wide ranging belief that there is particular potency residing on the margins of the familiar," virgins, positioned "on the margins between childhood and womanhood," were often perceived as endowed with disruptive, or transgressive, power (Wall 7). Concurrently, in *A Virgin Conceived: Mary and Classical Representations of Virginity*, Mary F. Foskett claims that:

> Absolute virginity [represented by Mary] denotes a certain undeniable power that the virgin embodies. Hers is an extraordinary continence. As an adult, she stands independent of the culturally imposed roles of wife and mother. The absolute virgin, whose sexual status signals not so much emptiness or singleness of heart, but self-containment and singularity, is always powerful and sometimes dangerous. (63)

The figure of Mary—the absolute virgin who transcends Woman's plight—is, importantly, as elusive and unreachable as Mary chosen by God, Mary impregnated by the Holy Spirit, and Mary the Mother of Christ. "Absolute," clearly, appears to be an impracticable category. Marilyn Frye argues that power can only be associated with the virgin once you define her as "a free woman, one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and hence socially her own person." Regrettably, "[i]n any universe of patriarchy there are no virgins in this sense. Even female children are possessed by their male kin and conceived of as potential wives. Hence virgins must be unspeakable, thinkable only as negotiations, their existence impossible" (133). The virginal lyrical I of the poem is, therefore, "retained . . . by ignorance" and "signals physical, social and moral liminality" (Foskett 59). Such liminality, in turn, dooms the virgin to incongruity:

> [because] she is a sexually ripe but inexperienced female, her body is associated with varying degrees of health and sickness, increased sexual desire, emptiness and openness, holiness, monetary and reproductive worth, vulnerability and weakness. (Foskett 58)

Again, the virgin is mainly defined through her body that she is expected to both guard and offer; her destiny is (not) to yield to temptation, (not) to give herself to dangerous man, and (not) to suffer the consequences.

If approached from such an angle, Crozier's poem unveils numerous connections between losing virginity and shame. Oftentimes it is actually shame that "[enables] the virgin to retain both her honour and her virginity" (Foskett 62). The loss of virginity is always conspicuous, irreversible and proliferates dreary aftermaths. The traditional

> paternalistic ethics imperatively demand that the fiancée be given over to her husband in virginal condition; he wants to be sure she carries

> no stranger's seed; he wants single and exclusive ownership of this flesh he is making his own. (Beauvoir 459)

That is why—according to Beauvoir—"virginity took on a moral, religious and mystical value, and this value is still very generally recognized today" (459). The "Virgin," however, as I mentioned, is a narrow category: she is "unique, alone among women, alone among mothers, alone among humans . . . ." (Kristeva 1997b: 327). Remaining a virgin—"an expert of flying elbows / and crossed knees"—requires a never-ending effort one finally "gets sick of" (Crozier 90): hence the dream of being "taken," of unconsciously "giving in." Perversely, shame is inscribed into virginity, too. This is, after all, the penis/phallus that within the patriarchal culture is the "master signifier," or a magic wand capable of transforming an incomplete woman into a complete one. The virgin, therefore, as a highly oxymoronic image, may easily be interpreted as undesirable and lacking.

toward “shameless parts”

One of the meanings of the word “tale” is “falsehood”/“lie.” Indeed, it seems that the strategy of de-shaming Woman, proposed by Crozier in her two penis poems, is one of ridiculing the cultural *truths* referring both to the penis/phallus and to defloration. The reality fabricated by the “Poem for Sigmund” and “Tales for Virgins” is often illogical and contradictory; at the same time, however, the preposterous stories Crozier ridicules are often granted the rank of cultural laws which discipline, and shame, Woman.

Importantly, Crozier’s decision to write and publish *The Penis Poems* (originally, they were intended only to be read out in public) was an audacious one. As Mary di Michele writes in her “An Argument with Darkness,” Western literary tradition “enshrines the phallus . . . . We have centuries of art, millennia of representations of female anatomy, defined by men. Male eyes have been our mirrors. Crozier… [is] doing the important work of ‘returning the compliment.’”[36] Even though Crozier “has fun with [it]” and considers the penis mostly as “an object of fun, amusement, tenderness, good luck and not simply as a dirty joke or an object for pornography,”[37] her choice of subject did result in the book being received as controversial and provocative. As Warner Winter remarked, “it’s too bad that the ‘Penis’ section means this interesting … book will make it into only those places where the librarians have courage.”[38] Crozier’s series is, in other words, a feminist transgression incorporated.

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36 Mary Di Michele, “An Argument with Darkness.” World Wide Web <http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=2039> (11.02.2011).

37 Review of *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* by Warner Winter. World Wide Web <http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/cmarchive/vol17no4/angels.html> (11.02.2011).

38 Review of *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* by Warner Winter. World Wide Web <http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/cmarchive/vol17no4/angels.html> (11.02.2011).

3.3. gazing at the gaze. subverting the "ocular regime"

("alice" and "sometimes my body leaves me")

... because geography always relies on an observer, it will always be a subject-dependent fiction rather that an objective fact; in turn, by telling stories, fiction tries to provide a map for experience, subjectivity and nation.

Gabriele Helms, Challenging Canada: Dialogism and Narrative Techniques in Canadian Novels *(68)*

They can only be real, in their own terms, by turning themselves into something they are "really" not.

Margaret Atwood, Strange Things *(qtd. in Hulan 16)*

"up her can nada"

Earle Birney (qtd. in New 184)

Earle Birney's "up her can nada" is a "punning, witty [and] deliberately rude" map/poem that

> [uses] line and word to epitomize all the hostile, self-protective, sexist, and self-righteous attitudes that Birney (or Canadian culture at large) attributes to Ontario's "Upper Canada" past, figuratively present in Establishment Anglo-Protestant traditions. Constructing these attitudes *as a map* is itself part of Birney's critique, for the map of "Upper Canada" articulates in speech and visual design the system of mapping *by* "Upper Canada" that has given centrality and power to one particular set of values. (New 169; italics in the original)

What Birney's map/poem reveals is that the process of mapping, colonising, and taking a land in possession implies "sexual conquest" and "penetration (of continent, of body)" (New 114). The parallelism between the rhetoric of topography and that of the female body seems, in fact, to have become one of the notable sources of inspiration

for writers as well as researchers in the area of cultural studies. The analogy between the two seemingly divergent rhetorical constructs is particularly evident when texts addressing them touch upon issues of literal or metaphorical liminality. It is the liminal space—one which often becomes the *locus* of struggle between competing discourses—that becomes a *topos* of *making sense*, of creating meanings. Metaphors of the body/space present in the discourses of Canadianness provide particularly illustrative examples of liminality thus conceived.

The uniqueness of the rhetorical correspondence between the female body, place and Canadianness in Canadian letters becomes clear in the light of an observation by Renée Hulan who, in her *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture*, suggests that "... the environment, the climate, the place are all that people in Canada have in common," which is why this "environment holds the transformative potential to condition and form a distinct [Canadian] identity" (10). In Hulan's view, the particular imaginary rather than real space that Canadians have looked on as the locus of their national identity is the north—a perfect "setting for quest narratives and heroic tales of survival" (18). Since "[s]uch stories require their characters to attain qualities traditionally ... associated with masculine identity... [a] national consciousness shaped by the north tends to encompass the same qualities of rugged, masculine identity" (19). Such "ragged individualism," in turn, requires "the passivity, silence, and frailty of someone other than the hero, usually women, the landscape" (19), or women *as* the landscape. In the same vein, Charlotte Sturgess points out the interesting affinity between the discourses of national and gendered identity in the literary process of creating the concept of "Canada":

> The textual refiguring of spaces and boundaries, the emphasis on encodings and decodings, crystallize the anxieties of a culture still coming to terms with its "settler-invader" (Brydon 1994, 25) status, one which articulates "Canadianness ... through crossed constructions of competing narratives of nation and gender" (24). (141)

If one accepts Andrew Tolson's broad definition of gender as the "cultural significance of sexuality, a historically and culturally specific significance with political as well as social implications" (qtd. in Hulan 20), it becomes "possible to compare gender and other political and social discourses such as nationalism" (Hulan 21).

By way of clarification: notions of space and boundary, as well as their literary constructions (and deconstructions), appear to be crucial components of the discourses of Canadian national identity: as *topoi*, they also become the *loci* in which "narratives of nation and gender" cross and meet. Even though the processes of seeking, creating and re-visioning of national and gender identities usually take place simultaneously and in parallel, in the Canadian context, as Sturgess and Hulan suggest, narratives originating in these processes intersect, or even mix and mingle. One of the consequences of such conceptual meetings is a tendency manifest in Canadian literature to use the language of the body in order to write about space—and to personify Canada as Woman.

The mechanism sketched out above has, however, been present in Western literature and culture for a long time: unknown, unfamiliar spaces have often been (metaphorically) colonised with the use of the rhetoric of femininity. A fitting example is a feminised visualisation of otherness by Jan van Kessel. In his painting, *America* (1666), the artist encloses the apparently chaotic attributes of the New World within an orderly, classicist interior. Interestingly, central to the painting are the figures of exposed, innocent but also seductive Indian women. Even though they are accompanied by children and masculine figures, they seem to dominate the scene, informing the "chaos" with a prominently feminine tinge. It is this chaos that van Kessel designates "America." Tadeusz Sławek interprets the painting in the following way:

> The mid-17th-century work by Jan van Kessel, Jan Breughel's grandson and an eminent Flemish artist, [is—on the one hand—] an apotheosis of the nature of America, of its oddities and curiosities (the abundance of animals varying in forms and shapes), of its fertility and richness (even though it must be noted that these natural riches—including the shellfish, mussels and oysters—are all related to the sea, which simultaneously distinguishes America from the agrarian-telluric Europe and emphasizes the element of the ocean separating one from the other). On the other hand, however, Kessel's effort of representing America tends toward a distinctive and literal inscription of the continent within the world of well-known forms determining the current canon of European arts. Even though the habitacles, in which figures representing the various forms of the local civilization's life open up to a broad, limitless vista, the figures of the Indians, caught in somewhat theatrical poses have been introduced to the neoclassicist-like interior in such a fashion as if the artist, apprehensive of the problems with representing America, decided to approximate it to the viewer by means of sculpturesque and architectural forms to which the eye of the European middle

class has become well-used. Thus runs the elaborate courtly masque entitled *America*, in which the unknown is presented by means of shifting us back in time (the figures in the habitacles could indeed be ancient sculptures; hence the thesis that America is closer to the "beginnings" of culture) and through the gesture of the inscription of the whole spectacle within the convention of a theatrical *mise-en-scène* (which allows for the "familiarization" or America or, furthermore, for its "duplication," or its "imitation" effected in any place and time by means of well-known mechanisms of art, such as the court drama) . . . America, which was supposed to be that which is unrepresentable and which acts subversively with respect to the world of Europe, now becomes the servant and preceptor of the wealthy middle class European, warranting his clear conscience in his use of amassed riches. (472–473)

Sławek's reflection demonstrates how the (seemingly) unrepresentable space becomes marked, limited and described, and thus becomes subjected to exploration and exploitation. Familiarised and tame, America—like a woman, inscribed within the phallogocentric discourses of gender roles—may be taken in possession, objectified and inferiorised. Evidently, the rhetoric of subjugation and inferiorisation applied in the colonial context parallels the rhetoric historically used with reference to femininity. Like America, femininity cannot be left "uncontained": without a definition superimposed upon what to the conqueror's eye may seem to be nothing but chaos, both America and femininity would remain nondescript entities disrupting preferred orders and dangerously tipping the balance of power. Located on the margins of the dominant, Eurocentric discourse, America appears to be a liminal space which must be inscribed within a comprehensible system of reference and translated into a comprehensible language. Femininity, stereotypically perceived as unintelligible, nonspecified, irrational, as well as unsettlingly and seductively corporeal, is limited to frames of the Judeo-Christian imagery—and thus offers the European explorer a convenient set of parallel rhetorical devices, as if ready-made specifically for the purpose of the description/containment of the newly encountered liminal space. Like femininity in the past, also the New World calls for rhetorical action: to be comprehended/comprised within the central paradigms of interpretation and dominant world order, it needs to be marked, labelled and defined.[39]

39 Yet, irrespective of whether the liminality is conceptual or geographical, the conqueror seems to believe that he fully comprehends what is being communicated to him despite his inadequate command of the language. To Antonio de Ciudad Real, who in his explorations encounters a group of natives and asks them

In general, however, the rhetoric of femininity—present in allegories of Mother Earth or Mother Nature since the times immemorial—is realised within the phallogocentric discourse in traditional constructs of Woman as a mother, housewife, housekeeper and homemaker. At the same time, the idea of Woman also provides a foundation for national symbolics: Great Britain, France and Poland, among other countries, are frequently conceptualised as women in poetry, in painting and even in cartography. Picturesque landscapes are often likened to the female body, and the female body, in turn, has often been praised for its "topographic" beauty. Inscribed in scenic representations—apparently natural, irrational, and intuitive—Woman becomes one of the basic points of reference in descriptions of space which needs to be first domesticated, and then governed and managed. This is why, in Canadian adventure stories, "the counterpart to [the] restless men is... a beckoning and dangerous female north, made even more fearsome by the comparison to the civilized women who make cosy, inviting homes for wayward men" (Hulan 117).

