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ANTIGONE'S TRAGIC 'SISTERS' IN SYLVIA PLATH'S *THE BELL JAR* AND H.D.'S *HER*

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ABSTRACT

This Ph.D. dissertation examines Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Hilda Doolittle's *Her*, by setting them against Sophocles' *Antigone*. Like Antigone, who is condemned to die, buried alive outside the *polis*, Thebes, for having defied Creon's decree to leave Polyneices' body unburied, Esther and Hermione, the heroines, are both 'punished' for defying patriarchal hegemony in their own allegorical *polis*. Punishment takes the form of criminalization, in the case of Antigone, and medicalization, in the case of Esther and Hermione. Esther Greenwood's resistance surfaces as a physical symptom, 'madness', precisely because hegemony is internalized by her, as subject, while it is, at the same time, fought against. Hermione Gart's anti-gender stance also surfaces as a physical symptom, "dementia" as she calls it, on this account, too, even if, till the very end of the novel, it is combated. Their attempts to express dissent and engraft it into a narrative of resistance to gender ideology through their writing and sexuality afford us the 'tools' to explore resistant female subjectivities in the two *romans-à-clef* in connection with how their acting dissident, or dissident '*prattein*', is finally neutralized and co-opted into the narrative of patriarchal hegemony mainly because hegemony is internalized by the heroines, which reflects real life, too. Both Plath and H.D. are seen to embrace difference and fight for recognition of their right to dialectize away the pariahdom/femaleness duality through an effort "to speak as conscious pariahs, as rebellious ones," and in so doing to "escape from their predetermination" (Didier 348). It seems true, however, that, as *Antigone* teaches us, any attempt to undermine the dominant 'narrative' seems ineffective since resistance subjects the resisters to 'othering', with Esther's and Hermione's dissent being medicalized and co-opted by their allegorical *polis*. To this effect, the allegorical *polis* becomes the conceptual space afforded to the two heroines, who, along with most women, have little, if any at all, choice in the eyes of the hegemonic patriarchal culture.

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would have happened. I could go on describing how they have been standing by me with their network of support and love but words may fail me.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis Statement

By setting *The Bell Jar* and *Her* against Sophocles' *Antigone*, this Ph.D. dissertation re-visits Sylvia Plath's and Hilda Doolittle's *romans-à-clef*, to argue that Esther Greenwood and Hermione Gart, their two heroines, each becomes the Antigone of their times. Like Antigone, who is condemned to die entombed outside the *polis* --Thebes -- for having defied Creon's decree to leave Polyneices's body unburied, Esther and Hermione are both condemned to 'die' in the 'sepulchers' of the paradox of becoming icons for their generations and the generations to come while, at the same time, being subjected to the punishment of gender-normative bias and doubt. They are punished for defying patriarchal hegemony in their own *polis* metaphor. Punishment takes the form of social 'othering'. It actually takes the form of criminalization, in the case of Antigone, and medicalization, in the case of Esther and Hermione. Esther Greenwood's resistance surfaces as a physical symptom, 'madness', precisely because hegemony is internalized by her, as subject, while it is, at the same time, fought against. Hermione Gart's anti-gender stance also surfaces as a physical symptom, "dementia" as she calls it, on this account, too, even if, till the very end of the novel, it is combated: "I am Her, Her, Her," cries Her Gart "in her dementia" (*Her* 3).

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther initially makes a remorseful observation that anticipates the ECT treatment that she must undergo to be relieved of her 'madness', namely the fact she is considered unsuitable for society. While commenting on the Rosenbergs, an American married couple sentenced to die in the electric chair for espionage in favor of the communist government of the Soviet Union, she proleptically says: "The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers… It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves" (*TBJ* 1).

Esther's words -- as Plath's fictional double—are, to that effect, prophetic of her suicidal tendencies. This does not mean that *The Bell Jar*, written in 1963, is merely another autobiographical novel, or that it should be read as the key to 'deciphering' Plath's suicide. On the contrary, it presents a number of contentious issues concerning Cold War rhetoric. At the same time, it brings to the fore how those controversial issues

become interdependent with gender, without a satisfactory answer, though. It shows Esther's 'madness' as a symptom of a society steeped in hypocrisy. It also sets out the contradictions that Plath confronts, the impossible and conflicting ideals of womanhood as well as the political treason, medicalized as madness, that betraying them is associated with in the 1950's U.S. For example, the moment Esther's career opportunities seem to dwindle, she experiences a sense of 'sinking' into a 'mire' of a role which she herself has not sought out but which has been imposed on her. The fact, though, that she does not do what is expected of her to qualify for her role as a woman results in her being viewed as a contemptible 'apostate', whose act of 'treason' is considered comparable to that of Ethel Rosenberg on the grounds that she, too, refuses to do what is required of her to play her role as a mother and wife properly. As Esther realizes, being different can find no compassion in society. Rather the reverse is true: "'So,' I said, 'Isn't it awful about the Rosenbergs?' The Rosenbergs were to be electrocuted late that night. 'Yes!' Hilday said, and at last I felt I had touched a human string in the cat's cradle of her heart. 'It's awful such people should be alive.' . . . 'I'm so glad they're going to die'" (*TBJ* 96).

That Esther is aware of her 'otherness', that feeling of non-belonging, is one thing; that she identifies with those who are branded as 'othered', and therefore already do not belong (with the Rosenbergs, or, more precisely, with Ethel Rosenberg), and at whose expense the 'narrative of belonging' is constructed, is another. In doing so, Esther actually goes as far as to destroy the process by means of which she is treated as alien to the system, thus calling the very truthfulness of the discourse of the *status quo* into question. This realization, therefore, opens a 'crack' for exploring a new sort of narrative that accounts for what Judith Butler calls "the persistence of disidentification" crucial to "facilitat[ing] a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern" (*Bodie*s 4). However, even if understanding "which bodies matter" seems to be conducive to understanding the majority 'code' of the 'narrative of belonging', rebelling against it, or, in other words, attempting to call the *status quo* into question, involves abandoning the illusion of a sense of self that is both encouraged and erased by the power discourses.

Inasmuch as Plath's *The Bell Jar* foreshadows Esther's 'madness', H.D.'s *Her*mione,[1] written in 1926-27, is, by the same token, proleptical, too, in the beginning, as it tells of the eponymous heroine's yearning for the sea triggered by a painting that her mother, Eugenia, has painted. The sea poses the danger of drowning since water,

depicted as "green on green… out of another dimension," leads her to describe herself as snapping out of a "psychic terror" when looking at it -- an image certainly reminiscent of "dementia" (*Her* 6, 9). Unsurprisingly, her concluding remark, "being here one was nowhere, in time and space there was no such thing as anywhere" (207-8),[2] is but an admission anticipated by the fact that she confesses, in the beginning, that "such a painting must lead to certifiable insanity …" (6); she also concedes she is "certifiable or soon will be [insane]" (6), thus prefiguring the 'slackening' of the linear organizational structure of time and language later on in the narrative. This 'slackening', however, may be a symptom of "certifiable insanity" which, albeit strange, helps her to lay claim to a 'renewed' relation to the ambient world as well as to the self. It serves as a springboard to a form of more insightful self-understanding, to a kind of more perceptive self-knowledge. Hermione herself somehow admits to this process of potential transformation when she says: "I will creep back into the shell in order to emerge full-fledged… later …" (221). Using her insanity as gestating her hidden ability to bring herself to the world anew, with her "dementia" containing the aquatic element rather than the cone-shaped foliage of the pine tree canopy under which she finds herself, she cleanses herself of the impact "the world's division" has had on her. So, now re-animated, she seeks and offsets the dichotomy between self and 'other', as she most emotively recites while hinting at her love for Fayne: "O sister my sister O singing swallow, the world's division divideth us" (179).

As H.D. portrays the heroine choosing Fayne Rabb as her lover, thus reducing the effect of "her role as the male artist's [or, in other words, as George Lowndes'] passive muse by choosing a lesbian relationship," she creates discursive space "for herself as a woman artist" (Galtung 11-12). However, *Her* should not be read as merely H.D.'s narrative account of her early adult life with autobiographic elements. The novel exposes its heroine's attempt to wake other women from their deep patriarchal 'sleep' that drains her energy, too, both as subject and a writer. Her fictional exploration of the interior of herself through Hermione could be likened to the opening of the way through a forest "where she can work through … a tangle of bushes and bracken out to a clearing where … [she] may see clear again," as the author declares in *Palimpsest* (3). While through this image Hermione is seen to be confronted with her fluctuating psychic configurations in her attempt, firstly, to speak out as a woman and as a writer from within the patriarchy embodied both by her father and her mother and, secondly, to subvert the narrative of heterosexual romance in order to valorize a woman-oriented

relationship, the image in question also adumbrates the ambivalent and tortuous ground for these explorations (Benstock 335).

Although the sense of ambivalence coupled with the conflictual dynamics between the self within and the world without seem to be responsible for both heroines' fluctuating psychic configurations, the latter also seem to engender in them the need to transmute the tortuous ground of their psyche into artistic expression – in the form of writing. In this light, it would be rather facile to view both authors' autobiographical works as falling under the complacent concept based on the possible but also 'painless' correlation between insanity and artistic genius, thus momentarily eliminating the ideological dimension of 'madness' as a symptom of a patriarchal society that devalues women and socializes them to degrade themselves while, at the same time, attracting attention to a more 'romanticized' notion of 'madness' as actually underlying potential artistic creation. Even so, and despite the fact that what common parlance calls 'madness' (or, what in more specialized terminology is known as hypomania, or manic / depressive disorder, or melancholy etc.) is sometimes associated with creative thought and artistic temperament, the male 'ethic' of mental health that attributes normality to a woman reveling in being granted the right to live as her husband's 'proxy' still has the right to condemn a female individual's attempt to search for potency. In case she rejects or is ambivalent about her female role, she frightens both herself, as subject, who has internalized the male 'ethic' of mental normalcy, and society; a corollary to such an act of differentiation from the 'norm' leads to ostracism and self-destructiveness, or, at best, it is treated as a form of tolerated artistic talent, if expressed as such, subliminally associated with those who do not or are portrayed as not being able to belong to the social 'narrative' of the 'normal-woman' stereotype.

In both *The Bell Jar* and in *Her*, as suggested above, the heroines' dissent becomes acting dissident, dissident '*prattein*', which is somatized, with Esther being treated with ECT and with Hermione experiencing hysterical symptoms. Esther's non-conformity to the limitations of the American ruling social system of the 1950s is expressed as silence, with her being portrayed as inventing fake names and proceeding to failed suicide attempts. However, Esther is 'cured', ready to conform to the postwar American ruling culture, as implied initially in the novel, with the heroine "cut[ting] the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with" (*TBJ* 3). At the end of it, totally 'cured', she has internalized what is implied as being expected of her from the very beginning: being fit for the role of motherhood. Similarly, Hermione's resistance

to the unreconciled dichotomies that seem to plague her, such as heterosexual or homosexual relationship --George or Fayne, marriage or writing, or even math or art – embodied by Father Carl or Mother Eugenia, translates into her mental and emotional collapse. More specifically, her collapse is provoked by a succession of failures like that in math at college or her failed identifications with her brother Bertrand, further complicated by his marriage to Minnie, and ending in the failed relationship with her enigmatic lover, Fayne. Nevertheless, like Esther, Her Gart seems to be 'cured', too, since she quits seeking out any rigid definition of herself and no longer seeks to possess her 'coordinates', both literally and metaphorically: she finds herself misestimating the spatial relationship of her physical presence to the forest where she happens to be met by Jimmie Farrand who, bewilderedly aware he has not seen her earlier, says: "I didn't know you were here," to which her response is equivalent to a blunt refusal, immediately adding to it a tone of uncertainty as she delivers her almost perplexing afterthought: "not strictly speaking" (*Her* 228). To the extent she has tried to escape from the painful inner turmoil of negotiating homosexuality within the confines of the 'Gart sign', Gart being her surname and symbolic of the 'law' or patriarchy, and has created an excuse for her and her female readership by saying she prefers to marry herself in the end -- "this will be my marriage" (*Her* 234), her answer to Jimmie is but a confession to her self-resignation to a 'let-sleeping-dogs-lie' policy which she, however, lets it be thought of as actually 'working it out' with herself. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that she is on course for 'rehabilitation' and seems to be as 'cured' as her 'tragic sister', Esther.

As seen from above, the clash between Esther as well as Hermione and the hegemonic culture does not escape with impunity. It practically seals their fate. It subjects them to 'othering'. In the same way, twenty-five centuries ago, the clash between Antigone (the dissident) and Creon (the hegemon) seals her fate, too. She is treated as an outcast, as a *miasma*. Besides her defiance of Creon's edict, her face-to-face expressed defiance of his views calls his hegemony into question: "I did not think your proclamations so strong," which is Antigone's boldly articulated response to Creon's "And you dared anyway to transgress these laws" (*A* 453, 449).[3] Through the eyes of the Theban *polis* and its king, Antigone has perpetrated a crime and therefore she must be punished. Likewise, in the case of Esther and Hermione, their rejection of patriarchy's 'grip' on them is translated as incomprehensibility, on behalf of patriarchy,

which in turn finds expression in their being dismissed as insane. The 'law' enforces compliance on the heroines so that they will be 'cured'.

However, before delving into the 'mechanism' of 'cure' in the two novels, it should be to the benefit of our understanding of the two heroines' resistance to patriarchy to try to attempt to 'strip away' the stereotypical view that the latter is traceable to a primitive social organization in which authority is exercised by the patriarch in the family, which is no longer the case in modern societies. The opposite seems to be true. In light of this, patriarchy should not be construed as a mere historical phase nor a limited 'shorthand' for accounting for male dominance in different historical periods. Patriarchy as a system should be explored as a conceptual 'tool' by means of which not only can the persistence of male power domination be explored but the elusive 'play' of gendering men and women through their dialectical tensions can be investigated as well. Basically, in "Gender and Class Revisited: or, the Poverty of 'Patriarchy'," as Anna Pollert says, "the forms of collusion and consent, opposition and conflict … change of gendered relations, of articulation of different interests, of relations between experience, consciousness and ideologies" are also susceptible of exploration insofar as the term in question ceases to be synonymous with gender relations within various historical contexts, which is proven to be futile (655-59); instead it should be extracted from within its futile theoretical matrix and addressed as that which it seems to be, namely a field of a wider materialist analysis infused with feminism. In this field of analysis, the political aspects of the conflictual dynamics within the context of gender relations and its results in society, or the reflexes of these conflicts in the brains of the participants developed into the raw material for manipulating -- co-opting -- the course of further struggles and conflicts by the ones victorious in the conflicts and struggles constitute the differing forms of a superstructure. It should be noted here that even though the ultimate determining element of a 'materialist' conception of such a superstructure is the economic factor in the last instance, the differing forms of this superstructure all call for a form of 'materialism' that probes the 'depths' of conflict in relation to gendering in terms of a materiality of the ideological apparatus and practice of power that politicizes the necessity of gendering as a strategy of repression and of multiple forms of subjugation. In this light, patriarchy with gendering does not become a static property, but, on the contrary, it becomes a mutable dimension of experience and social relations conditioned by ideology, without the recognition of which there is

no room for change either for women or for men, which this dissertation wishes to actually bring to the fore.

It is this idea of ideology that this dissertation aims to highlight so as to corroborate the view that it is through ideology -- a range of social, cultural, and religious factors combined -- that the construction of a traditional masculinity is informed and acts in accordance with them. According to F. Engels, patriarchy "is the world historical defeat of the female sex" ("Engels on the Origin" 705). According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, patriarchy is a "hypothetical social system in which the father or a male elder has absolute authority over the family group; by extension, one or more men (as in a council) exert absolute authority over the community as a whole."[4] In addition, according to the same source, based on Darwin's theory of evolution, "19th-century scholars sought to form a theory of unilinear cultural evolution… [which] suggested that human social organization 'evolved' through a series of stages: animalistic sexual promiscuity … followed by matriarchy, which was in turn followed by patriarchy" (*Britannica*); nevertheless, modern scholars claim that "while power is often preferentially bestowed on one sex or the other, patriarchy is not the cultural universal it was once thought to be" (*Britannica*). Patriarchy, as a result, is "a form of political organization," as suggested above, which, according to Alda Facio, distributes "power unequally between men and women" in a way harmful to women[5] (8).

Updating and expanding the understanding of patriarchy, we could proceed to define it as being a social construction that does not exclusively characterize ancient civilizations, though. It is materially more than a mere sequel to matriarchy whose roots were in the ancient past. It actually goes beyond "the unequal distribution of power between men and women," and it is, *grosso modo*, "an unjust social system" that discriminates, treats as of lesser value, and is, on this account, oppressive to women (Facio 8). It is a concept which, albeit defined by history, or social circumstances, should be fundamentally examined as a by-product of ideology, or, as Carole Pateman states, "the difference between masculinity and femininity … [equal to] the political difference between freedom and subjection" (qtd. in Facio 8). If seen more expansively, patriarchy carries within it "all the socio-political mechanisms" that reproduce, perpetuate, and "exert male dominance over women" by naturalizing "real and perceived biological differences between the two sexes" to justify men's "domination on the basis of an alleged biological inferiority of women," as Facio claims (8), which this dissertation also finds agreeable as a claim. It is an ideological by-product that

historically proceeded from the construction of family, the practical and legal leadership of which was exerted by the oldest male member of the family, the patriarch, from whom the family members were descended and around whom the women and children of the family behaved as his subordinates. As Facio explains, being at the top of the hierarchy, the patriarch wields great economic power (11-12). Moreover, he possesses an unambiguous masculine gender identity whose essential sexual character throughout history seems to be that of the heterosexual male – with a few 'generic' differentiations depending on the historical period referred to and the region described. Practically, this means that although "gender roles and stereotypes may be different in each social class, age and culture … through the mechanisms, structures and institutions… [of the patriarchal system, patriarchy] makes these roles and stereotypes seem natural and universal" (12).

Even if we admit that there is from basic to considerable variation in the role that gender plays across time and cultures, "most models of patriarchy" seem to be based on the dichotomy of the two "biological sexes" (Facio 8-9). These models operate on the idea that from the father is derived and is "projected to the entire social order" the order of supremacy of the male that is "maintained and reinforced by different mechanisms/institutions" (8-9). As such, patriarchy inculcates men with the stereotype that they "individually or collectively oppress all women as a social category, but also oppress women individually in different ways, appropriating women's reproductive and productive force and controlling their bodies, minds, sexuality and spirituality mainly through 'peaceful' means such as the law and religion" (9). These 'peaceful' means are, more often than not, "reinforced through the use of physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence," which, when combined, renders patriarchy a form of "mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organization/structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalization of sex-based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles" (9); as is easily understood, such institutions "interconnect" to reinforce and consolidate the domination/ subordination patterns between men and women; and they also become interdependent with "other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination," admittedly producing "[s]tates that respond only to the needs and interests of a few powerful men" (9). This, in turn, by no means precludes women from possessing any form of power or rights; on the contrary, women do have power and rights as well as influence and resources. Nevertheless,

despite their 'clout', financially, politically or otherwise, women still seem to be dominated by the notion that they are of 'lesser value' than men, something that unavoidably follows from the fact that after all those centuries of oppression females, as a social group, have internalized the misbelief that they as distinguished from males are worth less than the latter. There seems to be an unspoken but subliminally collective consensus among the female and male members of the community that this is the case, which is conducive to establishing femininity as 'other' and masculinity as the norm, or, as that which, in other words, represents or even encapsulates the feminine. This agreement is the corollary to the ideology and its expression through the social institutions that unequivocally lessen the value of femininity, thus assigning women roles, work, and a social environment that are of less worth and/or power than those assigned to men. Unless reconciled to what they are allotted -- thanks to male 'benignity', they are subjected to 'cure'. Insofar as the 'cure' comes in the form of rehabilitation, the 'law' actually extends its own limits to accommodate the 'dissidents' themselves without jeopardizing its hegemonic power over its subjects. It uses 'othering', usually in the form of medicalization or even criminalization, and will also employ the mechanism of co-optation as one of its strategies to facilitate its self-perpetuation.[6]

While Esther is in hospital, her mother, with her characteristic martyr's smile, echoing Dr. Nolan's reassuring attitude that they will act "as if all this were a bad dream," says: "We'll take up where we left off, Esther" (*TBJ* 123). In the same vein, Hermione is determined to "escape Gart …phobia, *rehabilitation*," with the narrator further implying what "rehabilitation" is suggestive of: Eugenia, her mother, the person who inspires the images of most violent "rehabilitation" (*Her* 24). Both Plath's and H.D.'s heroines find their 'cure' in the system's rationality that seeks to include them anew by first excluding them ('othering' as a form of creating guilt feelings has always been an efficient mechanism). Practically, the system asks them to 'think again' and to 'try to adapt' themselves to the erstwhile situation. This actually means to throw them back to the pittances of the 'law' they hate. In 'tragedy' terms, it offers them the cathartic outlet to return to 'normalcy' after experiencing the extreme. For *The Bell Jar*, this means incarceration in a mental institution and subsequently an attitude in form of suicidal tendencies, for its heroine views death as a measure to be free and gain a new identity for herself. For *Her*, this means a nervous breakdown which transforms its heroine into the dispatch bearer she thinks she is while ill, running non-stop, like a

'hound' of truth on love's traces, like a "runner who seeks to convey a hieroglyphic script" (Galtung 85), the messenger who must convey "a message [carried]… in forgotten meters" (*Her* 220), in a 'dead' language unintelligible but to mythical Phaedra frantically searching for Hippolytus in Artemis' sacred forest where he hunts with the goddess of the forest. Like her, Hermione keeps running "always in search of a loving receiver" (Galtung 85), doomed to hear the beating of her feet on the ground still leaving uneven tracks with the footprints trailing unsteadily.

At the close of *The Bell Jar*, Esther, treated like 'a fixed tire', seems to have learned that defying gendered boundaries is not just impudent, it is catastrophic as well. In Foucauldian terms, Esther has been explored, analyzed and rearranged and as a result re-adapted to the present environment, which is her 'cure'. She says that she feels "the eyes and the faces all turned" to look at her, making her sense herself being guided by them, "as by a magical thread" (*TBJ* 234), which portrays the new version of her as a 'fixed puppet'. In Foucauldian terms, Esther has internalized the required socially accepted female role models (*Birth of the Clinic* 164). She is "born twice -- patched, retreaded and approved for the road" to a motherhood which she despises but which, at the same time, lets her 'celebrate' her "re-birth" (*TBJ* 233) -- we are told at the beginning of the novel that she has had a baby (3). She is a mother and not the "mean-faced" woman of the "fig-tree" dream (52-53). She has been subsumed into the same narrative which has been trying to define her as marginal, 'othered', mad, in the beginning, but which, now, seems to be including her, too, as 'normal', which she self-deceptively calls "re-birth." The ending is ambiguous since, although Esther has reconciled herself, firstly, with the bygone adventures of her life as, for example, with Buddy and Irwin, secondly, with Joan's death, and, lastly, with the possibility of her exit interview, we, as readers, cannot but ask ourselves, whether, despite her 'halo' of 'normality', all her efforts have come to naught since she finds herself carried away on a false note of optimism thinking, self-deludingly, she can rid herself of her 'jar'-like *polis* metaphor.