The concept of domesticity premises the binary opposition between the outside and the inside: the unlimited, dangerous open space *vs.* the warmth and safety of home. Domestication indicates the idea of a complex *inscription* into an understandable order of the *heimlich*, as a result of which the domestic space and that which it contains blend into one. The house—"the smallest... spatial [unit] of acknowledged human dwelling" (Best 182)—is hence often identified with femininity, both at the metaphorical and at the corporeal level, and therefore the textures of the feminine and the spatial traditionally blend in various discourses responsible for the present-day state of culture. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, in which "the house is a woman" (Best 182) reduced to maternal womb, the metaphor of ultimate comfort and safety, seems to be only one of many important testimonies to support the claim. Men, conversely, "can never be 'at home' with masculine identity; rather, they must constantly aspire to an identity based on an externalized sense of self by continuously proving themselves worthy" (Hulan 101).

Sue Best argues that any act of feminising space suggests—on the one hand—that the space undergoes a transformation as a result

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of the name of the place in which they are, the response *uic athan* will not mean "I do not understand": the explorer knows that the peninsula's name is Yucatan (Rachwał 18).

of which it is rendered homely and private, and hence easy to control. On the other hand, however, the same gesture testifies to the ever-present cultural anxiety evoked by the notion of femininity, which results in constant attempts to enclose the corporeal female within clearly specified borders (182–183). The notions of femininity and space are interconnected because, as Best asserts, the female body is not merely a metaphor for space, but because, rhetorically, it is the female body which grants space some definite shape—and is necessary for space to function within discourse. Space, in other words, is (re)produced by the female body (186).

As Charlotte Sturgess remarked in the passage quoted at the beginning of the present chapter, the anxiety reflected in Canadian literature can be understood as a specific case of *Angst* experienced in confrontation with liminality. To the Western mind, Canada—a vast country of a relatively small, yet constantly growing population—still appears to be a *Terra Nova*. This is why, like the whole of the New World at the time of European exploration and early colonisation, Canada seems to continue to be subjected to the mechanisms of rhetorical feminisation.

Thus, the affinity between femininity and Canadianness becomes explicable in the context of the proneness of the culture of the West to identify unexplored bodies of land with the female body. Accordingly, as Canadian women authors—such as Margaret Atwood or Jancy James[40]—confirm, the rhetoric of the Canadian myth of wilderness has been tangibly feminised; likewise, the figurative renditions of Canadian landscape have traditionally been metaphorised with reference to female body. Importantly, however, the apparently simple ideological and rhetorical parallelism becomes more complex in light of the unique discourse of Canadian national identity.

The feminisation of the concepts of Canada's landscapes notwithstanding, the country's "bodily landscape" seems to retroactively shed light upon the rhetoric of femininity itself. As Sturgess writes, Canada has frequently been defined in terms of "a unified cultural space, whether that of a 'mosaic' or of a 'multicultural' ideal" (12). It seems, however, that a mosaic can never be truly "unified": even if one imagines its pieces as equivalent to one other, they never blend into a unity. Canadian landscape is not only perceived as wild, cold and hostile,

40 See: Margaret Atwood *Survival* (1972) and Jancy James's "Canadian Paradigms of Postmodern Feminism" in *Postmodernism and Feminism: Canadian Contexts* (2005).

but first of all as dismembered and fragmented. In this, the features of the traditional discourse of *heimlich* femininity, the rhetoric of which served the purpose of the domestication of liminal spaces of the newly explored lands, give in to the postmodern concepts of femininity, which today often serves the purpose of the description of contemporary Canada.

In other words, the transformations of the Western concepts of femininity in the post-1980s world offer good reasons to claim that the practice of feminisation of the *unheimlich* spaces has remained in place, even though what once served domestication, today serves an altogether different purpose. Linda Hutcheon seems to be right in her assertions that today it is the discourses of Canadianness and feminism, rather than the traditionally conceived femininity, that coincide.[41] Correspondingly, similarly to Canadian theorists who subvert the concept of, or the need for, a coherent Canadian identity, Canadian feminist writers often "take over the roles of explorer/traveller/adventurer and reconstruct them." In their texts, "[t]he image of landscape-in-motion replaces the image of land-as-static-territory-to-be-named-into-compliance and so confined" (New 114),[42] in order to emphasise the transgressiveness inscribed in the ideas of the body/space/identity. In the ensuing sections, of this chapter, consequently, I intend to examine the correlation between these concepts from two different standpoints suggested above and corresponding to the processes of shaming

41 See: Hutcheon, Linda, Kathleen O'Grady, "Theorizing Feminism and Postmodernity. A Conversation with Linda Hutcheon by Kathleen O'Grady." Trinity College, University of Cambridge, 1997. 12 Sept. 2008. World Wide Web <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/hutcheon.html> (11.02.2011).

42 This strategy is perhaps most clearly visible in Aritha van Herk's novels and her concept of *geografictione*—"the term [which] combines geography, fiction, and the ending 'e,' which, in many Indo-European languages marks the feminine form" (Helms 68). Geografictione springs from the conviction that "... [g]eography, mapping and fiction cannot be neutral/neuter, as the narrator realizes in her explorations, all three discourses, as she knows them, have been written by men, while the perspectives of women have been silenced and marginalized" (Helms 68–69). Whereas in her novels (e.g., *Places Far From Ellesmere*), van Herk rewrites the masculinist arctic narratives, she most clearly contests the concept of the north as the ultimate Canadian space in her short story entitled "Creating Willem Berentsz; Piloting North." The story of Berentsz, who was "most definitely not Canadian" (van Herk 81), construes "the north [as] a configuration of narrative imagination, without nation, without destination, and without inherent motivation [and a] geography only traceable by an eye willing to abandon its prescribed latitude and longitude" (92).

and de-shaming: the former focuses on the correlation between "Canada" and "Woman," the latter connects the transgressive discourses of Canadianness and feminism.

On the one hand, in the light of what has been stated so far, it is clear that both Canada and the female body to which the land has been likened have been undergoing a similar process of being "mapped" and "colonised," i.e., objectified, possessed, and hence shamed. "Canada" and "Woman," in other words, have both been relegated to the margins, and discussed in terms of their apparent otherness and negativity. In the section titled "A Body (Not) of One's Own and the Problem of Otherness in Crozier's 'Alice' and 'Sometimes My Body Leaves Me,'" therefore, I focus on the female body which is shamed into being *homely* rather than *homey*. In the following section, however, titled "Returning the Gaze: Feminist Revision of Looks Cast in 'Alice,'" I explore the opportunities of de-shaming this body as suggested in Crozier's poem. The assumption that I adopt in my reading is that both "land" and "body "can . . . function . . . as [spaces] or [places] or [sites] of challenge to the accustomed borders of power." Both are "[icons] of stability and [mediums] of change. Fixity vies recurrently with fluidity, position with positionality, the place of social residence with the condition of being there" (New 6). Thus my interpretation points to the transgressive and transformative potential of the in-betweenness that Alice *embodies*.

a body (not) of one's own
and the problem of otherness

In Margaret Atwood's words, "The Female Body has many uses" (1994: 74). Undoubtedly, the female body has been a locus in which a plethora of frequently contradictory cultural meanings would intertwine. In the patriarchal tradition, where it has often been construed as synonymous to the concept of Woman, the body has gained excessive significance and thus, as Beauvoir suggests, came to determine the limits of Woman's potential in the culture of the West (34). Susan Bordo observes that Woman and her body may be compared to Siamese twins, "neither one with [the other] nor separable from [each other]" (1995: 2). In Western culture, in which, over millennia, *ratio*—traditionally attributable to Man—has been valued higher than the body, the latter "is the negative term" (Bordo 1995: 5). If Woman is primarily construed as a somatic being, she simultaneously becomes an embodiment of the one of the two elements of the binary opposition which the culture has been treating as less valuable, or even contrary to the one attributed positive values. In this vein, Susan Bordo states that if Woman is the body, "then women are that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death" (1995: 5).

It is striking, however, that the concepts of "negativity," "otherness" and "foreignness" find traditional application not only in the process of the conceptualisation and, subsequently, discursivisation of femininity, but also in the analogous process of defining Canadianness. It is easy to observe that, like women, Canadians have on numerous occasions been ascribed the so-called "negative identity": since both women and Canadians define themselves through reference to dominant groups (men and Americans respectively), they allegedly find it easier to decide *what they are not* rather than *what they are*. The parallelism stems from an analogous experience of marginalisation: "Just as women have traditionally been positioned on the fringes of male culture, so Canadians often feel as if they are watching the action (be it American or European) from the sidelines" (Hutcheon).[43]

43 "Theorizing Feminism and Postmodernity. A Conversation with Linda Hutcheon" by Kathleen O'Grady. World Wide Web <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/Hutcheon.html> (24.01.2011).

The problem of the disjunction between Self and the Other—where the Other adopts the shape of the female body—is addressed in two poems by Lorna Crozier, titled "Alice" and "Sometimes My Body Leaves Me." In the first verse of "Alice," the lyrical I reveals that she "[knows] a woman / who can leave her body" (66). Freed from bodily constraints and exhilarated by the act, the woman rises in the air and "from the ceiling's corner / [laughs] at her mound of flesh / sweating on sheets" (66). Evidently, the relationship between the woman and her body is founded upon the traditional dichotomy: body *vs.* mind. The woman/*subject*—the immaterial "I," traditionally identified with masculinity—weightlessly *rises above* the physiological/feminine *object*: the disgraced and immobilised object of mockery and derision. The immaterial element becomes the "essence" or the "self," whereas the body is reduced to a worthless container, a surface, or (as will become clearer in the poems discussed further) a metaphorical house which imprisons or *frames* the woman, and hence a house in which the woman cannot—and does not wish to—make herself at home. The relationship between "the woman" and "her body" (the subject and the object) is clearly of hierarchical nature: the contemptuous, scornful gaze falls upon the body *from above*.

In the second verse of the poem, the lyrical subject emphasises that a woman who can leave her body nonetheless leaves an impression of normality since she does not manifest any features of madness ("her eyes do not twist / nor does saliva thread / her chin" (66))—thus suggesting that in the *physical appearance* of the described woman there is nothing particularly repulsive. Therefore, one may conclude that the only determinant of *abnormality* (otherness and inferiority) in the poem is the negatively marked femininity alone. As Elizabeth Grosz observes, the biological body undergoes conceptualisation exclusively as mediated by cultural images and truths (41) defining the body of Woman as overly visible, sexual, permeable and defective—as an involucrum around nothingness (which concept, incidentally, makes an interesting parallel to the metaphor of Canada as a periphery surrounding emptiness). In the light of such reading, the need of escape seems understandable. Even the lyrical I itself admits that it envies the woman her magical ability "to stride beyond this bone closet" (66)—especially that the self takes over the body's capacity to see and the ability to move. However, in the last verse of the poem

this unique skill is exposed as deceptive as it is dangerous: every time the woman leaves her body, she "stays away a little longer" (66).

Even though "Alice" and "Sometimes My Body Leaves Me" come from two different collections of poems, it is interesting to look at them correlatively. The "dissociative" ability of coming separate from one's body, which in "Alice" is a source of exhilaration and elation, becomes an unsettling element of everyday reality and an experience of the lyrical I in the second poem. In the first verse, the lyrical subject reveals that sometimes her body "goes into another room / and locks the door. There / it bangs about / like an angry thief" (15) The woman does not know "what it feels, / if it feels anything" or "what sounds to make / to call it back" (15). Like a nameless animal—a simple, yet potentially hostile "it"—the body escapes its owner's (re)cognition. Yet, even if the sense of superiority toward "this thing"—which features so powerfully in "Alice"—becomes manifest in the actions of the owner of the body in the second poem, it is inscribed in the colonising gaze levelled at the body. The incomprehensible entity becomes an object (of observation): the lyrical subject of the poem, unsuccessfully, attempts to translate its actions into a comprehensible language. At the same time, however, the woman abandoned by her body feels incapacitated and helpless. The questions she asks ("What does it do when it sits alone / without a book or anything / resembling love?" (15)) testify not only to the distance separating her from her body, but also to the great attention which the woman pays to her corporeality. Yet, since her concern is thoroughly unrequited, the woman remains feeling disintegrated: incomplete and lonesome.

In both poems the woman, separated from her body, becomes metaphorically homeless: she is incapable of being the tower of strength for herself and remains in need of *a body of her own*. Despite the fact that in the patriarchal culture the images of the mother, wife and the mistress of the house are inscribed into the space of the *heimlich*, the female *body*—not determined with reference to the mentioned social roles—is attributed features excluding the familiarity of the space of home. Woman's body is therefore defined "as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment—not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order ..." (Grosz 203). As such, it is thus the contradiction of home; it is both an enigma and a wilderness. In the context of theories of the Canadian identity—the rhetoric of which

frequently makes use of references to the landscape of Canada, described as the vast expanse of snow or a cold, dead emptiness—the ideal of the home-like familiarity appears unattainable. "'Away' and 'home' are the destinations of [Canadian] writing" (Rooke ix): Canadian authors, as Constance Rooke claims, write along the two parallel vectors of opposite senses.

returning the gaze:
feminist revision of looks cast in "alice"

The relationships between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic ones.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception *(108)*

While in one sense the body is the most abiding and inescapable presence in our lives, it is also essentially characterised by absence.

Drew Leder, The Absent Body *(1)*

Like "Woman," "Canada is a concept at once coherent and dispersed" (Findley 174). In a great majority of canonical texts searching for, or narrating, a coherent Canadian identity, the noun "Canadian," in fact, refers to a "canonical Canadian," i.e., a white, male Anglophone. In other words, "Canadian minus any qualifiers evokes the entirety of the geopolitical space it refers to, but it also siphons off large segments of this space and its peoples into oblivion at worst, and circumscribed at best" (Kamboureli 2007: ix). Contrary to Constance Rooke's claim that Canadian authors write in two opposite directions ("away" and "home")—both of which require that the home exist as a fixed point of reference—Smaro Kamboureli imagines Canadian literature as deviating from this clear-cut axis:

> CanLit may be instrumentalized by and concerned with the Canadian state, but it also contests the stateness, and boldly points beyond it, to an elsewhereness that is not yet legible, that defamiliarizes the tropes that produce transparency and its accompanying contentment and complacency. An alternative cognitive space, this elsewhereness demands epistemic breaks that require new tools to comprehend its materiality; it calls for an understanding of temporality and space that questions the assumption that knowledge is residual, always anterior to what has come before, the product of the same epistemological gestures that have cultivated the categories of "proper" subject and "other" in the first place. (Kamboureli 2007: x)

Correspondingly, in this section I focus on the concepts of transgression, re-vision, multiplicity and, most importantly, de-shaming, which—in the theoretical chapter of this book—I linked to the notion

of Canada as a queer space. In my reading, it is the female body depicted in Crozier's "Alice" that becomes both the queer, transgressive space and the token of elsewhereness.

In *The Absent Body*, Drew Leder speaks of the human body as both ecstatic and recessive. "The word ['ecstatic']"—writes Leder—"includes within it the root *ek*, meaning 'out' and *stasis*, meaning 'to stand.' The ecstatic is that which stands out. This admirably describes the operation of the lived body. The body always has a determinate stance—it is that whereby we are located and defined. But the very nature of the body is to project outward from its place of standing" (22). To recede "means to 'go or fall back.'" The body is recessive as it "not only projects outward in experience but falls back into unexperienceable depths. … If, for example, I am fully engaged in listening to a concert, my closed eyes, my stilled legs, are enfolded in a background disappearance. No longer perceiving or acting from such organs, they temporarily withdraw from awareness" (53–54). Leder's suggests that the "normal" healthy body is therefore experienced both in terms of absence and of presence. Such a state of presence, however, may be interrupted by pain, disease, or any encounter with Otherness: the interruption, in turn, results in what Leder calls "dys-appearance" of the body. Importantly, "dys-appearance" does not merely connote "absence" or "disappearance" that "[characterise] ordinary functioning," but is descriptive of a circumstance in which "the body *appears* as thematic focus, but precisely as in a *dys* state—*dys* is from the Greek prefix signifying 'bad,' 'hard, or 'ill' as is found in English words such as 'dysfunctional'" (84). Dys-appearance—which, like shame, assumes the form of a threatening body/*me* split—is a result of any bodily dysfunction, in the course of which "a specific organ, rather than serving the rest of the body, manifests an independent pattern" (88). Such an organ "suddenly goes its own way, failing to perform its required norm in proper co-ordination with others" (88).

It seems, however, that in the case of Woman, it is not a specific rebellious organ that alienates itself from the coherent "whole," but rather her whole body dys-appears: is experienced as shamefully disobedient. Leder connects Woman with dys-appereance on the basis of Beauvoir's definition of Woman as the Other. In his reading, he pays attention to the fact that

> [women] must maintain a constant awareness of how they appear to men in terms of physical attractiveness and other forms of acceptability. Women are thus expected to pay meticulous attention to their surface appearance, including hairstyle, make-up, dress, weight, figure, and skin tone. This exhibits the principle of social dys-appearance; one incorporates an alien gaze, away, apart, asunder from one's own which provokes explicit thematization of the body. (99)

In the way one looks down at one's paralysed limb and is "struck by the alien nature of the embodiment" (88), Woman (the body-subject) *looks down* upon the body-object and "can no longer take the body for granted" (89). Her body becomes alien to her "self," and—as she "experiences the painful body as merely an 'it'"—she "becomes . . . ready to take whatever means are necessary to rid [herself] of it" (77). Significantly, in the context of the feminine rituals of beauty that Leder writes about, "getting rid of the body" can no longer be read as a metaphor only. The numerous processes to which Woman subjects her body often aim at reducing its size (which, in the case of women suffering from *anorexia nervosa* may lead to—very literal—death).[44] The female body as construed by Leder is, to a great extent, imaginary: in the process of becoming *one*, rather than *one*. In other words, it is marked by dys-appearance because it *appears* rather than *is*, and it is appearance—surface and mask—that makes Woman.

Feminist theorists have often emphasised the super- and arti-ficial nature of femininity which, in their readings, is recurrently likened to a masquerade and/or a performance. Like Cinderella, Woman becomes feminine (i.e., the object of Man's desire) once she is equipped with the required accessories of femininity, such as a dress ("all beset with jewels"), a pair of glass slippers ("the prettiest in the whole world"), and a whole "equipage to go to the ball with" (Perrault).[45] Like her appearance, her behaviour also has to be regulated, or toned down: a feminine woman does not talk/eat/do much (Cinderella, accordingly, dances "so very gracefully" and shows her stepmother and stepsisters "a thousand civilities"). In line with the fairy tale pattern, omnipresent in Western romantic narratives, Woman is promised

44 Both the Beauty Myth and the meanings attached to the female body are the focus of my interpretation of Crozier's "The Fat Lady's Dance" in the following subchapter.

45 All the quotations from Charles Perrault's "Cinderella" used in this paragraph come from the World Wide Web <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault06.html> (16.02.2011).

success as soon as her body metamorphoses into its perfect(ed) form—therefore, when (magically transformed) Cinderella enters the ballroom "[t]here [is] immediately a profound silence... so entranced [is] everyone with the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer." The young prince cannot eat a thing, "so intently [is] he busied in gazing on [the girl]." In Perrault's version of the tale, masquerade guarantees success as well as implies anonymity: in her new dress, Cinderella is unrecognizable to her stepmother and stepsisters. In fact, she no longer is Cinderella—or Cinderwench[46]—but becomes a feminine *tabula rasa* for the prince to write on. The story's promises, however—first, that a metamorphosis of her appearance is mandatory, and second, that once the transformation is complete she will be happy "ever after"—appear to be contradictory, because Woman is urged to transform her body permanently, to remain preoccupied with improvement and to wait for a transition. Identified with a changeable, permeable body in-the-process, she can only long for the profound silence of the entranced audience, but she can never have it.

The fairy tale both emphasises the connection between Woman's appearance and identity, and dramatises her role as an object to look at. Prince's gaze penetrates Cinderella and transforms her into an *objet d'art.*[47] The girl does not return the gaze, but yields to it, lets herself be moulded by it. In John Berger's terms, Woman, in fact, is incapable of looking back, because, being "too close to herself" (Merritt 46), she looks at herself only:

> Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked-at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (qtd. in Merritt 16–17)

46 "When she had done her work, she used to go to the chimney corner, and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderwench. Only the younger sister, who was not so rude and uncivil as the older one, called her Cinderella."

47 A similar process—in an even more pronounced way—is presented in the Brothers Grimm's "Little Snow White." Seemingly poisoned to death by her envious stepmother, Snow White is placed in a glass coffin, so that everyone can still admire her perfect beauty. When a prince arrives, consequently, he does not express a wish to revive the girl but says instead: "Let me have it as a gift, for I cannot live without seeing Snow-white. I will honour and prize her as my dearest possession" ("Little Snow-White" by the Brothers Grimm in Margaret Taylor's translation (1884) available online at: http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/grimm/bl-grimm-snowwhite.htm).

As Juliette Merritt proposes, Berger's claim is "incomplete, rather than incorrect" (17). Undoubtedly, Woman "[internalizes] the male gaze, perpetually seeing [herself] through the eyes of the Other…" (17). As evidenced in Crozier's poem, she looks at her body judgingly, and the shame she experiences under her own scrupulous gaze is due both to the apprehension that she *looks* bad, and the resulting conviction that she *is* bad. On the other hand, however, "this gaze is only one among many that women possess" (17). Even though in "Alice," as I indicated in the previous section, the body is dislocated and objectified by the lyrical I, consolation comes with a possibility of looking differently.

Puzzlingly enough, the lyrical I faces the "woman / who can leave her body" and sees the woman's "laughing face / mirrored in her eyes" (66). The woman's eyes, therefore, reflect what, apparently, is *not* in front of them: the mirror reflection of the "woman / who can leave her body" is *faced* by another person. Interestingly, although they stand face to face, they transgress the confines of the traditional dichotomy the Self/the Other. Already the first verse of the poem ("I *know* a woman / who can leave her body") suggests a (close) relationship between the woman and the lyrical I, which is then substantiated in the successive mirror-intermingling and the lyrical I's shameless recognition of the woman's talent:

> I have asked her
> to teach me
> to stride beyond this bone closet
> but her act is instinctive
> and beyond learning
> or perhaps I am afraid
> and don't really want to know
> this final deception (66)

There is, therefore, no shame in the relation between the lyrical I and the "woman / who can leave her body," while, certainly, the gaze is present in it. In Merleau-Ponty's phrasing, one can actually "supplement [one's] embodiment through the Other" and see another's body as

> a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. Henceforth, as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other person's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which

> my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously. (qtd. in Leder 94)

Leder ventures a statement that although Woman incorporates the (masculine, objectifying) look that she then forwards upon herself, she is likely to have the eye contact with others who treat her as a subject, "that is, [who experience] with [her] the world in which [she] dwells" (96). The lyrical I of the poem shares the imprisonment within the "body closet" with the "woman / who can leave her body," as they both speak of the body in derogative terms, and the lyrical I finds the magical abilities of the woman tempting (and risky). In Leder's words, it is precisely the experimental *sharing* that precludes shame:

> Sartre's example of a man looking through the keyhole illustrates that dys-appearance can be initiated by ethical distance or condemnation. Sartre's voyeur feels shame when discovered. The Other, it is assumed, would never do such a thing, would refuse to assume a similar posture and gaze. The voyeur becomes aware of his position by virtue of his disrupted cosubjectivity. If the onlooker turns out to be a friend equally interested in taking a peek, the voyeur's self-consciousness would soon disappear. Their embodiments would no longer be away, apart, asunder, but interwoven in a common project. (97)

It seems that the "common project" in which both the lyrical I and the woman are interwoven, is the ambition to get out of the body and away from the shame secured by it. The project, however—as the lyrical I recognises—is a "final deception." The body they both want to relinquish is, as stated earlier, a dys-appearing one and, according to Leder, "the ultimate mode of dys-appearance" (141) is the body's death:

> Though none of us has ever experienced our death, it ever seeds our body, waiting to blossom. It is foretold from within the episodes of pain, injury, and illness [and] by the body's gradual changes. . . . The body in its aspect as that-which-must-die can constitute a threat to all of one's goals. It can sever or transform all relations, bring our projects to a halt, threaten one's very existence as an 'I.' This body thus emerges as an ego-alien force that demands thematization" (141).