As for Hermione, oppressed as she is by a patriarchal and heteronormative culture, she suffers psychic damage as a result. She is punished, too, since the cultural context in which she lives and tries to create treats her punitively, as well as any woman of her contemporaries who dares to doubt or reject its stereotypes either career-wise or sexually. Her transgression of sexual norms results in her following "the tortuous pathways of a sexual ambivalence that leads to psychic breakdown" (Benstock 335),

especially when she realizes that her beloved Fayne is involved with her former *fiancé*, George. At the close of *Her*, Hermione dreams of escaping at last, running with her indecipherable script in hand, a runner who "does not stop running … [seeing as her] truth is in this race," and whose "race" is not a self-imposed contest of speed but a quest for a loving receiver (Calle-Gruber 216).

At this point, it should be noted that H.D.'s message runs the risk of being misinterpreted if the reader does not take into account the fact that even at the end of Hermione's 'journey', the heroine "does not stop running," envisioning herself to carry "a message in forgotten meters" (*Her* 220), thus continuing to live and also leave us in a state of abeyance, inside a fictional 'bubble' of a 'maybe' which may not be bursting but which, on this account, she fails to notice. So, although she portrays her fictionalized self as being on course for self-determination, being able to choose the direction of her own life and also being the exclusive authority over her own body and mind, or, in other words, being her sovereign self, she is not. She may be expected to conquer self-determination through her struggle with the 'Gart-sign' but the fact that she is in two minds about lesbianism, until the very end of the novel, traversing, as she is, the "tortuous pathways" of her experimentation on women-oriented love, makes her 'journey' to her 'renewed' model identity rather problematic (Benstock 335). At the same time, striving toward becoming a speaking subject through her career as a writer (*Psyche Reborn* 117), collecting bits and ends from within the fragmented memories of the past buried in the ruins of ancient Greek mythology, serves as her vehicle for her own resurrection.[7] So, although, as a text, *Her* operates on the brink between its own ideological origins and its function as a device that leaves the ideology and the history within which it expresses itself open to investigation, it succeeds in inscribing itself in the very patriarchal narrative which it aims to overturn. Through the vehicle of her heroine, H.D.'s resurrection becomes encaged inside of her unconscious attempt to relieve herself and hegemony, too, of any stress she might cause in the event she decided to stop running and instead adopt a more robust attitude by crossing the system's 'red line' and causing ideological 'inconvenience' to the system.

Years after the creation of *Her,* when she finds herself in the war-torn city of London in 1942, H.D.'s prophetic dream to be "re-born" is celebrated in "The Walls do not Fall" from her *Trilogy*[8] (31). As Liana Sakelliou says, "The Walls do not Fall," admittedly, presents England's struggle to survive during WWII, H.D.'s endeavor to remain sane, and the precarious survival of female identity and poetry (47).[9] While in

London, with its buildings left shattered by the Blitz, she is informed of the excavation of the tomb of Tutankhamun, which reminds her of her visit to the ruins of the ancient city of Karnak, part of ancient Thebes, with her mother, Helen, and Bryher (Guest 156). This trip seems to have an impact on her view of mythology, with the myths from ancient Greece now 'parading' side by side with those of Egypt in her mind. It affects the way in which she looks at ruined London. To her, ruined London seems to be a direct consequence of the differences between people which are responsible for wars. As Aliki Barnstone states, H.D. brings to light how "the differences between people -- especially religious differences -- ignite war" ("Introduction" vii-ix), however back these differences may extend into our collective past, and however tyrannical they may be in our life. Actually, casting back to "the thing behind the thing that mattered" (*Her* 198), H.D. sees herself like a messenger of old, a *hemerodromos*, a long-distance runner with a message of 'truth' from that part of herself holding on to an 'ancient', undivided world being carried to that other self of hers, which is part of this world, suffering under the divisions of this world, or, as she says, from "the world's divisions [that] divideth us" (*Her* 179). On that quest for 'truth', almost fifteen years later, she re-experiences the need to return to her 'ancient' past to recover the 'treasure' of old. In her narrative tradition, experience is actually contextualized within a continuum, and so *Trilogy* revives that deferred experience from within Hermione's fictional attempts to bring it to life in what Johnathan Culler calls "experience…divided and deferred…already behind us as something to be recovered, yet still before us as something to be produced" (82). Thinking that 'truth' from such a distant time in the past will smooth over the differences between people which are responsible for wars, and will also re-ignite in people the passion for love, she reaches out to the past in an effort to dig its secret meanings out. She unearths a hoard of memories of the colored symbols of the ancient city of Karnak and Luxor from her trip to Egypt, while, at the same time, letting her pen grope around the wounded 'body' of London and Karnak, like another doubting Thomas who is not convinced that her Moravian past holds the key to her quest.[10] It is actually through the symbols buried in the "mist and mist-grey" past that she finally encounters the old god beckoning ("Walls" 3). She has already made a decision not to trust *Agnus Dei*,[11] the Christian God of her Moravian origins; instead, she looks to another deity. She has found a hybrid god, a god from her 'parade' of mythical gods of the past composed of both ancient Greek and Egyptian deities fused into a hybrid deity in the form of a ram – rather than in the form of the lamb, and so she names this divine

creature Ram. As Barnstone explains, "Amen, Aries, the Ram: H.D. was deeply immersed in astrology," adding that in Latin "Aries means 'the ram,' … a constellation containing the stars of the spring equinox," and also explaining that this "constellation" is also referred to as "the first sign of the Zodiac" ("Reader's" 180). As for older "mythologies," Barnstone says, they "identify the Ram with Zeus and with Amon/Ammon, the ram God of Egypt" (180). As the ram bellows, "time, time for you to begin a new spiral, / see—I toss you into the star-whirlpool;/ till pitying, pitying, snuffing the ground," he makes his presence felt by establishing personal contact with his faithfuls: "here am I, Amen-Ra whispers, / Amen, Aries, the Ram" ("Walls" 30). Looking to him, she craves resurrection; she longs to be "reborn." She wishes to be devoured, be digested by Ram, and emerge "re-born" like Hermes, the messenger of 'truth', accepting Ram's offer and assuming the subordinate position of a child by clinging to him and referring to him as "father": "Now my right hand, /now my left hand /clutch your fleece; / take me home," she is heard begging and calling out to him ("The Walls" 31). She submissively now calls him as what she thinks he is to her, "Father / …let your teeth devour me, /let me be warm in your belly, /…the re-born Sun" (31).

As seen from above, her "re-birth" is but feasible through the appropriation of the legacy of a male god's attributes. H.D. allows herself to be co-opted into the 'symbolic' universe of a traditional narrative,[12] part of which is her fictional 'Gart-sign', too, with her dissent being compromised since she manages to experience internalization within the god, departing, thus, from her wish to "escape Gart …phobia, *rehabilitation*,"[13] announcing fifteen years later her wish to be "re-born" through being appropriated by the male god Ram. Moving across the interface from one end, the 'law', embodied by her father and brother, to the other, its breach, personified by her mother, Fayne and even her sister-in-law, would make things easier. Her initial vision, though, which actually takes form in H.D.'s poem, gestures toward her rejection of her rebellious tone since her desire to turn herself into a messenger traversing between the 'law' and its transgression runs the risk of being appropriated by the 'law' against which she rebels – to the point of being 'eaten' by the male God symbolic of the 'law'.

Both novels seem to conclude on what could be construed as a note of disputable 'freedom' that the protagonists ultimately believe they have attained, and, as a result, on a note of optimism. Nevertheless, both *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, this dissertation intends to show, seem to actually conclude on a possibility, or rather probability, of having

what they bring to the fore as dissident '*prattein*' co-opted into the 'sublime' apparition of a 'maybe'. Thus, Esther is cured of 'madness' by taking up motherhood. Hermione, too, is portrayed as deciding to marry herself at the end of the novel, using the money her grandmother has left for her marriage as a means to marrying herself, triumphantly announcing "this will be my marriage" (*Her* 234). Actually, by embracing this auto-social, kind of auto-erotic role, she tries to free herself from interpellation within a narrative of indeterminate gendering since, although she negotiates her homosexuality within the confines of the 'Gart sign', at the same time she "is part of next year, part of last year," as she says in the end (*Her* 224).

All in all, this dissertation is part of the critical output on Plath's and H.D.'s attempts to express dissent and engraft it into a narrative of resistance to gender ideology through the 'tools' of their writing and sexuality. However, the originality of this study lies in the fact that it deviates from the critical tradition relating the portrayal of Plath's and H.D.'s 'undisciplined' femininity to disruptive language and differing models of sexuality, by exploring resistant female subjectivities in their two *romans-à-clef* in connection with how their dissident '*prattein*' is finally neutralized and co-opted into the narrative of hegemony mainly because hegemony is internalized by the heroines, which reflects real life, too. Such an idea has not been sufficiently, if at all, explored to date.

Lastly, the value of this study consists in its making connections across different universes of thought from the two authors, Plath and H.D., through a wide range of feminist critics such as Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, Butler, Chanter, to Althusser, Foucault, Gramsci, to name but a few, in order to rework the theme of dissent and re-engraft it into that of Esther's antipathy to 'traditional' 1950's female gender roles and Hermione's agonistic experience of subversiveness and marginality through the 'tools' of her poems and novels. It thus manages to bring to light the 'thread' that runs through the intertextuality of their common discourse within a *polis* metaphor that 'confiscates' their resistance and turns it into a rationality of reintegration into an acceptable role while, at the same time, allowing them to 'toy' with the comforting idea that what they have chosen in their submission to 'symbolic' authority is self-determination. Such an undertaking could not have been achieved by considering only a single theoretical framework.

1.2 Method

For the purposes of this study, a mainly post-structural Marxist feminist interpretative approach is used. This work's point of departure in reference to the above-mentioned approach is among other things its post-essentialist perspective informed by the influence of constructivism in which social and cultural inscriptions on the body and subjectivity are considered of paramount importance. To the extent that such an approach makes the gender ideology/'alternative' femininity and hegemony/resistant subjectivity binaries, in particular, visible, analyzable and revisable, and, in turn mapped on to other binaries such as the male/female and straight/lesbian binaries, our analysis of *The Bell Jar* and *Her* is more oriented toward the production mechanisms of power relations, which are maintained by attributing naturalness, normalcy, reasonableness and even soundness to the term that is dominant in any of the binaries. At the same time, our analysis is also oriented toward how the term considered of less importance in the binaries is regarded as unnatural, as 'other', as irrational, or even as lacking. Our analysis of the novels in question becomes all the more focused, therefore, on the ways the social inscribes itself on individuals, in our case, on Esther and Hermione as the fictionalized doubles of Plath and H.D., namely how it interpellates them, and so, by casting doubt upon this process of interpellation, our theoretical 'tools' help us to show how it is that power does not merely shape Esther and Hermione, or us, as certain kinds of beings, but works in such a way as to render those ways of being desirable such that they adopt them as their own. By calling into question this process of interpellation, our theoretical 'tools' will help us show how it is that power works not just to shape Esther and Hermione as particular kinds of beings, but to make those ways of being desirable such that they actively take them up as their own, which is applicable to us, too.