The ability of the woman to leave her body is alarming to the lyrical I, precisely for the reason that "each time . . . [the woman] stays away a little

longer," as the prolonged dys-appearing necessarily leads to the terminal disappearance. If the poem proposes any solutions to the body-bound shame, it is rather in the "loving eye" that one should look for them.

In the words of shame psychologists, eye-to-eye contact with another person constitutes the most intimate interpersonal relation possible. Necessarily, it is a shame-less one, as the experience of shame clearly precludes such interaction (a shamed object of the gaze immediately looks down or away). Whereas the shaming gaze in the poem is directed onto the body, or into the eyes reflected in the mirror (which are nothing but the "constituted objects in the world" (Leder 14)), the only look which is devoid of shame is one which is *shared*. As proposed by such feminist theorists as Sonia Kruks, Marilyn Frye, Maria Lugones, Christine Sylvester, Sandra Lee Bartky and Susan Bordo, and discussed in the following paragraphs, the experience of the powerful, intimate and *respectful* gaze challenges the prerogative of the sha-ming one.[48]

The re-vision of the nature of looking is advocated in Sonia Kruks's discussion of Lugones's concept of world-travelling, Sylvester's idea of panoptic empathy, as well as Bartky's conception of feeling-with another. The first concept—world-travelling—is a metaphor of entering another person's world (and of a subsequent identification with the visited Other) through "loving perception." Such identification requires the rejection of any "fixed conception of oneself," as "instead of defending boundaries, one must endeavour to be open to ambiguity and surprises, to accept being a fool and having oneself and one's own world continually reconstructed" (Kruks 156):

> Travelling to someone's 'world' is a way of identifying with them, because by travelling to their world we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have travelled to each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other. (Lugones qtd. in Kruks 156)

48 Interestingly, Drew Leder claims that the "mutual incorporation," as defined by Merleau-Ponty, is also implicit in Jean-Paul Sartre's theory: "[Sartre] argues that the Other's gaze leads me to experience my own body as object. But this presupposes that, to some degree, I can see myself as others do. Only because my vision always incorporates that of other people could they have this power of negation over me. I put myself in their place, assume their perspective, just as they do mine. Hence, mutual incorporation is the necessary precondition of even the alienated gaze that Sartre describes. This mutuality never fully disappears, not even in the most objectifying encounter" (95).

In Susan Bordo's reading, Lugones's world-travelling is an example of the feminist advocation of postmodern multiplicity, which goes "beyond dualism not merely theoretically but also in intellectual practice." She continues to claim that

> …becoming a world-travelling thinker cannot…be accomplished by sightseeing, textual or cultural. Nor does it require extensive coverage of "foreign" territory. As Lugones describes it, it has fundamentally to do with the desire and ability to explore reality "wearing the other's shoes." This means recognizing, wherever one goes, that the other's perspective *is* fully realized, not a bit of exotic "difference" to be incorporated into one's own world. The world-travelling thinker thus must be prepared, not only to "appreciate" the foreign, but also to recognize and nurture those places where worlds meet. (Bordo 1995: 287; italics in the original)

Recognition and appreciation of the "places where worlds meet" notwithstanding, Kruks is suspicious of Lugones's concept as one that urges disembodiment and implies *becoming* the Other: "Our experience of attempting to enter the world of others is both more complex and less complete that Lugones assumes in describing the process of 'identification.' For we cannot shed our weighty identities as freely and playfully as she suggests. … [Were] full identification with others in their worlds even possible, it would not be desirable" (157). What Kruks proposes in place of the "full identification" is to—in the words of Christine Sylvester—"[rely] on empathy to enter into the spirit of difference and find in it an echo of oneself as other than the way one seems to be" (qtd. in Kruks 158). Empathy, as described by Sylvester, does not induce the merging of the Self and the Other, but a separate existence which nevertheless depends on "informing and drawing on each other" (qtd. in Kruks 159). A similar idea emerges from Bartky's "Solidarity and Sympathy" in which she draws on Max Scheler's concept of fellow-feeling:

> Bartky suggests that Scheler's phenomenology of feeling-with offers feminists a helpful framework for addressing experiences of difference among women. … In attempting to feel-with those who suffer, we must not reduce them to passive victim status nor to mere objects of sympathy, or even pity. But neither can we actually experience their suffering ourselves. Instead, "genuinely" to feel-with another "presupposes that awareness of distance which is eliminated by identification": to feel-with somebody is not the same as to feel what they actually feel. (Kruks 160)

The three concepts—world-travelling, empathy and feeling-with—endorse "a mobile subjectivity, rather than the parading of fixed identity positions, and thus, flexibility, a commitment to juggling, an embrace of ambiguity and irony" (Kruks 159). The multiplicity they advocate posits the space where feminism, postmodernism and queerness meet. This space is de-shaming because it forms in between two looks shared by two *subjects* of the gaze. Leaving aside the body ("sweating on the sheets" (66)), the lyrical I and the "woman / who can leave her body" shamelessly travel into each other's worlds. The body, however, problematically, remains *there*, for the two looks—loving and arrogant—coexist in Crozier's poem. The shame-less gaze does not annihilate the simultaneous shame-full gaze, but it introduces panoptic alternatives that transgress the hierarchy of looking determined by Sartre and Beauvoir.

toward an ex-centered vision

> *What is most exciting and creative about thresholds as passageways are the possibilities that are produced by letting go of destinies and expectations, by learning to live with and through uncertainties.*
>
> *Fairn herising "Interrupting Positions: Critical Thresholds and Queer Pro/Positions" (128)*

> *Living at once inside and outside the framework, Hester is able to see the frame.*
>
> *Carol Gilligan "Joining the Resistance: Psychology, Politics, Girls and Women" (17)*

Carol Gilligan's motto above refers to the figure of Hester Prynne, the heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Hester, like Biblical Eve, is guilty of transgressing God's law—as an adulteress in the Puritan community of Boston, she is shamed into punishment (or punished into shame). The scarlet letter "A" that she wears on her bosom is, like a blush, a conspicuous indicator of her shame. What the quotation emphasises, however, is that Hester's marginal position—she occupies, literally and metaphorically, the space in-between the town and the wilderness—provides her with the distance necessary to see things differently.

The concept of marginality and in-betweenness corresponds to the notion of liminality which I referred to in the introductory part of this subchapter. In Jill G. Morawski's phrasing, "[l]iminality is the threshold, the betwixt-and-between of established social states" and "a place not just for momentary inversion, or reversal, of mundane social reality, but also for its ultimate subversion, or replacement" (qtd. in Riegel 13). Liminality, therefore, describes the paradox of being both here and there, and, simultaneously, neither here, nor there. On the one hand, the threshold is a location, on the other, it is a passageway "between and through locations" (herising 128). Such indeterminacy of place and space is important both for theorists of Canadian identity and for present-day feminist researchers. In theories of Canadianness, the potential of the margins is perhaps most clearly pronounced in Linda Hutcheon's concept of the ex-centric:

> The centre no longer holds. And, from the decentred perspective, the marginal and what I will be calling the "ex-centric" (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new significance in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogenous monolith … we might have assumed. (qtd. in Kamboureli 2009: 167)

Concurrently, the belief that "the centre no longer holds" has been an important postulate of the feminist movement. Therefore, feminist theorists have often de-centred, or ex-centred, such seemingly unalterable concepts as Woman or the female body. As the argument of this chapter has demonstrated, Woman's oppression and shame are

> related to a system of looking whereby relations of power are conducted within a subject/object dichotomy. In this "ocular regime," power is traditionally believed to accrue to the subject side of this opposition, a position most frequently held by men who make women the object of their gaze. (Merritt 16)

Consequently, in this case, the feminist ex-centering means the reconfiguration of "women's role within the visible field" (Merritt 16). Accordingly, although the female body presented in Crozier's "Alice" is shamed into otherness, the poet imagines a possibility of de-shaming Woman by making her the subject of the look, the shame-less "world-traveller," and the transgressor.

The concepts of fragmentariness, otherness, and incoherence, therefore, determine the loci in which the theories of gender and of Canadianness intertwine. In light of the interpretations presented above, the identity of a woman and Canadian identity evade equivocal definitions: the theoretical limits of the body of the woman and those of Canadianness are subject to continuous transformations, are ceaselessly transgressed and undergo recurrent revisions. The liminality of both these spaces triggers anxiety in Canadian artists, yet the periphery—"the exciting and dangerous boundary where silence and sound meet" (Kroetsch 63)—sensitises one to the signs of otherness and warns one of the dangers lurking in the cohesive discourses of national identity and of femininity erected upon the fundamental concepts of being-at-home with oneself, a de-shamed subject.

3.4. subjectifying the subject. subverting the western beauty myth

("the fat lady's dance")

> *They had a model of Miss Hunter before them as they talked, made in a new transparent substance called flexi-wax, threaded through with plastic sinews and vein and bones: they played with it, pinching out flesh here, adding it there, working their way to perfection. They thought they might have to alter the position of the kidneys, so that they lay one above the other, not side by side. It was easy enough. The working parts of the body must be properly linked; their actual position was immaterial.*
>
> *Fay Weldon,* The Life and Loves of a She Devil *(233)*

In her *Flesh Wounds. The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery*, Virginia L. Blum employs the metaphor of the female body as a landscape. She coins the term "body landscape" in order to address

> the individual's sense of where one's body begins and ends, the hierarchy of the body parts, which parts one esteems or values or invests with more thought than others, the degree to which this body is perceived as transformable or having been transformed. … [O]ne's body landscape determines one's own threshold for and reaction to different kinds of transformations (puberty, disfiguring injury, piercing one's ears, aging, cosmetic surgery…). (42–43)

Even though Blum stresses that thus construed "body landscape" is *one's own*—a personal and subjective perception of one's body borders, it is interesting to observe that she writes of it in terms of a hierarchical evaluation, and sees it as a plane upon which transformations are to come about. As the body is always "culturally inscribed and historically located" (Bordo 1995: 41), it is logical to speculate that the positioning of the threshold of which Blum writes depends on political rather than private factors—and on one's individual susceptibility to cultural messages. Moreover, although Blum does not speak of the *fe-*

male body specifically, in the light of what has been discussed thus far, it is difficult to think of the "body landscape" as gender-neutral. Particularly, if one agrees that some of the bodily transformations of which the author parenthetically writes (aging, cosmetic surgery), even though they may affect any-body, bear particular importance to the *female* body: one subject to the workings of the Beauty Myth. In fact, if one interprets the passage above from the perspective of gendered discourse, it can be inferred that it is *masculine* gaze that determines "an individual's sense" of the body: a gaze which has traditionally objectified the (stereotypically female) "body landscape" from the outside—and invested more thought with some parts of it than with others.

If one considers Blum's "body landscape" as a (version of) "body image," the blurring of borderlines between an individual's experience of the body and its cultural evaluations becomes manifest. For example, it is so common for women to be dissatisfied with their bodies, that a new term—"normative discontent"—had to be coined in order to emphasise that body dissatisfaction is, in fact, "normal" (Lafrance, Zivian and Myers 228). In the same vein, dieting has been described as a "normal" eating behaviour for Woman (Lafrance, Zivian and Myers 228). Moreover, it is worth noting that the Body Image Distortion Syndrome—symptomatic for *anorexia nervosa*, but not limited to this disorder—was originally perceived as a "defect" in some "disordered" women who were "unable to see [their bodies] 'realistically'" (Bordo 1995: 55). Yet, as Susan Bordo shows,

> [m]ost women in our culture . . . are "disordered" when it comes to issues of self-worth, self-entitlement, self-nourishment, and comfort with their own bodies; eating disorders, far from being "bizarre" and anomalous, are utterly continuous with a dominant element of the experience of being female in this culture. (1995: 57)

Such designations as "normal" and "abnormal," "natural" and "unnatural," as well as "personal" and "cultural," appear nothing short of perplexing when one thinks of Woman's relationship with her body: the confusion, however, seems to open up a space in which the body can be addressed in terms of its "de-shaming potential": as a plastic, (un)bounded, albeit, for these reasons, also (in)tangible. Although body transformations, including plastic surgery, have been the subject of a wide variety of feminist analyses thus far, and sometimes, as Blum

suggests, they have even been perceived as "liberating," i.e. allowing Woman to take control of her life (61)—it seems in order to return to the debate and to revisit some of its major issues from the perspective of Woman's shame. At this point, it is already clear that there is a direct link between Woman's shame and her need to become *other than she is*. Like Cinderella, Woman is urged to metamorphose, yet

> ... the specific ideals that [she is] drawn to embody (ideals that vary historically, racially, and along class and other lines) are seen as arbitrary, without meaning; interpretation is neither required nor even appropriate. Rather, all motivation and value come from the interest and allure—the "sexiness"—of change and difference itself. Blue contact lenses for a black woman ... make her "other" ("the other woman"). But that "other" is not a racial or cultural "other"; she is sexy because of the piquancy, the novelty, the erotics of putting on a different self. *Any* different self would do, it is implied. (Bordo 1995: 253; italics in the original)

Correspondingly, it is interesting to think of the connection between Woman's body and subjectivity in the context of the ever-increasing popularity of plastic surgery. Traditionally, the human face has been perceived as a window onto one's identity. Possibly, the most blatant practical example of such a perception is the phenomenon of an ID picture: a photograph of one's face, whose presence is mandatory in one's passport or a driver's license, functions as the most immediate, though often misleading, indication of who one is. Furthermore, face and character have been conceptually linked together in fixed expressions of many a language: the popular idiom "to lose face," for instance, connects the "façade" to such concepts as dignity, honour, and self-respect. Eventually, it is also on the face that emotions—such as anger, fear, joy, or shame—inscribe themselves most clearly: the face is, or, more precisely, it *used to be* a trustworthy indicator of one's emotions. *Used to*, due to the consequences of the shame-induced transformative practices encouraged by contemporary culture.

In an American TV series *Lie to Me* (2009—), Dr. Cal Lightman, "... the world's leading deception expert ... can read feelings ranging from hidden resentment to sexual attraction to jealousy ... by analyzing facial expressions and involuntary body language."[49] Thanks to his unusual skill, liars are always exposed and rightly punished—the face, therefore, clearly points to "the truth." In the episode 3 of the first se-

49 World Wide Web <http://www.fox.com/lietome/about> (18.02.2011).

ries, revolving around the death of a teenage girl, however, Lightman is originally misled into suspecting the girl's mother—a federal judge—of committing the crime, because he "notes the expression on the judge's face doesn't match the words she's saying."[50] As it turns out, however, the woman has been using Botox, and thus her inanimate face points to no truth.

In the "culture of cosmetic surgery," face can no longer be viewed as either unique or expressive, and "losing it" no longer connotes shame or disgrace. In M.G. Lord's words, "[t]he postsurgical Dolly Parton…looks like the postsurgical Ivana Trump looks like the postsurgical Michæl Jackson looks like the postsurgical Joan Rivers looks like…Barbie…" (qtd. in Blum 179). Thus, because of the popularity of the relatively safe procedures, such as lip augmentation and Botox injections, many international celebrities have become visually similar. Furthermore, their "uniformised" faces continue to be replicated, since patients bring photographs of cultural icons to the surgeon's office indicating them as blueprints for their own respective metamorphoses:

> When you come closer to becoming a celebrity by having yourself surgically altered (imitating on the body what cameras and lightning do to the screen image), the identification becomes more complete; significantly this is an identification with a *process* (role playing) rather than with any particular person, thus necessarily putting any fixed sense of self at risk. (Blum 154; italics in the original)

Even though plastic surgery, as evidenced above, undoubtedly puts "any fixed sense of self at risk," advertisements of plastic surgery, as well as such popular TV programs as *Extreme Makeover* (2002–2007), often refer to the traditional, humanist notion of the true self. Almost all of the women transformed on the *Extreme Makeover* reality show claim, for instance, that their main motivation to undergo the agony of the procedure is to reveal their *true identity*: they wish the world to see who they *really* are. Paradoxically, it is when they look like someone else that they feel most at home with themselves.

Woman as a construct and "beauty" as a category are inextricably linked in the culture of the West. "Feminists have had good reasons to distrust the discourse of beauty" (Wolff 144): for centuries, "beauty"

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50 World Wide Web <http://www.fox.com/lietome/recaps/season-1/episode-03> (18.02.2011).

has been believed to be one of few allegedly positive terms applicable to Woman and as such, it has played "an integral role in the construction of gender identity in a patriarchal system" (Battella 3). In Naomi Wolf's 1990 *The Beauty Myth*, therefore, beauty is described as "a form of currency in circulation among men" (20), whereas the Beauty Myth itself is a tool of patriarchal oppression. The myth

> was institutionalized ... as a transformer between women and public life. It links women's energy into the machine of power while altering the machine as little as possible to accommodate them; at the same time, like the transformer, it weakens women's energy at its point of origin. It does that to ensure that the machine actually scans women's input in a code that suits the power structure. (21)

The pursuit of beauty is "a normalizing discipline ... perpetual, elusive, and instructing the female body in a pedagogy of personal inadequacy and lack" (Bordo 1995: 254). Its goal is to help maintain gender hierarchy, by means of keeping women dissatisfied with their bodies and, at the same time, teaching them that satisfaction-through-transformation is within their reach. This, in turn, is to have them engaged in performing actions which are politically inconsequential. By way of example, the disconcertingly detailed description below is Sandra Lee Bartky's fantasy of Woman's daily routine, ironically playing with an amalgamate of "beauty tips" offered abundantly by magazines for women:

> I must cream my body with a thousand creams, each designed to act against a different deficiency, oil it, pumice it, powder it, shave it, pluck it, depilate it, deodorize it, ooze it into just the right foundation, reduce it overall through spartan dieting or else pump it up with silicon. I must try to resculpture it on the ideal through dozens of punishing exercises. If home measures fail, I must take it to the figure salon, or inevitably, for those who can afford it, the plastic surgeon. There is no 'dead time' in my day during which I do not stand under the imperative to improve myself: While waiting for a bus, I am to suck the muscles of my abdomen in and up to lend them 'tone;' while talking on the telephone I am bidden to describe circles in the air with my feet to slim down my ankles. All these things must be done prior to the application of make-up, an art which aims, once again, to hide a myriad of deficiencies. (1990: 40)

In order to stress the power of the beauty myth, Wolf refers to it as "a gospel to a new religion" (86)—and presents Woman as its

zealous follower. Woman has to devote herself to the Rites of Beauty, which dedication is perceived both as her responsibility and a test to her character: beauty is not a given, it is what is earned through conscious effort and determination. Paradoxically, however, as both Wolf and Bartky make clear, Woman's preoccupation with her appearance—though apparently a proof of self-discipline and persistence—does not really improve her status. In Western culture, "beautification" is an exclusively feminine exercise: as such, it is often viewed as trivial, as a symptom of vanity, or a harmless obsession. "If we are never happy with ourselves," Susan Bordo explains, "that is due to our female nature, not to be taken too seriously or made into a political question" (253). Consequently,

> [t]o succeed in the provision of a beautiful or sexy body gains a woman attention and some admiration but little real respect and rarely any social power. A woman's effort to master feminine bodily discipline will lack importance just because she does it." (Bartky 2002: 73)

The "ugly" Woman, however, faces a yet more serious threat; ridiculed and shamed as unfeminine, she is commonly represented as monstrous, dangerous, offensive, and lazy. Beautification, albeit undeserving of serious treatment, must be treated with all seriousness by Woman: the failure to observe the rites of "the gospel" results in consequences which in themselves are far from trivial.

The focus of this section is on the *fat* female body—one that is a manifest proof of the non-adherence to the rites of beautification, and thus an object of coercive cultural shaming. Within present-day Western culture fat is perceived us ugly (and hence unfeminine), unhealthy (and hence life-threatening), excessive (wasteful and polluting) and even indecent or vulgar. Fat is intemperate—fat bodies take up too much space, consume too much food, encompass too many meanings. In Lorna Crozier's "The Fat Lady's Dance," however, the Fat Lady—traditionally relegated to sideshows—becomes a symbol of unbounded, feminist defiance.

fat is in the fire, or:
the shame-less dance of the fat lady

> *The ugly woman, by not conforming to the norms of beauty, is depicted as anomalous, rebellious, and transgressive. Such a feminine type escapes control and challenges social order. Since she may cause the wild, unrestrained, and chaotic to emerge, she is excluded and punished.*
>
> *Patricia Battella,* The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Æsthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque *(3)*

> *Fat. Few topics excite as much interest, emotion, or capital investment. With a multi-billion-dollar diet and fitness industry, tens of millions of joggers, bikers, and power walkers out on any sunny weekend all trying to banish fat, work off fat, atone for fat, health ideologues who talk of little these days besides fat, research and development dollars working overtime to invent no-fat substitutes for fat—our intense wish for fat's absence is just what ensures its cultural omnipresence.*
>
> *Laura Kipnis,* Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America *(93)*

Coercive shaming, female body fat and the at-home-with-oneself feeling have all been linked to the concept of *transformation* in a number of problematic ways. Whereas today some of these ways appear to be more important than others, it is interesting to note that, globally, the cultural meanings attached to the concept of fat have been changing (quite radically) over time. The "cult of bodily thinness and obsession with banishing fat" that present day Western culture indulges itself in, are "historically recent, and in sharp contrast to bodily æsthetics for the past four hundred years or so" (Kipnis 99):

> In Rubens' time, for example, thinness had largely negative connotations of poverty and deprivation, along with the insinuation of disease and old age. Being thin implied something dark and suspicious about the person's inner being as well: a spiritual poverty or moral insufficiency. The thin lacked good fortune, not to mention will and zest: thinness connoted morbidity, a lack of life. Previously, in the Middle Ages, thinness had been considered æsthetically pleasing, given the way it echoed the Church's teaching on the unimportance of the flesh. But by the time Rubens came along, an emerging humanism, represented in the Renaissance faith in the limitless possibilities of the human mind and body, was expressed visually in depictions of bodies of weight and rotund sensuousness, with the full, solid body expressing a sense of social stability and order. (99)

Nowadays, conversely, fat is often read as a symbol of instability and disorder: it implies "something dark and suspicious about the person's inner being" because, as may be inferred from commonplace rhetoric, fat people, for reasons difficult to fathom, are believed to *allow themselves* to be fat. Fat, therefore, "seems to carry a certain imaginary narrative with it, an origins tale of how the fat person got to be that way, the shameful revelation of clandestine (or overt) gluttony and overconsumption" (Kipnis 101). As fat, by and large, evokes "undisguised contempt," and sometimes "an intense, unexamined, visceral disgust" (96), fat people should have known better. If they decide to disregard the holiest of laws of the beauty myth—and *decide* to remain obese, i.e., "ugly"—they expose themselves to various forms of punishment (or the corrective measures aimed at putting them back on the right track). "If the rest of us are struggling to be acceptable and 'normal,' we cannot allow them to get away with it; they must be put in their place, be humiliated and defeated" (Bordo 1995: 203). Consequently, as Laura Kipnis evidences, the fat are perceived as "public property whose bodies invite [not only] the vocal speculations and ridicule of strangers" (103), but also more direct forms of aggression and violence. As the author reports, "25 percent of fat men and 16 percent of fat women reported being hit or threatened with physical violence because of their weight. Furthermore, emotional violence is nearly universal: 90 percent of fat people surveyed report incidents of derision, ridicule, contempt, and scorn on account of their weight" (104).

Even though *fat* and the *beauty myth* are closely banded together, the cultural meanings of fat go beyond the mere problem of appearance, and are related to a number of permeating cultural fears. "A recent study done on girls in grades three and four"—writes Zahra Dha-

nani—found that these girls would rather lose a parent than get fat" (33). Correspondingly,

> [w]hat we need to ask is *why* our culture is so obsessed with keeping our bodies slim, tight, and young that when 500 people were asked what they feared most in the world, 190 replied, "Getting fat."... In an age when our children regularly have nightmares of nuclear holocaust, that as adults we should give *this* answer—that we most fear "getting fat"—is far more bizarre than the anorectic's misperceptions of her body image, or the bulimic's compulsive vomiting. (Bordo 1995: 140–141; italics in the original)

One of the answers to the question above, suggested both by Kipnis and Bordo, is that fat

> conjures up... the terrifying specter of an insatiability that all we social citizens have, to varying degrees, learned to suppress. Fat advertises "naked need," need that surpasses the ability of the available resources—whether edible, monetary, or emotional—to quell it. (Kipnis 106).