At this point, it would be an omission not to refer to Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva who are considered the 'mothers' of post-structural feminist theory and whose work will greatly contribute to our examination of the two novels. More specifically, insofar as the two heroines are trapped within a sexuality imprisoned in a patriarchal language and entrapped in a language through which they are unable to communicate in society, Cixous's conception of the female body as a 'lever' of communication in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" is employed as a 'tool' in our analysis. Moreover, her theory of the formation of subjectivity through the 'tug-of-war' of antagonizing forces in binaries such as 'culture/nature', 'head/heart', 'intelligible/palpable',

'form/matter', is also used as an additional 'tool'. Albeit more sparsely cited in comparison to Kristeva, Cixous conceptualizes the female body in such a manner that she makes it directly tied to the plight of the two heroines who are in search of ways to communicate through their self-entrapment in their sexuality. At the same time, as Kristeva's view of the subject, and its construction, favors a subject always "in process" or "on trial," her work also greatly contributes to the critique of essentialized structures, whilst preserving the teachings of psychoanalysis.

More fundamentally, besides "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous's *The Newly Born Woman* offers insights into the operation of the construction of subjectivity through socially engendered sets of binaries, as stated above. Working with them, she manages to bring to the fore the paradox that although the second term of each of the binaries in her list appears to be playing an active role in supporting the binary of which they constitute an essential part, the possibility of the second-term concepts influencing or participating in this very system is actually ruled out. This exclusion proves highly relevant to the two *romans á clef* analyzed to the extent that they constitute a narrative 'journey' into the process of the 'building' of female subjectivity for Esther and Hermione. Nevertheless, the fact that she disputes this 'paradigm', by placing the emphasis on the 'real' and not on the 'symbolic', through the subject's discovery within herself of the presence of both sexes (*Newly* 84-85), also brings to the fore an ongoing dialogue between the two parts. As Galtung explains, "the self recognizes and incorporates the 'other' into the self, rather than using the 'other' merely to confirm her sovereign 'I', which confirms her place within the 'symbolic'" (14). Practically, this "exchange between the two … exceeds 'phallic' authority," with language being "wrestled from the 'law'," which, as a result, means that the subject must and can exist "as a stable entity," as Cixous claims (*Newly* 86). However, this dissertation suggests that while language is wrestled from the 'law', it is ideologically 'charged' by the 'law' and thus reinforces it.

As far as Kristeva's contribution to this work is concerned, her "Revolution of Poetic Language" reconceptualizes the 'semiotic' as not being diametrically opposed to the 'symbolic' but as actually being a part of it (92). According to Kristeva, "while the unconscious activity of the 'semiotic' generates movement and motivating signification, the 'symbolic' governs the way in which this meaning can be conveyed" (qtd. in Galtung 16); and through the "constant oscillation between these [antagonizing but also] interdependent functions of language," as she claims, "an unstable subject that

is always in motion, always in production" is created (16). And whereas in Lacan, subjectivity has its origin in the child's complete subordination to the so-called 'Name of the Father',[14] Kristeva postulates that subjectivity originates "from the pre-linguistic maternal sphere" (16). Refusing to abandon her experience of the 'semiotic', Kristeva's subject persists in relishing the gestural, the "wandering" elements of signification and as such she is "in-process" ("Revolution" 91). However, to be elevated to the level of subject, she will unavoidably cross over into the 'symbolic' sphere where symbolic elements, such as social rules and norms, "will hamper her wandering and put her on trial" (91). As Galtung further explains in her thesis, "to prevent herself from being encapsulated in the masculine 'symbolic', the subject must continuously find the means to signify her refusal to let go of the maternal within the realm of the 'law'" (16). In this light, the Kristevan subject's refusal to wean herself from the maternal within the confines of the 'law' proves relevant to the texts under examination inasmuch as the maternal in the novels plays a crucial role. Actually, the fact that both Esther and Hermione view their mothers as playing a passive role, on the one hand, but also as having a significant influence on their way of thinking as well as on their doubt of social values, and, to a certain extent, even on their mental illness, on the other, makes Kristeva's 'tools' useful, too.

As our theoretical elements form some of the analytical 'tools' of the 'making' of female subjectivity in the two novels as we explore the interface between the psychic imprint left in the heroines by the 'law' itself and the way in which they act dissident in a *polis* metaphor that usually either medicalizes or criminalizes, they also reveal how psychologically imposed elements create a profound symbiotic relationship between culture and ideology which in turn affect and shape female subjectivity. To the extent now that Plath's and H.D.'s novels unfold a narrative continuum in which female subjectivity is not only analyzed from the point of view of identity formation but also from that of its ability to resist the ideological stereotypes that discipline and imprison it -- regardless of the result, both Butler and Foucault could illuminate our analysis, too. Firstly, Butler's reconceptualization of the female identity as being "socially constructed through a series of performative, iterative acts" will be instrumental in how hegemony operates to delimit what counts as a viable sex (*Bodies* 519); and secondly, Foucault's exploration of a differentiated account of power registering the significance of practices of hegemony, resonating with what we call the *polis* metaphor of 'hot-spots' of rehabilitation of such enclosed institutions of Plath's and H.D.'s worlds as

schools, hospitals or artistic *milieux,* within the 'walls' of which the individual is surveyed and any unwelcome inconveniences that might jeopardize the equilibrium of the enclosure are neutralized, will also be instrumental in our analysis. To this end, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* also proves instrumental in helping us to trace the parameters that lead to the necessity of disciplining bodies in society, individuated according to their tasks, strictly observed and controlled. As a result, it is also instrumental in helping us to adjust this theoretical framework to the two heroines' compliance with the definition of the norm of socially 'legitimate' conduct. Needless to say, the norm in question must be perceived as being guided by evaluation procedures and the sanctions linked to them. Since the conflict in *The Bell Jar* and *Her* occurs within the parameters of a political rationality that constructs mentalities in connection with the internalization of performance norms implemented thanks to a constant self-monitoring within a general regime of inspection that revives and, at the same time, modernizes the old Benthamite dream of 'panopticism', then this is true.[15]

For it to work, there exists a requirement that needs to be met: internalization. To understand internalization, we need to first explain it in connection with the concept of 'panopticism' and what the latter means. Miran Bozovic, analyzing Foucault's conceptualization of *panopticon* as a metaphor for the modern disciplinary society, argues that the disciplinary society that emerged in the 18th century continues to sustain itself through techniques that assure the ordering of human complexities, with the ultimate aim of docility and utility in the system (95). This is achieved through the mechanism of internalization of external goals. This mechanism operates on the basis of the individual feeling of being under surveillance, which, in turn, forces the individual to constantly judge herself by firstly locating herself in a conceptual place where she can then compare and identify herself with socially accepted role models that contribute to the community's set goals (*Birth of the Clinic* 164). Moreover, the surveillance culture renders her seeable so that she can be externally judged again and again, with 'doses' of improvement being recommended and incorporated into her desired behavior. In this way, "an efficient machine" can be obtained (164). Such a "machine" does not require being under constant surveillance since the mechanism of internalization works in the best interests of the system or *polis* metaphor.

However, Foucault's technology of 'discipline' alone cannot explain how all subjects finally become co-opted into the *polis* metaphor without repressive coercion.

His contribution to this dissertation would be lacking had it not been for some theoretical help from Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony, according to whom the ruling class is able to hold on to power without the need to resort to mass coercion. Instead, hegemony's hold on power is maintained by actually how it uses cultural institutions to maintain power, propagating through them its own values and norms so that they become what one might call 'common sense' values taken for granted by all. Gramsci emphasizes the fact that "hegemonies are constituted through a material matrix of social practices that are sustained by a wide-ranging apparatus that includes schools, churches, public institutions and cultural traditions" (qtd. in England 14). In *Hegemony, Ideology, Governmentality: Theorizing State Power after Weber*, England also refers to Gramsci as stating that "citizens eventually acquire habits of thought that predispose them to view existing inequalities as natural and legitimate" (14). To that effect, Gramsci uses the 'suffrage' argument to prove his point (14). As England explains, "Gramsci's key historical argument is that to avert the cycles of mass resistance that Europe had witnessed time and again, first during the 14th century peasants' revolts, then during the French Revolution, and once more in 1848," hegemony extended suffrage to women, too (14). However, the act of extending suffrage did not threaten to overturn the system since their hold on power remained unchanged. What basically happened was that "by integrating the population into the political system, mass suffrage offered new methods of legitimation, allowing the state to co-opt resistance by channeling dissident impulses into moderate parties of loyal opposition" (14). It is a *sine qua non* that Gramsci's conception of hegemony and the co-optation of resistance into the hegemonic power discourse of society extends to the worlds of *The Bell Jar* and *Her* and what they represent then and now, namely a long-standing historical precedent involving the two heroines and their collective expression that becomes all the more repetitious in fiction and in real life then and now.

More clearly, Gramsci's conception of hegemony and the mechanism of co-optation could be applied to the analysis of the two novels to spotlight how Esther's and Hermione's *polis* metaphor smoothly co-opts dissidence. In this way, it is easier to understand how dissidence is premised upon the dissident's commitment to what this work calls *polis* fantasy, or, put differently, 'looping' forms of *jouissance* which, in the two books, are initially expressed as transgression for both heroines, which is later displaced into motherhood for Esther and into a kind of auto-erotic role for Hermione. Their initial 'rage' against patriarchy is allayed with 'doses' of 'improvement' being

recommended through a culture propagating such values and norms that become 'common sense' values for the two heroines, as stated above. Such 'common sense' values are incorporated into their desired behavior, resulting in them becoming "an efficient machine" (*The Birth of the Clinic* 164). The impetus behind their initial resisting agency is actually neutralized, though. This is because dissident tactics tie their success to the surveillance culture of patriarchal hegemony. As a result, the heroines, as subjects, are unable to decolonize their desires from the fantasy of the *polis* metaphor as paternal signifier. This, in other words, is what we said earlier about how it is that power works not just to shape Esther and Hermione as particular kinds of beings, but to make those ways of being desirable such that they actively take them up as their own, which is a result of misrecognition or, in other words, ideological conditioning. Actually, since they follow in the footsteps of others who are as militant as them and do what they do, they misrecognize themselves as being outside of ideology whereas in fact they are not since ideology is responsible for their confidence that what they do is not ideological when in fact it is, or, as Gramsci says, this happens because "habits of thought … predispose[us] to view existing inequalities as natural" (qtd. in England 14).

At this point we should say Gramsci's theory is better complemented by Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." The ideological state apparatuses like family, religious institutions, educational system, and media give us an identity, basically indicating that we become what we are because of ideology. Where the two novels are concerned, with a prefabricated identity bequeathed to them, Esther and Hermione experience the long-standing historical precedent that forces them to be scrutinized through lenses, mirrors, milk-bottle glasses and scientific vessels. Their performances therefore all seem to emerge in the consciousness of a critical audience as being inseparable from the past as well as from the 20th and 21st century culture of surveillance, too. As a result, they bring different historical threads together woven into the very fabric of their intertextual discourse which in turn incriminates the machinations of the system to subject them, as subjects, to predetermination.