If *fat* is a metaphor for unrestrained desire and *slenderness* stands for "the correct management of [this] desire," one

> must take into account the fact that throughout dominant Western religious and philosophical traditions, the capacity for self-management is decisively coded as male. By contrast, all those bodily spontaneities—hunger, sexuality, the emotions—seen as needful of containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female. The management of specifically female desire, therefore, is in phallocentric cultures a doubly freighted problem. (Bordo 1995: 205–206)

Consequently, fat, and the fear of it, appear to be closely bound to Woman (and the fear of her), confirming Naomi Wolf's assertion that "above all fat is female" (192). This is why "fat" and "thin" are feminist issues and subjects of a weighty feminist investigation.[51]

Although the meanings that female fat carries are mostly negative, the fear that fat evokes stems from the cultural perception of it as "a site of deep... contradiction" (Kipnis 96), rather than as something straightforwardly "bad." For example, the fat female body is also

51 *Fat Is a Feminist Issue: A Self-Help Guide for Compulsive Eaters* is a title of Suzie Orbach's 1979 book, whereas "Thin Is the Feminist Issue" is a 1985 article by Nicky Diamond, which offers a critique of Orbach's study.

commonly read as one of the "all-giving, nurturing, reliable, loving, caring earth mother who excels in feminine skills of caretaking, food preparation and sensual hugs" (Orbach 170). This stereotype transforms fat Woman into a fertility goddess who—like the Venus of Willendorf—eludes identification other than through her large breasts, thighs, and buttocks, as well as emphasised genital area. This image is, most obviously, reductive—the fat *person* becomes the fat *body*. In the same vein, fat people are often believed to be good-humoured, entertaining, and ready to laugh at themselves.[52] This conception is particularly striking as it falsifies the recurrent image of a fat person being "funny": now, it is not Western culture which ridicules the fat, but the fat who ridicule themselves. In consequence, the cultural shaming of the fat may appear justified and harmless—one does not laugh *at* them, one laughs *with* them. These two examples point to the fact that the fat female body is often read as incongruous and oxymoronic: it is pornographic/asexual, amusing/preposterous, conspicuous/indiscernible, and victimised/rebellious. As terrifyingly not/me, fat is a truly abject, liminal substance, "expendable female filth; virtually cancerous matter, an inert or treacherous infiltration into the body of nauseating bulk waste" (Wolf 191).[53] Described in medical research as unhealthy and, in fact, life-threatening, fat connotes both dirt and death, which partly explains the enormous success of the cultural "tyranny of slenderness."[54] As corporeality in the extreme, the fat body represents "inevitable death of all bodies—a condition that, like plaque in the arteries, is universal but must be fought constantly and repeatedly, and is projected onto fat bodies" (Kent 135–136).

In the feminist theory, the fat Woman's body has generally functioned as either the figure of oppression or nonconformity, both of which are strongly connected to the concept of body metamorphosis. Within present-day Western culture, in fact, the fat female body is seen as "a transformation waiting to happen" (Kipnis 103). "The scandal of fatness," as Kipnis suggests,

52 In "She's a Joke: Fat vs. Fun in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*" (Szatanik 2007) I discuss the apparently comical properties of the fat female body with the use of the feminist theories of humor.
53 I examined the connection between fat and waste in my article "Big Fat Waste. Woman's Fat as Cultural Refuse" (Szatanik 2008), illustrating my theoretical proposition with an interpretation of Janine Antoni's installation titled *Gnaw*.
54 "Tyranny of slenderness" is a term coined by Kim Chernin and adopted by Susan Bordo in her *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (1995).

> is its insult to those collective transformative fantasies, the affront of a body that dares to remain fat and untransformed. … Although there must be some disavowed level of awareness on the part of the public that to be fat is largely beyond individual control, at the same time the culture's deeply held belief is that the fat could change but have *chosen* not to. … The angry, contemptuous social reaction to the resistance of the fat to refashioning themselves is a testament to the very degree of our investment in the potential for change. (103–104; italics in the original)

In Kipnis's terms, feminist theorists and fat-activists have responded to the ideas expressed in the quotation above either by taking "the genetic 'born-that-way' line"—thus claiming that the fat Woman has been unjustly criticised for refusing to do what is clearly beyond her capabilities—or by taking the "'choosing to be queer' position" (Kipnis 106), and thus suggesting that the fat body is a body in (conscious) protest. Woman who *stays* fat and refuses to conform to the social image of the proper (thin) Woman is interpreted as a threat to the patriarchal order. One who diets, on the other hand, conforms to this very order. Importantly, dieting—though offered as the only form of redemption—"is itself a precarious, unstable, self-defeating state for the body to be in—a reality that the 'disordered' cognitions of bulimics and anorexics are confronting all too clearly and painfully" (Bordo 1995: 59). Dieting, in other words—as Naomi Wolf asserts—keeps women pre-occupied with their appearance, physically weak and politically harmless. Woman on a diet is Woman disarmed; Woman disarmed, in turn, constitutes the groundwork for the patriarchal order. In Suzie Orbach's phrasing, therefore, fat may be viewed as a "symbolic rejection of the limitations of women's role" and

> a response to many oppressive manifestations of a sexist culture. Fat is a way of saying "no" to powerlessness and self-denial, to a limiting sexual expression which demands that females look and act a certain way, and to an image of womanhood that defines a specific social role. Fat offends Western ideals of female beauty and, as such, every "overweight" woman creates a crack in the popular culture's ability to make us mere products. (21)

At the same time, it is clear that the fat female body cannot really be assigned to the simplified either-or readings. On the level of symbolic interpretation, the fat female body can be seen as *both*, the sign of rebellion against the demands of Western culture, and the product of these demands (as fat women often binge on food *because* they feel

the overwhelming pressure of the cultural norms of beauty). “[T]he coexistence of anorexia and obesity”—writes Bordo—“reveals the instability of the contemporary personality construction, the difficulty of finding homeostasis between the producer and the consumer sides of the self. … Both are rooted in the same consumer-culture construction of desire as overwhelming and overtaking the self” (1995: 201). The fat female body represents “an extreme capacity to capitulate to desire” (1995: 201) which “by [its] very nature [is] excessive, irrational, threatening to erupt and challenge the patriarchal order” (1995: 206). The fat body is rebellious in that it symbolises losing control, and losing oneself—its contours are growing, the body boundaries are transgressed. In this, the fat body again becomes a site of contradiction: its transgressive properties may be scary, but they also carry a potential for a change. In line with the contradictory readings of the fat female body, Lorna Crozier’s poem “The Fat Lady’s Dance” features the eponymous fat lady who transforms from a passive victim into a fearless offender.

The first stanza of the poem reads:

> The fat lady can’t get out of bed.
> He has done it before, his idea of a joke.
> He has left her there and gone to work
> after he has watched each greasy egg
> slither down her throat, after he has made her
> swallow every wad of buttered bread. (88)

As the passage makes clear, the fat lady’s immobility is a result of deliberate operations of the “he” of the poem, who stuffs her with food first, and then leaves her powerless and passive. The relationship between the two is undoubtedly hierarchical—she is the symbol of powerlessness and he is a representation of power. Consuming food—greasy, fattening, forbidden—is an element of a game that he devised. Although uncontrollable desires and hungers are traditionally ascribed to the female body, Crozier’s fat lady, as described in the first stanza, lacks the control that she could lose. She is the fat lady not because she yields to temptation or follows her appetite, but because *he* finds pleasure in her complete submissiveness. Therefore, the relationship is reminiscent of one of the forms of feederism—a sexual fetish which may involve “force-feeding and bondage and is undertaken with the intention of fattening up the feedee to the point of immobility

and total dependence."[55] Thus understood, feederism corresponds to the ambiguous readings of fat Woman's sexuality—on the one hand, construed as unattractive and repulsive, she is perceived as unsexy, and hence asexual. On the other hand, for the very same reason that she escapes the traditional definitions of "sexy," she is construed as perverse, or pornographic. If she is sexual, it has to be "abnormal" sexuality. More importantly, the fat lady's body is a plane over which the man can exercise power, maintaining the hierarchical division of gender roles—she is stuck in bed (the private sphere of pleasure and rest) while he—the active agent—goes out to work. The first stanza, therefore, introduces the fat Woman as the fruit of the patriarchal definition of femininity—she is, after all, a lady.

"[T]he kind of perception human beings have of their bodies, the image they hold of them, is peculiarly involved in shame" (Lynd 137). In any shame-free perception "[the] inescapable intimacy with one's own body is a two-way interchange, an interaction of external and internal" (137). Noticeably, however, the fat lady's body—simultaneously judged not (good) enough and excessive, veiled in fat, yet overexposed, feasting on the negative images of itself—is, necessarily, a shamed body. Hence, what the fat lady is fed with apart from food are also the "external," cultural meanings of "fat": these "obsessive [messages which get] shoved down [women's] throats like a probing insistent finger. Thin = healthy at any cost, vigilant, self-disciplined, morally superior; fat = lazy, trash, morally corrupt, capitalistic, greedy, desperate, disgusting, diseased, 'American'" (Polack 18). As the fat lady is incapacitated and bloated with the negative depictions of herself, her body image is not a fruit of any free interchange or interaction. The "internal" ceases to function as a filter or barrier, as fat often "carries with it an enormous amount of *self*-disgust, loathing and shame" (Orbach 29). Typically, "these feelings arouse from the experience of being out of control around food," but, evidently, the lack of "control around food" translates into the lack of control in general. Resultantly, "when [the fat lady] hears the door close, she snivels, / [and] starts to cry as she always does" (88).

"Something strange begins to happen," however, when "somewhere under the globes of flesh / [the fat lady] feels a motion, a memory of movement":

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55 World Wide Web <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Feederism> (19.02.2011).

The fat lady thinks of feet.
She stops crying,
opens her mouth, sucks in all
the rage her belly can hold.
With a massive heave-ho she rolls
off the bed to the floor and goes on rolling. (88)

The fat lady fights her way through a doorframe and a wall, and "rolls down the street." Uncontrollable in her infuriated rolling, she disturbs the composure of the town: she "caroms off a bus, ... her flesh / slaps the pavement, ... she fells trees, ... bursts hydrants, [and] rolls ... up to the door of his office" (89). And then

with one great yell, one mighty heave
she rolls the building flat
then rises up on jiggling legs
and shaking the brick dust off her nightgown
she pirouettes out of town. (89)

What allows the fat lady to have her revenge, is a shift from the cultural expectations to the actual experience of her fat body: unable to "gracefully float," the fat lady has to find her own, *curved* way of moving. A deviation from the negative meanings commonly attached to "fat"—through the actual, positive experience of fatness—is advocated as a strategy of de-shaming of the fat female body by a number of feminist writers and fat activists. As they assert, the reclaiming of the fat body is possible when the fat ladies "start living through [their bodies] as opposed to being locked in [their heads]" (Dhanani 34). It is getting in touch with her fat body that allows, hence, the heroine of Dhanani's account to reformulate the fat body in the following way:

> I have decided to reframe all of the fat people that I have grown up with: my aunts, grandmother and mother .... These people are not incredible creative spirits in spite of their weight "problems," but their spirit is part and parcel with their fat. In my room, I keep a statue of the Buddha with his jolly face and huge open round belly. I do this to remind myself that my belly is my vessel to enlightenment. I have learned that being fat, as much as I have felt the pain and the shame of it, has also been one of the greatest gifts that I have been given. I feel like I am wise and intuitive because of this fat, and that maybe I have even been able to more freely explore my sexuality because of my fat." (35–36)

Similarly, Evelyn Lau's *Inside Out: Reflections on a Life So Far* narrates the significant process of re-defining fat:

> I hated the unaccustomed thickness of my body, yet I took a secret, perverse pride in the space I was filling up, the air I was pushing aside in the family home in order to make room for myself. I looked in scorn upon my mother, who wore tiny pink sweaters with pearl buttons, size XS. Her legs were like bleached sticks, the skin white and crêpey; her hipbones jutted visibly beneath her skirts, and she reminded me of a starving cow . . . . (77)

The fat body, therefore—although still perceived as "unaccustomedly thick"—is, in Lau's account, translated into big, noticeable, hence a powerful one. The big size becomes an attribute of potency, while thinness comes to signify weakness and malady. Most obviously, the fat lady can only pride on greatness if she looks beyond the patriarchal perception of genders; greatness, after all—as Nathanson claims—*is* a "natural" source of pride. In the contemporary Western culture "big size" already has positive connotations; the feminist strategy is to claim them. Thus, a shameless experience of the power of fat leads beyond its negative definitions: Lorna Crozier's "Fat Lady" heads somewhere "out of town."