It is true Plath and H.D. are seen to embrace difference and fight for recognition of their right to dialectize away the pariahdom/femaleness duality through an effort "to speak as conscious pariahs, as rebellious ones," and in so doing to "escape from their predetermination" (Didier 348). Whether attempting to escape their predetermination is enough to render their life livable is answered by Antigone's tragic end, though. It

seems true that, as *Antigone* teaches us, any attempt to undermine the dominant 'narrative' seems ineffective since resistance subjects the resisters to 'othering', with the eponymous heroine's dissent being criminalized and her 'younger' sisters', Esther's and Hermione's, dissent, too, being medicalized and co-opted by their *polis* metaphor. On this account, the above interpretive approaches all enter into genuine dialogue to confirm that the *polis* metaphor becomes the conceptual space afforded to the two heroines, who, along with most women, have little, if any at all, choice in the eyes of the hegemonic patriarchal culture.

1.3 Literature Review

In the forthcoming sections, we will explore the existing research that reflects the process of the 'building' of the female subject that Plath and H.D. create in *The Bell Jar* and *Her*. Set against Antigone's dissent, Plath's and H.D.'s 'disobedience' becomes much more powerful with the *Antigone* story turning itself into a timeless shaft of light through the interface between acting dissident and the hegemonic discourse.

Through their two heroines, we will also explore how both *romans á clef* resist being read only autobiographically. Their protagonists continuously waver between conflicting ideals about womanhood and claiming their own discourse against the very 'othering' of themselves by the patriarchal society in which they live. Their identity thus emerges from within and defines itself against the restrictive paradigms of ideological stereotypes intertwined with a politics of controlling the population which, in their case, is portrayed via a discourse of 'othering', which is none other than a discourse of the medicalization of difference expressed as 'madness'.

Because of this, both texts seem to read like a constant shifting of an unstable self rather than the 'coming into being' of a self. This unstable self in question affords insights into the workings of the construction of a female subject that is powerful enough to navigate the social sphere then and now. Studying the novels' nexus of resistant subjectivities, through their subversive language and defiant sexuality, will help us to also inquire into the manner in which a subversive feminine self, which poses a challenge to the masculine sphere with her 'otherness', presents a subjectivity that belongs neither to a masculine nor to a feminine plane, but participates in both and at the same time is appropriated by the same hegemonic power discourse from which it thinks it has differentiated itself.

1.3.1 *The Bell Jar*

Through her writings, Plath (1932-1963) is considered to have given birth to a creative self that is hidden within. Plath has grafted the 'skin' of Yeats's words "We only begin to live when we conceive life as tragedy" into the body of her writings (qtd. in Baig 23), using vivid images and symbols "to communicate her personal tragedy and to convey herself through her work" (23). Revolving around a few elemental aspects of her short life, like her family, her parents and her illness, she has mainly included them in the subject of her literary work. With vivid imagery and intense focus, Plath explores such themes as death, suicide as well as depression, along with a sense of hope for resurrection, healing and redemption through it. The final part of her career consists of *The Bell Jar* and her *Confessional Poetry* about which she speaks in her interview to Peter Orr: "I speak them to myself….and whatever lucidity they may have come from, the fact that I say them to myself, I say them out loud," as she says, "In England 1960-62" (*1962*).

As the most celebrated of all her works, *The Bell Jar* is believed to unmask her true self. In the novel in question, there appears an intense, even violent need to sacrifice everything for a renewal. She seems to want to remove the old false self of hers to give birth to a new real one. Edward Butscher says that Plath intends to explore her dilemma of "evil double" in *The Bell Jar* using an 'alter-ego' as her protagonist (307). Plath, he says, decides to discover the cruel depths of modern world by inflicting pain on her innocent mirror image, Esther, which is why she prefers to "kill Esther's 'alter-ego', Joan Gilling, to form a chain of mirror-images viewing each other's torture and experiencing brutality of the world indirectly," rather than decide to dispose of her heroine herself in the novel (307).

One symbol that appears profusely in Plath's autobiographical novel is that of the "bell-jar." The latter is associated with images of suffocation, torture and mental illness. Afflicted with mental illness, too, Plath recognizes how it has worked itself into her life and documents it through her writing, but more scholastically through *The Bell Jar*, in which she wonders, "How did I know that someday -- at college, in Europe, somewhere, anywhere -- the bell-jar, with its stifling distortions, wouldn't descend again?" (*1962*). Plath's "bell-jar" is what Lynda Bundtzen describes as a "mental structure" (131). Signifying the psychological state of all women of her time in the U.S., the "bell-jar" also signifies lack of social justice and a sense of claustrophobia resulting from social oppression "that reduces Esther to a still-born baby unable to grow" (Baig 5). Bundtzen

decodes the symbol by attributing to it three general meanings. She says that it is "an over determined symbol" which could be interpreted as illness due to which "Esther feels sealed off from the rest of the world," as well as confinement resulting from "social inequalities," on account of which "all women tend to be sealed off from experience" (141). The symbol itself could also be construed as "the feeling of being a dead fetus preserved in a jar, and being physically imputed" (141).

Despite the varied symbolisms of the "bell-jar," on the face of it, Plath, in her novel, shows that the battle with social injustice and oppression seems to engender a collective female rebellious spirit expressing itself as "sardonic satire and sincere protest, an authentic American novel about the disintegration of America" (Butscher 310). Being the cathartic outlet for her emotions, "the novel 'cures' her troubled soul" (Baig 14). In Robert Lowell's "Foreword to *Ariel,*" Plath is quoted as calling *The Bell Jar* "an autobiographical apprentice work which I had to write in order to free myself from the past" (viii). 'Groping' through the harshness and cruelty of the world without, she is able to feel the anguish of her own soul within: "a constant sense of loss, betrayal, and disillusionment" that overshadows her life is in search of "its outcome in art," through which "the fervent feminist" within takes its voice (Baig 14).

Due to the self-imprisoning role imposed on her within the "bell-jar" of her life, Plath's protagonist manages to "use the 'weapon' of words against the 'enemy' without, but fails to kill the demon within" (Baig 15). As a result, her demon emerges "in the form of her sentimental violence and a terrible suicide" (15). However, on the other hand, she manages to oppugn the social hypocrisy, calling the stereotypes into question and smashing the "bell-jar" around her. A fighter *par excellence*, she is on headlong collision course with patriarchy, as is graphically expressed in her poem "Lady Lazarus" from *Ariel*: "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair /And eat men like air." Esther is portrayed as not only succeeding in advancing through the society's 'jar-like' claustrophobic immurement "but also in filling the psychological space between her body and soul, self and society" (Baig 15). Needless to say, the void in her psyche that she tries to fill in is basically rooted in the double standards favored by the society of her time.

Esther does not attempt to remove herself from the earth in order to be relieved but in order to erase the earthly values she despises; and Plath does not follow suit. Esther actually seems to be the ideological alibi of Plath's inability to come to terms with being appropriated by the very societal power discourses she despises. When, in the end, she

says, "as by a magical thread, I stepped into the room" (*TBJ* 257), Plath paints the picture of 'an Esther' who is 'cured' and is ready for life. However, Esther has also disproved her in the very beginning when she herself, as the narrator of her own end, has prophetically wondered what it feels like to be electrocuted like the Rosenbergs: "I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves" (*TBJ* 1). As Baig claims, "although Esther's journey from innocence to experience, from girlhood to womanhood, and from confinement to liberation shows avenues for change in life," it is true that "the will-power to fight with her psychological demons and to live according to her own desires and shape the world at her own standards crashes against the very narrative she has tried to change" (26).

Finally, it is true that an appreciable amount of critical work has been produced with regard to how the novel paves the way for an examination of how an individual seeks to overturn the power relations, negotiate with disciplining forces and the limitations of this strategy, by such theoreticians as Kate Baldwin, Susan Coyle and Betty Friedan, to name but a few. It is also true that a lot has been written on the 'making' of identity in a spatiotemporal context marked by the Cold War atmosphere that builds the ideology of the 'ideal woman' as a 'gagged' domestic childrearer who, more often than not, is held politically guilty unless compliant with the female stereotype. However, little, if any work, has been produced in relation to how her performances, which are scrutinized through mirrors, lenses, scientific vessels etc., emerge in the consciousness of a critical audience who, like the chorus in Antigone's trial, perform a 'commentarial' role inseparable from a culture of surveillance then and now, with the novel cogently lending itself to an analysis of bodies that enter into the machinery of power which, according to Foucault, "explores [the body], breaks it down and rearranges it" (*The Birth of Prison* 138). Also, little if any work has been produced with regard to how and why Esther also known as Plath also known as Esther, initially being against motherhood and expected female docility, learns to 'train' herself to become a mother who, all the same, can also discuss sexual emancipation as a narrator after discovering the "fitting coil," thus concluding the Esther story on a note of false optimism. Practically, little, if any work, has been done with regard to how Esther's original dissidence, premised on her commitment to her *polis* fantasy, is smoothly channeled into allayed 'rage' through her self-resignation to a culture propagating 'common sense' values that gradually undermine and transform that 'rage' into mild dissident impulses tolerable by the system.

1.3.2 *Her(mione)*

H.D. (Hilda Doolittle)[16] is considered today "a canonical modernist poet" who has also "experimented with prose" (Galtung 8). Although H.D.'s profuse literary output, especially with regard to her prose work, has received enough critical attention, when discovered in the mid-seventies, H.D.'s works still remain rather absent. As a poet, she is brave enough to revise her own culture through her extraordinary achievements in creating new female-centered myths.[17] To this end, she fights against patriarchal strictures and seeks to elevate the female to a position as illustrious as that of her male counterparts. Her feminism takes fire from the spark created by her passion for and friction with powerful male figures. She thus characteristically writes that "a lady will be set back in the sky. It will be no longer Arcturus and Vega… it will be myth; mythopoeic mind (mine) will disprove science and biological-mathematical definition" (*Her* 76).

"A thinly veiled *roman á clef* that belongs to the four-novel Madrigal cycle,"[18] the novel, written in 1926-27, somehow "mirrors H.D.'s experiences following her failure at Bryn Mawr College in 1912" (Galtung 11). The story revolves round Her(mione) Gart, a hard-driving artist who, like H.D., is entrapped in major dilemmas. Although in two minds between the expectations of her traditional family, her engagement to George Lowndes, which parallels Hilda's engagement to Ezra Pound, and her desire for Fayne Rabb, which is also analogous to H.D.'s erotic desire for Frances Josepha Gregg, Hermione struggles to define herself. Her struggle for self-definition does not seem to skirt the issue of her lesbianism, which is why *Her* calls for a feminist interpretation. In *Penelope's Web*, Friedman reads *Her* as "H.D.'s successful attempt of overturning the masculine paradigm that hems her in as a subject and a writer" (118-19).

Although *Her*, as H.D.'s most emblematic work, is a novel with a lot of autobiographical elements in it, it is also a 'bone of contention' as to what its author wants to express. There are some views worth considering, though. According to Dianne Chisholm's study of H.D.'s work, *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation, Her* contains elements of "a sustained critique of Freudian psychoanalysis" and mainly includes an alternative origin story for the condition of hysteria (Chisholm 77-81). At the same time, it could be construed as a self-consciously ambivalent account of an alternative search for a 'twin-self sister' catalyzed by the figure of Fayne to whom she is sexually related. However, from a more radical

perspective, it is H.D.'s account of acceptance of her life, of history, of her responsibility to work for change, thus inserting herself into what Kristeva calls in "Women's Time" the "radical refusal of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time" (195).