In its focus on transformation and transgression, Crozier's poem advocates "reconstructing subjectivity" (Bordo 1995: 284), which, admittedly, carries certain risks. In Susan Bordo's view, "when we give expression . . . to those aspects of our identity forged in marginality, we may be seen as 'spectacle'" (1995: 284). Correspondingly, Mary Russo suggests that "making a spectacle out of oneself [seems] a specifically feminine danger," namely, one of exposure:

> Men, I learned somewhat later in life, "exposed themselves," but that operation was quite deliberate and circumscribed. For a woman, making a spectacle out of herself had more to do with a kind of inadvertency and loss of boundaries: the possessors of large, aging, and dimpled thighs displayed at the public beach, of overly rouged cheeks, of a voice shrill in laughter, or of a sliding bra strap—a loose, dingy bra strap especially—were at once caught out by fate and blameworthy. It was my impression that these women had done something wrong, had stepped, as it were, into the limelight out of turn—too young or too old, too early or too late—and yet anyone, any *woman*, could make a spectacle out of herself if she was not careful. (318; italics in the original)

Exposure, therefore, is shameful when it is accidental (i.e., when it happens to Woman), not when it is consciously attained. As Russo observes, Woman is always in danger of becoming shamefully visible: for the fat Woman, (in)visibility might be particularly problematic. Shame, size and visibility are inextricably linked: the experience of shame—often described as one of becoming too noticeable and hence too "big"—triggers a profound wish to disappear, to become smaller, which is why, as one might speculate, the fat Woman (taught that she is big/bad) is exceptionally vulnerable to shame.

Further in her article Russo analyses the "feminine spectacle" with the use of Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of the grotesque/carnivalesque body, which the fat female body has been construed to represent in the contemporary culture of the West. These representations, on the one hand, have served the purpose of further *othering* of Woman (e.g. by means of presenting her as unruly and uncontrollable, and her body as strangely unclosed, leaking, and permeating/permeable). On the other hand, however, as Natalie Davis observes,

> [t]he image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest. Play with an unruly woman is partly a chance for temporary release from the traditional and stable hierarchy; but it is also part of the conflict over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within society. (qtd. in Russo 321)

"The figure of the female transgressor as public spectacle is . . . powerfully resonant" (Russo 323). Indeed, the fat lady's rolling transforms her (from a lady) into a "booming parade" and a "one piece band" (89) that children follow and dogs bark at. In her fight, the fat lady becomes shamelessly visible—in contrast to her passive invisibility related in the first stanza of the poem. Shameless, she is powerful enough to quit the space to which she had been ascribed for too long and leave it behind, crushed.

toward a shame-less body

> *Shifting the relations of embodiment gives fat women a way to stop living their bodies as the "before" picture and to begin to have a body thought valuable in the present.*
>
> *Le'a Kent "Fighting Abjection. Representing Fat Women" (131)*

> *. . . scholars, nonacademic intellectuals, activists, and lay people alike can begin creating and regulating a new social reality through the use of words—spoken as well as written.*
>
> *Kathleen LeBesco "Queering Fat Bodies/Politics" (76)*

In Lorna Crozier's "The Fat Lady's Dance" the shamed, fat Woman finds her way to the (presumably) shame-free space. Her experience, and subsequent self-conscious exposure followed by destruction eventually lead her "out of town," which, in the poem, is the realm of the "he." Yet, before she pirouettes to an apparent margin, she first ravages the centre: the destruction appears to be quite literal, i.e., oriented toward specific actions and involving the modification of one's behaviour. It corresponds to the postulates brought forth by a number of activists as well as scholars representing the disciplines of psychology or feminist studies. Texts by members of various size-acceptance movements, specifically, express their anger at the dominant, pejorative interpretations of the fat body and urge the fat to rebel. In her essay titled "Angry Naked Fat Woman," for example, Miss Mariko Tamaki imagines a means of revenge which is similar to that resorted to by Crozier's Fat Lady:

> I have a plan. I'll take my naked body to the streets in protest. I'll pummel the public with what it insists on denying and avoiding: tons of mountainous, sexy flesh. I'll bare my bare boobs and squish my sweaty bum at strangers. I'll squeak against every surface available and leave strange marks to embarrass the public. I'll gather an army of fat angry naked soldiers and we'll take to the streets. (26)

In the same vein, Naomi Wolf urges women to "be shameless. Be greedy. Pursue pleasure. Avoid pain. Wear and touch and eat and drink what we feel like" (291). Such direct advice is also commonly given to women in therapy, or to those who belong to various support groups. Even though the talk of discovering one's true self, or regaining a sense of wholeness to oneself, appears unfit for any academic discussion (as is based on an essentalist assumption that there is a "true self"), it has been successful in de-shaming women in Western culture. At the same time, however, the possibility of redefining the cultural meanings of fat has been the subject of highly theoretical analyses.

In her "Queering Fat Bodies/Politics," for instance, Kathleen LeBesco uses theoretical concepts proposed by Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz to talk about reinscribing, resignifying, and reconstituting fat identity. She argues, for instance, that "it is possible to theorize (or rather to re-theorize) the signs of fatness, rendering fat intelligible socially and culturally" (77). The transformation of the cultural understanding of fatness depends on the redefinition of the concept of the body as such: "Where one body…takes on the function of model or ideal, the human body, for all other types of body, its domination may be undermined through a defiant affirmation of a multiplicity, a field of differences, or other kinds of bodies and subjectivities" (qtd. in LeBesco 78). Another strategy—employed by Susan Bordo and Naomi Wolf—is to consider the body as a text of Western culture, and to examine how social "codes, norms, ideals, and signs present themselves narratively on culturally invisible [or overly exposed] fat bodies" (LeBesco 79). Most importantly, however, as the title of LeBesco's article makes clear, the author proposes that the fat female body be queered, or, in other words, examined "through the lens of queer theory" (80). As I emphasised earlier, such a reading allows the concepts of transformation and transgression to come to the fore, and it opens up the space for the exploration of subjectivity in its relation to playfulness and performativity. Lorna Crozier's "The Fat Lady's Dance," accordingly, points to practical/theoretical sphere where the Fat Lady can, shame-lessly, "come out, plumply" (Bryan 45).

3.5. kissing and telling: a résumé

I have to take the risk of offending, angering some of my readers. I have to name the places that, for me, have gone unnamed too long. Find the words. Speak the flesh. Kiss and tell *with anger, grace, humour and sometimes, love.*

Lorna Crozier "Speaking the Flesh" (94)

The driving force behind Crozier's poetry—which the seven poems analysed in this chapter evidence—is the desire to "turn what's been silent into language, whether it's been animal or female or the silence of lost places" (Crozier qtd. in Hunter x). In many of her works, including her confessional essay on alcohol addiction entitled "Breathing Under Ice" (2006), the silent that is being verbalised is not only deeply personal but also unquestionably shameful. To kiss and *tell*, one has to resist shame, as "resistance is often the place where poetry starts" (Crozier 2005: 56).

Shame seems particularly difficult to write, but writing as such may also be perceived as a shame-ful act—"to care intensely about what you are writing places the body within the ambit of the shameful: sheer disappointment in the self amplifies to a painful level" (Probyn 131). The process of writing a text can evoke the shame of not being able to make "the writing equal to the subject being written about" (Probyn 131), of failing to interest your readers, and of having readers evaluate your work. Such shame is likely triggered, to repeat the obvious, in feminist authors who write against the dominant culture (with its institutions of power, traditions, literary canons and its readership). They write, to use a metaphor reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's "angel in the house," with "a Grinch, a gremlin, a gnome on [their] shoulder[s]—a little voice that pipes up in their ears every time they put pen to paper—*should you?—is it correct?—how will this be evaluated?—how many friends will you lose?*" (Hollingsworth 142).

The seven of Crozier's poems I discussed in this chapter—deliberately feminist and insubordinate—transgress these shameful, silencing impulses. "Original Sin" and "What I Gave You Truly," which I interpreted in the first subchapter, subvert the authority of the Biblical Cre-

ation Myth and "are part of a long and venerable tradition of feminist revisions of the Bible, paying homage to the female figures whose voices are so seldom heard in Scripture" (Hunter x). "A Poem For Sigmund" and "Tales for Virgins" undermine the authority of dominant theories of sex and gender and thus mock some of the most sacred patriarchal truths. "Alice" and "Sometimes My Body Leaves Me" unveil the disquietingly complex relationship between Woman to castigate the Western "ocular regime." Finally, "The Fat Lady's Dance" ridicules the cultural images of the fat female body, simultaneously confronting the Beauty Myth dominant in culture of the West.

"Writing against," unlike "writing along," not only entails feeling shame, but, more importantly, ultimately requires that shame be conquered. As Elspeth Probyn remarks, "shame forces us to reflect continually on the implications of our writing" (131–132), on how writing relates to living, on "how we are related to history and how we wish to live in the present" (Probyn 162). Consequently, one of the main assumptions of the analytical chapter of this book was that Crozier's poetic subversions translate into strategies of de-shaming Woman, which translate into a lived experience of women in Western culture.

C N O C L &

toward a revision of cultural practice?

> ... shame is produced out of the clashing of mind and body, resulting in new acts of subjectivity consubstantial with the words in which they are expressed.
>
> Elspeth Probyn, *Blush* (147)

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If one accepts the basic tenets of the theory underlying the argument of the present book, it becomes clear why, in order to efficiently affect "physiology" and "politics" alike, feminist de-shaming strategies must, inevitably, target discourse. It is, in fact, the subversion of the dominant patriarchal metanarratives of the West, achieved by directing the power of androcentric language (and thereto attributed values) against itself, that allows Woman to transgress the limitations of the cultural legacy of shame. Furthermore, if the element linking the "physiological" and "political" faces of shame is the reality-making language, then such a transgression will likely affect the female body *as well as* the social and political discourses policing femininity. Yet, bearing in mind the achievements of feminist, queer or gender studies to date, such observations alone would not be particularly revelatory if not for the fact that the productivity of the theory proposed in the second chapter of this book seems to lie in its methodological consistency. Methodologically sound, it offers a unique point of view, in which it is not only possible to perceive discursive de-shaming acts as *strategies*, but, more importantly, as strategies directly related to psychological mechanisms responsible for the workings of the shame affect. Thus, transplanting shame-oriented culture studies onto the fundament of a gendered revision of shame psychology results in the re-framing of both.

Consequently, the proposed theory of Woman's shame provides psychologically-oriented feminist studies with a disciplined perspective. The mechanisms of shame are not accidental, and thus discourses concerning Woman's self—whether centred on unconscious defence mechanisms resulting in suppression of shame-related traumas or on self-conscious transgressive acts oriented towards self-empowerment through de-shaming—receive a dimension which may simultaneously warrant their productivity within the public space and a set of efficient tools for the analysis of cultural texts, including texts of literature. These two areas, needless to say, remain in a dynamic relation; shedding light upon each other, revisions of texts eventually impact the shape of the public discourse and, conversely, the growing awareness calls new texts and new interpretations of the canon into existence.

The proposed analyses of Lorna Crozier's poetry, which inspired the argument of the present book in the first place, illustrate the applicability of the theory. Albeit methodologically grounded in the findings of androcentric shame psychology (e.g. of Michæl Lewis's reading of the Biblical origins of shame and the ensuing problems of shame-

determined socialisation, Donald L. Nathanson's remarks upon the "classical" theories relating shame to genital organs, Léon Wurmser's idea of "Look-at-ness" and Benjamin Kilborne's study on shame and appearance), the four case studies above depart from the analytical paradigm shame psychologists propose. Translated into a modern theoretical language—one which recognises not only the complexities inscribed in the concept of Woman, but also the variety of ways in which this concept is affiliated with shame, their observations concerning the mechanisms of the affect became re-framed to account for their most prominent omission: the psychological consequences of the cultural values attributed to the construct of "Woman."

Emphasising the influence of Western culture on the formation of Woman's subjectivity, and in light of the debate concerning shaming as a cultural strategy aimed at keeping the existing power relations intact, the feminist theory of shame allowed me to go beyond the limitations of the discourses of clinical therapy and to demonstrate that the central motifs of Lorna Crozier's poetry lend themselves to being analysed in terms of being consistently construed as an effective countermeasure against the dominance of the paradigm in which Woman is shamed to fit patriarchal definitions. What is more, where shame psychologists have mostly focused on negative aspects of the affect and remained content with the claim that the detrimental effects of the experience of shame should be overcome by means of positive reinforcement, my analyses demonstrate the *transgressive* potential of shame, which I discussed in light of queer theory and the equally ex-centric notion of Canadianness. In Crozier's poetry, "transgression" itself is transgressed, rendering shame an open category, a queer stimulus for a transformation beginning in the liminal space yawning abysmally where binarities underlying the traditional patriarchal metanarratives have collapsed.