In *Her*, H.D. actually expresses dissent and proceeds to try to displace the parental and heterosexual. To the extent that such a stance undermines the heterosexual paradigm in order to bring to the fore her lesbian relationship, Hermione succeeds in offering a narrative revision of love between women as being "rooted in the rejection of the mother and of her stifling heterosexual desire," as Hilary Emmett says in "Prophetic Reading: Sisterhood and Psychoanalysis in H.D.'s *HER*mione" (15-16). At the same time, "Hermione," as Emmett also says, "challenges Freud's discourse who locates lesbian desire in pre-Oedipal attraction to the mother" (15). A lot of critical work in connection with the novel has been used to interpret H.D.'s Hermione such as Deborah Kloepfer's "Flesh Made Word: Maternal Inscription" in H.D.'s *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H.D.*, Marianne Hirsch's *The Mother / Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Friedman's *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher, and Their Circle* as well as her *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H. D.'s Fiction*, to mention but a few, in order to help us to excavate H.D.'s and -- by extension -- Hermione Gart's psyche. Through them, we can see how she comes to internalize the powerful paternal discourse, the 'Gart-sign', and at the same time how she endeavors to exclude it from her life.

Finally, although much has been written about how H.D. emerges from within a tradition of female silence to undermine heterosexual romance and subvert the literary canon that imposes invisibility on her and female writing, not much has been written on how her 'alternative' femininity is experienced as a physical symptom that is medicalized precisely because the hegemonic discourse of patriarchy is internalized by her, as subject, while it is, at the same time, resisted. Also, little, if any, critical output has been produced with regard to the link between the heroine's dissent within a society that justifies and maintains hegemony through the active consent of those over whom it rules. More specifically, nothing has been written on how the 'parsing' of resistors into 'good' resistors and 'bad' resistors, as in the case of Hermione, in whose narrative lesbianism is not so much avoided as it is 'skirted' indirectly, brings to the fore a kind of blame-game 'politics' with a disciplining and divisive effect on the writer, reader,

and the women's movement in general, which is actually what hegemony does, namely co-opting the resistor's discourse into the narrative of the *polis* metaphor.

1.3.3 *Re-visiting Antigone*

This dissertation merely employs the 'tragedy effect' of the *Antigone,* namely how and to what extent it tests limits, defies norms, gives a certain kind of outlet for 'anti-social' feelings. In other words, since the audience did not come to a tragedy to take out its 'orthodoxies' upon the characters but partly for the thrill of watching the characters call those 'orthodoxies' into question, this dissertation takes this 'tragedy effect', examines how it is worked into the 'modern' picture of the Antigone as a heroic dissenter in order to bring to the fore a 'rebel' against the values which an audience of that time would likely espouse and practice in real life. As such, the *Antigone* involves a complex interplay between *polis* and its 'tragedy effect', or else between the reception of things in real life and the reception of things in the theatre, a form of *jouissance* connected with the 'anti-*polis* fantasy' which actually devolves into the suggested commitment to the *polis* fantasy on behalf of the eponymous heroine.

If we take the voice of the *polis* to be rather more on Creon's side and at the same time the voices against him to come rather from elsewhere, we can make progress in distinguishing them, identifying where they come from, and observing how they converse, which in the end will be beneficial to this dissertation. Helene Foley argues that ideology can be used to support either Creon or Antigone (143). Tragedy is indeed ambivalent and multivocal but at the same time it can provide a 'mirror' of resistance, the state, and femininity. It 'mirrors' the cultural and historical contexts, embedded within which is the same patriarchal discourse that spans almost twenty-five centuries of resistance to gender ideology. It can also provide a 'mirror' of gender power-relations with insights into how men and women are represented in the text, in order to help us to identify to what extent, then and still today, these representations contribute to, contest, or influence gender power-imbalances in society. Lastly, it does provide us with a 'mirror' of Antigone as what Butler calls "a timeless organizer of resistance against the dictates of an oppressive (if not immoral) state," and how this works for the timeless *polis* metaphor twenty-five centuries later, in her "Can one lead a good life in a bad life? Adorno Prize Lecture" (15). As such, it will help us to see her through the mirror of a dissenter who, on the one hand, gratifies our anti-*polis* fantasy and does not inconvenience our disciplinary 'economy' but who, on the other, does not radicalize that alternative femininity we suspect her of unwittingly trying to achieve.

Our ambition, therefore, in this dissertation is firstly to offer a selection of the relevant, creative and, at the same time, provocative feminist readings of the *Antigone* with regard to the instances in which the heroine figures in contemporary debates as acting dissident by offering an alternative version of femininity -- albeit not a radical one. Within this selection, a place of prominence will no doubt receive female subjectivity and sexuality, the tension and relationship between culture and nature, freedom and democracy, and the mechanisms that replicate taboos, normativity and pathology. For this reason, this work has resorted to such theoreticians as Luce Irigaray with "The Eternal Irony of the Community" from her *Speculum of the Other Woman* where she sheds light on the specificity of female subjectivity and the possibility for women to claim selfhood which she argues is sacrificed and lost in the tomb where Antigone dies. Tina Chanter's work, "The Performative Politics and Rebirth of Antigone in Ancient Greece and Modern South Africa," is also employed to the extent that it views Antigone as being constitutively excluded from the polity. In it, she argues that this logic extends well beyond the question of sexual difference to the extent that "exclusionary logics reiterate themselves" whether the excluded 'other' is marked by gender, race, class, or nationality, thus "calling into being a future polity that does not rely on the political exclusion of some of its members" (6). Mention should also be made of Butler's "Promiscuous Obedience," from her book *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, which situates the figure of Antigone "within a contemporary context in which the politics of kinship has brought a classical western dilemma into contemporary crisis" (5). Her *Gender Trouble* also examines the interdependence of state power and kinship, wondering, on the one hand, if kinship can flourish without the very mediation that the state provides and, more importantly, if the state is able to flourish or even exist, were it not for the family providing this mediation. Lastly, Kristeva's reading of Antigone focuses on the theme of a limit experience, situating Antigone, the transgressor, between worlds: 'captured' between life and death, public and private, inside and outside, she raises our awareness of these very boundaries exactly by defying and destabilizing them.

In this light, this dissertation revisits the *Antigone* with a view to "charting parallels," as T. Koulouris says, "between the conceptual parameters of her resistant subjectivity and the potential for effective resistance in the present" through the emblematic literary works of *The Bell Jar* and *Her* (Abstract). Because beyond the fact that Antigone still persists as what Koulouris calls an imposing "figure of female

struggle" in western literature, "we revisit" the *Antigone* as a "canonical text," since alongside such texts "that constitute the so-called western literary imagination," we could instrumentalize it in order to search for the ways in which the 'tragic' "pertains to whatever is social, historical," or even worldly, as Stathis Gourgouris argues (qtd. in Koulouris 1). In the same manner, Cornelius Castoriades, too, ascribes to Sophocles' play an "*actual presence* in the Athenian socio-historical space, a presence indissolubly interwoven with democracy, with the *polis*, and, of course, with the political" (139–40). In this capacity, therefore, the *Antigone* is capable of being put to good use if and when re-read against developing political resistant subjectivities, which helps us to investigate her resisting subjectivity juxtaposed to the authoritative rules of an oppressive state, and how this works for the timeless *polis* metaphor centuries later.

In this light, by recasting the debate between Creon and Antigone as the staging of a debate about democracy we can point out the analogy between the *polis* then and the *polis* in modernity, since we as members of the modern state, too, can testify to a process of "widening rupture between their will and the objectives of the state" (Koulouris 2). In this light, dissent becomes considerably more powerful with the *Antigone* tragedy turning itself into an expression of civil dissent. Dissent is investigated not only as a common attribute of an intertextual 'tragedy' but as an actual element of uncertainty, introduced into the *polis*, which, coupled with the heroines' choice to act against the 'order' of the system, turns itself into some kind of 'hubris' for the renegotiation of the boundaries of their *polis* metaphor in question. Their 'hubris' is submitted to a disciplinary 'economy' until it is turned into a desire identified with the *polis* metaphor as phallus with the heroines thus being appropriated by the system they have fought against.

1.4 Organization

In the 1st chapter, we present Antigone's resistant subjectivity through the lenses of certain theorists and theoretical frameworks. We thus recast the debate between Creon and the heroine as the staging of a debate about the essence of democracy as, in Bonnie Honig's words, "a form of social and political life" (6), within which dissent becomes most powerful, with the *Antigone* story turning itself into an expression of civil dissent that outreaches self-interested action and transcends space and time constraints to expound the collective feeling of an allegorical *polis* then and now. But more specifically, the play is used, firstly, as a 'tool' of exegetical analysis of the shared plight of Plath's and H.D.'s 'tragic' heroines, Esther and Hermione, in their emblematic

works, and, secondly, as an instrument "capable of carving a pathway to meaningful forms of resistance" (Koulouris 5), which, most of the times, are doomed to fail. In that respect, our analysis treats Sophocles' heroine as a resistant political agent ready to articulate a law to which Creon is oblivious. In doing so, it places Antigone within an interpretive framework in which she is viewed as challenging the very logic of a polity whose necessary condition for representation is exclusion -- be it of women, people of color, or other marginalized subjects.

The 2nd chapter, through the character of Esther Greenwood in Plath's *The Bell Jar*, investigates the struggle of women coming of age halfway through the 20th century for identity formation. At the same time, the chapter juxtaposes Esther, in her effort to achieve personalized identity, against the patriarchal hegemony of her time that ideologizes cultural containment, thus enforcing prescriptive roles on women within an American conformist setting. As implied, examined in this chapter are the ways in which these prescriptive roles are promoted, and also the psychic schism which the heroine, as subject, experiences, caused in her as a woman who is unable to fully assimilate herself into this role. Esther's female dissatisfaction and her choice for a differing model of sexuality is a symptom of resistance and is diagnosed as illness until it is treated with a new diagnostically defined identity branded on her entire being, into which she lets herself be co-opted without, however, having confessed to herself that this is a sign of victory on behalf of hegemony she has fought against. In this light, the novel further provides the raw material for exploring the significance of the "bell-jar" as a metaphor for the economy of disciplining bodies that seem to want to make a difference within the *polis* metaphor. However, as *Antigone* teaches us, any attempt to undermine the dominant 'narrative' seems ineffective since resistance that seems to be against the hegemonic discourse of the *polis* metaphor subjects the resister to 'othering', with resister's dissent being co-opted as illness or crime. 'Othering', either in the form of medicalization or criminalization, becomes the physical public coercive apparatus that directs the heroines towards nostalgia and penitence, which, in turn, paves the way for rehabilitation before re-appropriation into the dominant narrative.

The 3rd chapter portrays Hermione as struggling to separate from her mother and distinguish herself as a speaking subject. It portrays her as subverting the narrative paradigms of heterosexual romance in order to enhance the value of lesbian relationship as her own blow to the 'orthodoxies' considered appropriate for female subjects. However, the way it ends is a 'blind spot' which this chapter tries to illuminate. The

chapter also 'zooms in on' her prophetic dream to be "re-born" as a runner, a messenger, running "in forgotten meters" with her hieroglyphic script in hand (*Her* 220), always on the look-out for her fantasy of a loving receiver, which is later celebrated but also demolishes her long-standing resistance-in-process and dissent-on-trial in "The Walls do not Fall" from her *Trilogy*. By accepting God Ram's offer, and, thus infantilizing herself, by clinging to him and referring to him as "Father," she abandons her anti-patriarchy stance. This chapter claims that she is ideologically coerced into a rationality of reintegration into an acceptable role while, at the same time, allowing herself to 'flirt' with the comforting idea that what she has chosen in her consent to 'symbolic' authority is self-determination.

Notes

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[1] "Her" is at once grammatical subject and object: as homonym (or short version) of a subject's proper name (*Her*mione) and the accusative/dative declension form of the third person personal pronoun, her name folds, as it were, in itself selfhood as both subject and object.

[2] As is explained in Chapter 3, Hermione's 'illness' is temporary; her "certifiable" insanity is necessary in order for the repressed subject to lay claim to a 'renewed' relation to the ambient world and the self: "Obeying their orders. Whose orders? I have been almost faithful. In order to be faithful, *I* will forego faith, I will creep back into the shell in order to emerge full-fledged, a bird, a phoenix. I will creep back now in order to creep out later " (*Her* 221). Hermione shows that she is a 'bad' resistor – a dissident, using her insanity as gestating her hidden ability to bring herself to the world anew; her 'dementia' is but a process of self-cleansing where the 'soil' must be tilled "ripe for a new sort of forestation" (*Her* 57). If this "new sort of forestation" contains the aquatic element rather than the cone-shaped foliage of the pine tree canopy under which she finds herself "standing frozen on the wood path" (5), then Hermione can become a 'stone' dropped in that water; and through the water she will cleanse herself of the impact "the world's division" has had on her; and re-animated, she will seek and offset the binary arrangement of reality that keeps nature apart from culture and self from 'other' -- as she most emotively recites while hinting at her love for Fayne: "O sister my sister O singing swallow, the world's division divideth us" (*Her* 179).

[3] For reasons of brevity, any quoted excerpt from Sophocles' *Antigone* referred to in this dissertation will be henceforth cited as *A* instead of *Antigone*, which is the full title of the tragedy; the same applies to *The Bell Jar* that will be henceforth cited as *TBJ*.

[4] See the explanation of the term under the relevant entry in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (https://www.britannica.com/topic/patriarchy).

[5] "'We Rise' is a web-based resource, from which there have been taken certain sections regarding the nature of the phenomenon of patriarchy in history (https://justassociates.org/en/we-rise-movement-building-reimagined).

[6] The main function of co-optation is the silencing of dissent by giving certain individuals or groups a 'stake' in the *status quo*. Co-optation not only uses inclusion but also exclusion as another way of securing political power. The inclusion of some

always has the effect of excluding others, which is what holds true for power politics in the sense of 'divide and rule'. Actually, co-optation itself can serve to sideline others.

[7] "H.D. draws heavily from Greek mythology and literature," as Jennifer Lynn Maclure claims in her thesis (9). The mythology that she draws on helps her to investigate the canonical literary past and dig out what she finds useful to use as her writing 'scalpel' to cut away the politically motivated patriarchal 'lies' on the 'body' of patriarchal culture. From those bits and pieces of the past, she deconstructs the 'lies' of the male-defined hegemonic narrative in order "to reconstruct a new feminist mythology in which 'true woman' and 'true writer' do not have conflicting definitions," while, at the same time, attempting to unite what has previously been severed by the "figurative violence of … patriarchal theories" (21) – such as scientifically proposed theories, mainly those put forward by Freud in addition to the Judeo-Christian myths of male-privileging they are informed by.

[8] Although this dissertation does not purport to examine H.D.'s *Trilogy* as part of the writer's *oeuvre* with regard to how it interacts with H.D.'s and Plath's works under examination, it intends to explain why it uses it as part of its argumentation to support that we need to look at how H.D.'s recorded experience unfolds in her narrative tradition to understand that it is contextualized within a continuum organically related within, with experience "divided" and also "deferred" but already there to be drawn upon and "recovered.. before [her] as something to be produced" (Culler 82). As H.D. through Hermione is on a quest for the 'truth' that begins in her collective past and also passes through the war-torn zone of London, she re-experiences the need to return to her 'ancient' past to recover the 'truth' of old in a poem from her *Trilogy,* "The Walls do not Fall." As Kreiger says, *Trilogy* is "a founding example of the women's long poem sub-genre" assuming proportions "reminiscent of the epic, set as it is within the cultural turmoil of World War II" (3). Friedman actually locates *Trilogy* "squarely in the center of [the] modernist mainstream', alongside Pound's *Cantos*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Crane's *The Bridge*, and Williams' *Patterson*… [sharing] with those of her male contemporaries a quest theme that expresses itself in mythic and religious terms" (*Psyche Reborn* 5). On the other hand, as Rainey claims "others, in contrast, find an ill-fit between *Trilogy* and the male-authored poems, citing its relative heady optimism and its lack of continued cultural relevance as justification for its marginalization" (112). As emblematic of "its representation of feminine spiritual and aesthetic power and its underlying condemnation of masculinist philosophy and politics" (Kreiger 3),

Trilogy continues to be considered the locus "the emergence . . . of massive female symbols, resolutions and myths, of women-identified quests, and of female heroes who act in narratives making explicit critique of phallocentric culture" (DuPlessis 76). In addition, the long poem in question may be considered a "feminist manifesto" (Kreiger 3), but it is also H.D.'s voice of resistance to Freud's materialist views. As Friedman explains her "[r]ejection of materialism and the consequent search for spiritual realism is the central poetic act of the *Trilogy*, which therefore reproduces indirectly H.D.'s dialogue with Freud and demonstrates the essential pattern of much modernist art" (*Psyche Reborn* 102).

[9] Wherever in this thesis, both in Introduction and in Chapter 3, I have made reference to Sakelliou's *Εισαγωγή στην Τριλογία της H.D.*, I have done so by trying to make a paraphrase of the main idea from Greek to English.

[10] As for H.D.'s religious background, her mother, Helen Wolle (1852-1927), was from a prominent Bethlehem Moravian family and so H.D. was brought up in a religious environment which affected her thinking but at the same time led her to distance herself from her religious origins adopting a broader, more critical attitude to them. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under the entry "Moravian Church," we find out that "the first Moravian mission in the Americas was among black slaves in the West Indies (1732) … In 1740, the group went to Pennsylvania and founded Nazareth and Bethlehem"; under the same entry, we can also see that "the Moravian church … subscribes to both the Apostles' and Nicene creeds but does not have a distinctive creed of its own, believing that the various Protestant confessions have already established the chief articles of the Christian faith".

[11] *Agnus Dei* is Latin for Jesus, as the Lamb of God, who lifts the sins off our shoulders and carries them upon his, thus becoming propitiation for our sins, according to the Gospel of John. When John the Baptist sees Jesus, he exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

[12] The concept of the 'symbolic' is a term analogous to Claude Lévi-Strauss' concept of "order of culture" in the latter's *Elementary Structures of Kinship.* Borrowed and generously used by Jacques Lacan, it owes much of its importance as a key term in Lacan's works, as shown in his *Ecrits*, to the fact that "as language is the basic social institution in the sense that all others presuppose language," culture in which a man speaks is language-mediated "because the symbol [of language] has made him man" which "superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of nature"; the social world of

communication, interpersonal relations, ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the 'law' are made possible once a child enters into language and accepts the rules and dictates of society; the acceptance of language's rules is made possible on account of a child's acceptance of the "name-of-the-father" (more on the term below, at endnote [14]), those laws and restrictions that control both desire and the rules of communication; and through recognition of those laws and restrictions, you are able to enter into a community of others; thus, the 'symbolic', through language, links humans (subjects) together in one action; this action is founded on the existence of the world of the symbol -- on 'contracts', on the 'symbolic'.

[13] See the relevant quotation (*Her* 24) in Introduction (9).

[14] In his *Ecrits,* Jacques Lacan terms the "name of the father" as that "which we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" – as distinguishable from "the narcissistic relations, or even from the real relations, which the subject sustains with the image and action of the person who embodies it" (68); elsewhere he says that the "paternal function imposes the 'law' and regulates desire, intervening in the imaginary dual relationship between mother and child to introduce a necessary symbolic distance between them" (68); and lastly he explains that "the true function of the Father is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law', and the 'symbolic' Father is thus not an actual subject but a position in the 'symbolic order'" (218-19).

[15] The *panopticon* is a type of institutional building and a system of control designed by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. It is elaborated on in the second chapter. Suffice it to say here that the concept of the design is to allow all prisoners of an institution to be observed by a single security guard, without the inmates feeling they are being watched. The architecture consists of a *rotunda* with an inspection house at its center. From the center the staff of the institution is able to observe the inmates. Bentham expanded his plan in order to make it equally applicable to hospitals, schools, sanatoriums, and asylums; however, the basic design was more appropriate for a *panopticon* prison. It is his prison that is now most widely meant by the term *panopticon.*

[16] "Up until 1975, H.D. was known exclusively as an Imagist poet. In 1911, Hilda Doolittle left her hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania," and joined the long tradition of American expatriate poets such as T.S. Elliot and Ezra Pound living in London

(Galtung 8). In London, "she was introduced to F.S. Flint and Richard Aldington. Together they became the initiators of Imagism, a poetic movement that, through its advocacy of free verse and the clear, precise image, changed the course of modern poetry" (8). Pound's creation of H.D.'s signature, which she would keep for the rest of her life, shaped her career in a twofold way. Firstly, Pound's transformation of Hilda Doolittle to H.D., points to the modernist notion of poetry as a male vocation. It becomes shockingly obvious that the initials 'H.D.' "conceal her gender, testifying to a need to comply with male standards" (Galtung 8), thus for her work to 'pass' as male writing and, most importantly, not to "draw attention to itself as having been written by a woman" (Benstock 333). Secondly, Pound's creation of H.D.'s signature shows how male criticism was largely responsible for the shaping of the female artist's identity and her literary reputation. By signing H.D.'s poem 'H.D. Imagiste', "Pound ties her name to a specific literary movement he is championing"; although H.D. would later drop 'Imagiste', "this label continued to be regarded as an integral part of her name" (Galtung 9).

[17] Most of her accomplishments in this field are included and discussed in Susan Sanford Friedman's *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H. D.*

[18] It includes *Paint It To-Day*, *Bid Me to Live*, *Her* and *Asphodel*, all four of which were authored by Doolittle between 1921 and 1950.

CHAPTER 1
ANTIGONE: FROM DISSENT TO CO-OPTATION

1.1 Exordium

As this dissertation attempts to conceptualize resistance in the context of two emblematic 20th century *romans-à-clef*, *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, it revisits Sophocles' *Antigone*, focusing on the heroine's defiance of Creon's decree, which turns her into an expression of dissent, paradigmatically a constitutive element of resistant subjectivity. As Antigone remains a most imposing figure of female struggle in literature, it is almost our historical 'compulsion' to return to such canonical texts whose myths constitute our literary imagination in order to instrumentalize them. In the case of *Antigone*, as Cornelius Castoriades says, to view the heroine's clash with Creon not merely as one between a dissident and a sovereign, but as a totality, as an "*actual presence* in the Athenian socio-historical space," transposable in the context of the present, and, more importantly, as a presence "indissolubly interwoven with democracy," and, as a result, "with the political," helps us to indicate the analogy between the conceptual parameters of herself as a locus of implicit change and the potential for effective resistance in the present (139-40).