Crozier's strategies apply to the key cultural discourses responsible for the perpetuation of Woman's shame: deconstructing the fundamental oppositions of the basic myth of creation, she prepares ground for the disempowerment of the authoritarian voices of the "classical" theoreticians of the psychology of Woman, granted to androcentric scholarship and science by the authority of the Judeo-Christian metanarrative. Depriving "institutionalised truth" of its momentum, she paves the path towards subverting the authority of the masculine gaze, which she effectively disempowers with a shameless counter-gaze,

thus questioning the elementary foundation of the beauty myth, immediately translatable into the area beyond discourse: into physiological body, often shamed into starvation, pain of surgery, or death.

Crozier's strategies, analysed within the framework of the proposed theory of Woman's shame, tackle shame as a cultural phenomenon, yet translate directly onto the bodily space: de-shaming Woman, Crozier de-shames women, offering a point of departure for a therapy based on transforming individual intuitions into awareness of the essential ungroundedness of shaming discourses. The once perplexingly (un)framed composition of Woman becomes redefined: Woman becomes *transgressively* (un)framed, and thus shamelessly empowered.

The congruity of their findings concerning the mechanisms of shame notwithstanding, strategies of de-shaming Woman advanced by shame psychologists are, evidently, incongruous with those possible to consistently theorise on the basis of the bidirectional re-framing of the shame-oriented disciplines of my interest. More importantly, they are incongruent with the strategies demonstrably in-forming Lorna Crozier's poems. Although keyed to psychological mechanisms of shame, feminist de-shaming strategies rely on resisting and subverting the authority of patriarchal orders. Such resistance is always problematic, because feminist narratives of transgression are not created outside of the patriarchal framework: yet, self-consciously, it is *from within* this framework that they attempt to go *trans* or *across* it; they often begin with presenting "descriptions of domination that might be starting points for questioning the rhetoric and structure of power" (Bernstein 39). As such, they do not necessarily aim to make (common) sense: instead, they point to such a transgressive space in which shame ceases to be one of the regularised parameters of femininity.

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S T R S Z E

od-wstydzona

dépasser la honte

résumé

zuzanna szatanik

od-wstydzona
„wykroczenie" jako feministyczna strategia: przypadek poezji lorny crozier

(streszczenie/summary in polish)

Niniejsza książka poświęcona jest strategiom wykraczania poza doświadczenie wstydu, które – jak wykazuje autorka – stanowi nieodłączny komponent wytworzonego przez kulturę zachodnią konstruktu „kobiety". Rozważania teoretyczne, dotyczące wstydu jako wykorzystywanego przez dyskursy androcentryczne zjawiska kulturowego, autorka ilustruje swoimi analizami wybranych wierszy współczesnej kanadyjskiej poetki Lorny Crozier. Część teoretyczna pracy lokuje się więc na pograniczu studiów feministycznych i psychologicznych studiów nad afektem (tzw. psychologii wstydu). Trzeci z obecnych w pracy teoretycznych dyskursów wywodzi się z pojęcia „kanadyjskości", czy też kanadyjskiej tożsamości, przez wielu badaczy łączonego również z teorią *queer*.

W skład części teoretycznej książki wchodzą dwa rozdziały. W pierwszym analizowane są najważniejsze pozycje z dziedziny psychologii wstydu oraz ukazana jest nieobecność „kobiety" w owych opracowaniach. Drugi rozdział koncentruje się na tych tekstach teoretycznych z dziedziny teorii feminizmu i *gender studies*, w których temat wstydu został wyraźnie powiązany z kobiecością. Zasadniczym celem tej części jest przełożenie psychologicznej teorii wstydu (wypracowanej przez takich badaczy, jak Silvan Tomkins, Gershen Kaufman, Michæl Lewis, Donald L. Nathanson, Stephen Pattison i Léon Wurmser) na język współczesnego feminizmu i zaproponowanie swoistej „feministycznej teorii wstydu". Teoria ta stanowi podstawę do wypracowania takich narzędzi interpretacji tekstu, które z jednej strony opierają się na badaniach psychologicznych, a z drugiej uwzględniają specyfikę obiektu badawczych zainteresowań autorki: kobiety jako uogólnionego konstruktu kulturowego. Kobiecy wstyd – afekt mający odmienne cechy niż inne rodzaje wstydu – okazuje się zjawiskiem wyjaśniającym wiele elementów dyskursywnych i pozadyskursywnych, jakie determinują relację kobiecości do kultury zachodniej, wobec czego niniejsza

propozycja teoretyczna może stanowić fundament nowego kierunku w badaniach feministycznych.

Trzeci, analityczny rozdział pracy koncentruje się na strategiach wykraczania poza kobiecy wstyd – czyli „odwstydzania" kobiety – które wywodzą się z teorii oraz literatury feministycznej i obecne są w poezji Crozier. Cechą wspólną owych feministycznych technik odwstydzania jest kwestionowanie kulturowych „prawd" dotyczących kobiecości i kobiecego ciała. Tematem trzech omawianych w pracy wierszy są te przedstawienia kobiety, które w kulturze patriarchalnej funkcjonują jako szczególnie *wstydliwe*. Owe wizerunki to biblijna Ewa (wiersze pt. *Original Sin* i *What I Gave You Truly*), oraz Gruba Pani (*The Fat Lady's Dance*). Pozostałe cztery analizy (wierszy zatytułowanzch *Alice*, *Sometimes My Body Leaves Me*, *Poem for Sigmund* i *Tales for Virgins*) prezentują „normalną" kobiecość jako rzekome źródło wstydu.

Zawarte w rozdziałach interpretacyjnych rozważania, które ilustrują zastosowanie pojęcia kobiecego wstydu w praktyce analitycznej, prowadzą do konkluzji o możliwej zmianie istniejących teorii feministycznych lub uzupełnieniu ich o stanowisko nowe. Feministyczna teoria wstydu, której zręby buduje niniejsza praca, stanowi propozycję nieco innego niż dotąd spojrzenia na główny obiekt badań studiów feministycznych – kobietę i relacje, w jakie wchodzi ona we współczesnym świecie. Zaproponowane interpretacje siedmiu wierszy Lorny Crozier są jednocześnie świadectwem zachodzących już teraz kulturowych zmian w postrzeganiu kobiety, prowadzących do wytworzenia takiej transgresyjnej przestrzeni, w której kobiecy wstyd przestaje być jednym ze stałych parametrów kobiecości.

zuzanna szatanik

dépasser la honte.
stratégies feministes de transgression : la cas de la poésie de lorna crozier

(résumé/summary in french)

Ce livre est consacré à des stratégies de dépassement de l'expérience de la honte qui est, selon l'auteure, une partie inhérente à la construction « femme » dans la culture occidentale. Le contenu théorique de ce travail, qui porte sur la honte en tant que phénomène culturel propre aux discours androcentriques, est illustré par l'analyse des poèmes choisis de la poète canadienne contemporaine Lorna Crozier. La partie théorique aborde donc les thèmes proches des études féministes et des recherches psychologiques sur l'affect (psychologie de la honte). Ces deux discours sont traversés dans ce travail par le discours sur la « canadianité » voire l'identité canadienne que beaucoup de chercheurs et chercheuses analysent dans le cadre de la théorie *queer*.

La partie théorique se compose de deux chapitres. Le premier porte sur les travaux les plus importants dans le domaine de la psychologie de la honte et montre que « la femme » y est absente. Le deuxième chapitre se concentre sur les textes théoriques du féminisme et des *gender studies*, qui se sont déjà proposés d'analyser la notion de honte par rapport à la féminité. L'objectif de la partie théorique est de rapporter la théorie psychologique de la honte, élaborée par des chercheurs comme Silvan Tomkins, Gershen Kaufman, Michæl Lewis, Donald L. Nathanson, Stephen Pattison et Léon Wurmser, au discours féministe contemporain, et par conséquent de proposer une théorie féministe de la honte. Celle-ci permet d'élaborer les outils d'interprétation du texte qui sont basés sur les études psychologiques, mais qui tiennent également compte de la spécificité de l'objet d'étude qui intéresse l'auteure : femme générique. La honte féminine, affect qui est bien différent d'autres types de honte, est un phénomène qui explique de nombreux éléments discursifs et adiscursifs qui composent la relation féminité – culture occidentale, et peut donner des fondements à une nouvelle piste de recherches féministes.

Le troisième chapitre est analytique et se concentre sur des stratégies de dépassement de la honte féminine qui sont propres à la théorie et littératures féminines et qu'on peut retrouver dans la poésie de Crozier. En principe, ces techniques de dépassement de la honte consistent à remettre en question les « vérités » culturelles pour ce qui est de la féminité et du corps féminin. Trois poèmes analysés dans le livre portent sur les représentations de la femme qui sont particulièrement *honteuses* dans la culture patriarcale : Ève biblique (« Original Sin » et « What I Gave You Truly ») et la Grosse Madame (« The Fat Lady's Dance »). Quatres analyses (consacrées aux poèmes « Alice », « Sometimes My Body Leaves Me », « Poem for Sigmund » et « Tales for Virgins ») présentent la féminité *normale* comme la présumée source de la honte.

Les chapitres interprétatives, qui mettent en application la notion de honte féminine abordée dans la partie analytique, arrivent à la conclusion qu'il est possible de changer ou compléter les approches féministes existantes. La théorie de la honte féminine qui est à la base de ce livre propose une autre manière de voir la femme en tant qu'objet des études féministes et les relations qu'elle entretient dans le monde contemporain. Les sept interprétations des poèmes de Lorna Crozier témoignent des changements culturels pour ce qui est de la perception de la femme, ces changements se situant dans un espace transgressif où la honte n'est plus l'un des apanages permanents de la féminité.

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR: **Krystian Wojcieszuk**

COVER DESIGN: **Karolina Wojdała**
On the cover: “De-shamed” by Karolina Wojdała

LAYOUT DESIGN: **Paweł Jędrzejko and Zuzanna Szatanik**
Fonts used: Apolonia (by Tomasz Wełna)
and Adobe Myriad Pro (by Robert Slimbach and Carol Twombly)

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ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 978-83-226-2079-3

PUBLISHER
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
ul. Bankowa 12B
40–007 Katowice, Poland
www.wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl
e-mail: wydawus@us.edu.pl

First impression. Printed sheets: 12.0. Publishing sheets: 11.0
Paper: Alto 90 g/m^2, vol. 1,5 Price: 18 zł (+ VAT)

Printing and binding:
PPHU TOTEM s.c. M. Rejnowski, J. Zamiara
ul. Jacewska 89, 88–100 Inowrocław, Poland

De-shamed

"Shame is a common sensation. An unpleasant contraction felt when one is caught red-handed, shame is manifest on a blushing face. It makes one feel both exorbitantly aware of *being* and, at the same time, desperate *not to be*: to disappear or hide. As such, it is an antithetic emotion, described in terms of freezing, withdrawal or paralysis, as well as burning, aggrandisement or transgression. Because of the fact that shame is felt *in* and *on* the body, and, at the same time, breaches the body's limits, it makes one feel too large or too small, both indiscernible and overexposed. A shamed person is therefore perplexingly (un)framed. Indeed, the angst inscribed in the experience of shame is that of "losing face": the fundamental "(Who) am I?" becomes inevitable. In this book, the "I" whose identity is thus unfixed is gendered feminine."

(From the "Introduction")

"In her *De-shamed. Feminist Strategies of Transgression: The Case of Lorna Crozier's Poetry*, Zuzanna Szatanik addresses the unsettling subject of Woman's shame, understood as a cultural and psychological phenomenon as well as a literary motif: a subject both important and rarely raised by Polish and international academics alike. The complex, eclectic, methodology adopted by the Author deserves particular credit. Departing from existing psychological and psychotherapeutic studies of shame, burdened by their masculinist, or even misogynist, bias, Szatanik first explores questions concerning the relationship between shame and Woman. Subsequently, she focuses upon discursive remedial strategies of transcending Woman's shame in the culture of the West, which she then illustrates in her interpretations of seven poems by the contemporary Canadian poet, Lorna Crozier. To this end, she employs feminist and queer theories, viewed as necessary complements to the existing psychological studies of shame. These approaches, critically processed are then linked to relevant issues within the field of Canadian studies. The end result is a competent, multidirectional, but at the same time cogent study of Woman's shame in the context of transgressive de-shaming strategies employed in literary texts."

(From the review by Agnieszka Rzepa,
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)

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ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 978-83-226-2079-3
PRICE: 18 zl (+VAT)