By revisiting the *Antigone*, we are confronted by Antigone's famous dirge, throughout which she is heard to reject "the prospect of marriage and children," to claim that "her brother is irreplaceable" and to also explicitly state that "the tomb that she is about to enter is [meant] to become her bridal bed and the place where she is to meet her dead family again" (Markousi 22). Her lamentation is more than a self-invitation to the Underworld resulting from impetuousness; it is rather a refusal to obey that what her *polis* considers deserving to be grieved, "children" or a "husband," would be no loss for her. On the contrary, with her brother "gone," she feels she is condemned to a sort of living death since her life without Polyneices offers no intelligibility to her:

> O tomb, O marriage-chamber, hollowed out
>
> house that will watch forever, where I go.
>
> To my own people, who are mostly there;
>
> Persephone has taken them to her.

………………………………………..

Had I had children or their father dead,

I'd let them molder. I should not have chosen,

in such a case to cross the state's decree.

What is the law that lies behind these words?

One husband gone, I might have found another,

or a child from a new man in first child's place,

but with my parents hid away in death,

no brother, ever, could spring up for me.

(*A* 891-94, 906-13)

That her words strike a chord of genuine uncertainty[1] as to whether there are any associations with incest is comprehensible on condition that these words are examined independently of her being a member of the Labdacid family who have certainly been involved in incestuous relationships. With Jocasta being Antigone's mother as well as grandmother, and with Oedipus playing the role of both father and brother for her, Antigone's incestuous desire for Polyneices makes more sense -- if seen in a broader genealogical context.

At the same time, incest, as such, is not an expression of Antigone's youthful need to violate the mores of society, but is, instead, created by the *polis*'s politics of exclusion. Insofar as Antigone's and Polyneices' alienation from the *polis* is also intertwined with the fact that Polyneices is the enemy-intruder, while Antigone, besides being a woman, is also considered a political dissident, their enforced alienation from the *polis* brings the two siblings even closer than usual, which, as a result, upsets the order. Their bond transcends the boundaries of 'expected' sibling love to the extent that that Antigone seems to be pursuing even her own death to be re-united with her deceased brother. So involved is she in what seems to be an incestuous situation that it would not be an exaggeration to say that she somehow appears to be fixated on Polyneices' dead body. As a result, she becomes impervious to the consequences of her refusal to reconcile herself to Creon's decree that the corpse be unburied and exposed.

If transposed in the context of "whatever is social, historical, worldly" (Gourgouris xix), Antigone's unfulfilled tragic love for her brother seems to be relevant to the political. Her incestuous desire for her dead brother goes beyond the 'curse' of mere genealogical ties; it represents her need to stretch the boundaries of a woman's life worth living and fighting for. Therefore, it cannot not be examined in connection with

the myth of the Labdacids and how this brings disgrace upon the entire Labdacid 'household'. For although it is true that Antigone is involved in an incestuous situation that cannot be construed as resistance, it seems to be its aftereffect. For both patriarchy in ancient Thebes and patriarchy in modern neoliberal -- ultra-capitalist – societies incontrovertibly beget 'knotty' and uncertain relationships. As such, they result in exposing the very forces that gave birth to them. In this light, it is not surprising that Antigone's desire is created under conditions collaterally connected with Polyneices' exclusion and Antigone's precariousness following her willed defiance of Creon's decree. In *Antigone's Claim*, Butler mentions that "Antigone represents not kinship in its ideal form but its deformation and displacement," while also questioning "what sustaining web of relations makes our lives possible" (24). This can be condensed into a kinship status as 'anti-generation' as Antigone's name connotes, since "it is often a confusing one with no clarity or stability in this generation" (22). At the same time, as Butler claims, "Antigone's kin could serve as [a steppingstone] for the acceptance and integration of families that do not fulfill the traditional heteronormative patriarchal model of a family"[2] (72). In fact, her presence as a tragic heroine of multiple socio-historical symbolisms within a continuum between 'democratic' practices of the past and 'democratic' practices of the present discontinues our self-reassuring, 'democratically' established belief in a 'logic of things' of the *hoi polloi* which fundamentally enforces the very strict definition of being members of a *polis* in modernity that 'guards' such timeless truths as that of the normative version of kinship as being essential to the self-preservation of the culture as we know it.

In this light, this dissertation recasts the debate between Creon and Antigone as a means through which the 'endurance limits' of democracy in the *polis* then and in the *polis* in modernity are put to the test. By treating the incest theme as a political lever to pit patriarchy against an 'alternative' version of femininity, it takes Antigone's dissent coupled with the incestuous overtones of desire for Polyneices and exposes it in such a way as to highlight how incest can upset the established order and also how, by upsetting it, it can confirm it anew. Thus, Antigone's desire for her brother, Polyneices, becomes the vehicle which, due to its incestuous nature, implicitly works toward exposing the problematic aspects of an oppressive regime within which resistance is 'entombed' within the hegemonic discourse inside which it is seen to unfold, allowing for no re-articulation of the terms of the system that would make the life of all 'Antigones' livable or at least tolerable. Inside this system, Antigone's resisting voice

that attempts to articulate an 'alternative' version of femininity is silenced in a sepulcher.

Paradoxically, the heroine's suicide exposes a *polis* regime that criminalizes dissent but also legitimates it. Although she somehow "de-institutes heterosexuality," as Butler says, since she does not stay alive for Haemon, she actually "does not achieve another sexuality" (*Antigone's Claim* 76). This is her ultimate 'limit' of dissent. Her dissident '*prattein*' is finally neutralized and co-opted into the narrative of hegemony mainly because hegemony is internalized by her. 'Hailed' by Creon as "You there, whose head is drooping to the ground, / do you admit this, or deny you did it?" (*A* 441-2), Antigone is interpellated into a social identity of one who is being charged with violating the law. Actually, according to Althusser, "hailing 'recruits' subjects … by that very precise operation … called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every day… hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (174). Antigone assumes the role of subject who, albeit subjected to Creon's accusatory *logos*, also reasons in a way that is compatible with the *polis' logos*. She is thus co-opted into "the stance and idiom of the one she opposes," namely Creon (*Antigone's Claim* 23). However, she seals her fate by not having a life to live, by bringing on herself death before she has had the opportunity to live. As Butler also claims, "Antigone figures the limits of intelligibility exposed at the limits of kinship" (23). Even so, she seems, until the very end, to be navigating a 'sea' of ambiguity concerning her incestuous desire for the dead brother, with her secret never being revealed and with the *status quo* remaining as it was even after she decides to take her life. Her dissidence is turned into an expression of 'celebrating' self-inflicted death as its ultimate expression.

1.2 Antigone's Legacy Reviewed

Guided by Antigone's defiance of Creon's decree, it is time to introduce concerns and questions which allow us to probe our understanding of Antigone's dissident '*prattein*' further. Antigone's posture is one of dissidence, anchored in multiple positions and relationships. The ongoing conflict, '*polemos',* between Antigone and Creon is, as George Steiner puts it, "dense with some constants of antagonism or confrontation: between men and women, age and youth, society and the individual, the living and the dead, and men and gods" (231). Yet the answer to the question about the nature of dissidence represented by Antigone's act is rather evasive. For almost two and a half millennia, we have been hoping to 'spot' her doing wrong, to say clearly what she is about, however "no vigilance could be adequate to the task," as Carol Jacobs

says (qtd. in Bracke 48). No one has seen her commit the act of burying the corpse of the dead brother. Although the act of the burial seems to be "wandering throughout the play" (*Antigone's Claim* 7), the sentry reports that it leaves no tangible "mark that could attach it to a sovereign author" (Jacobs 910).

It is true that wherever performed, *Antigone*'s great power is its ability to be a Trojan horse for dissident political sentiment. *Antigone* has always been there for communities to claim the right to mourn loss. This understandably means expressing their need to lay claim to re-voicing their demand for protection of minority rights after a primary resistant voicing of such concerns has been violently 'hushed'. It also means mourning their dead wherever this right has been suspended or where states have declared a hierarchy of loss that includes dispensable victims, or, even where lives have been declared ungrievable, *Antigone* has been there as a way to express that grief. In places where minority traditions have been displaced from the city's 'walls', considered a threat to the nation, the play in question has been a way to open 'fight' down those 'walls' to reclaim the city. Whether this has borne fruit or whether it has been successful should be seen in connection with factors such as ideology and the extent to which the hegemonic 'narrative' is internalized by those expressing dissent. Ultimately, even wherever dissent remains but a whispered current, *Antigone* becomes the vehicle through which to articulate protest.

To this end, the following subchapter is intended to cover a slice of what could be regarded as the most provocative and subtle feminist readings of *Antigone* published in recent years with the aim of singling out those instances in which Antigone figures not as a 'martyr' but as the woman of the *polis* then and the *polis* in modernity, beyond spatiotemporal constraints, who, despite assurances to the contrary, is always internalized by the male body politic as being a '*metic*', however applicable that may be to gendered 'narrative' identities then and now, which Antigone claims to be: "I go to stay with them," as a *metic* who does not belong and as one who is exiled as Creon says later: "but she is exiled from our life on earth" (*A* 868, 890). Without therefore intending to romanticize the past, we provide these re-readings of Antigone in order to contribute to a better understanding not of *how* the change in the very manner in which gender politics is conducted does not occur but *why* it does not.

1.2.1 *Hegel's Antigone*

One such interpretation of the play is that of the struggle between the rule of the sovereign and alternative sources of authority summarized in Hegel's re-reading of

Antigone as the dialectic between the authority of the state and the call of conscience, with Creon equating the law of the state with justice and Antigone representing the call of morality, though. Hegel's 'reduction' of *Antigone* "to an opposition of human and divine laws allows for their … [conflict] precisely while they are seen as inseparable" (Hoy 175). As Hegel demonstrates, *Antigone* "highlights this issue of the emerging conflicts within social, political, and religious dimensions of law, *nomos*" (qtd. in Hoy 177). Jean Vernant's and Vidal-Naquet's reading supports Hegel's interpretation of the play as the clash between human and divine laws (9). However, through these binaries, Hegel 'essentializes' woman's nature, relegating her to private life within which women's relation to divine law is 'unconscious'. Hegel characteristically says in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* that "the feminine . . . does not attain to *consciousness* of [what is ethical] . . . because the law of the family is an *im*plicit, *inner* essence which does not lie in the daylight of consciousness, but remains an inner feeling and divine element devoid of actuality" (247.17–21). As Hoy comments, "Hegel's language … relegates feminine 'knowing'" to what we could call "an irrational or at the very least an unarticulated feeling" (182). The fact that Hegel "employs this terminology" fraught with a "blatant reinforcement of gendered biases by attributing to women inferior rational capacities" (182), is also confirmed by Kelly Oliver: "[T]he feminine element remains unconscious and unconceptualizable. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a phenomenology of masculine consciousness that is possible only by setting up feminine 'consciousness' as the negation of masculine consciousness and then suppressing the feminine" (84).

While Hegel 'essentializes' woman's nature as private and irrational, subordinated to man's public and rational nature, he also 'naturalizes' participation in the public sphere by the male members of the *polis* and ties it with the human laws which are 'known' and explicit, a direct implication of male supremacy since the rational and the public are associated with man's participation in the *polis*. Through the above implication, women and family are admittedly suppressed, with the public, however, seeming to depend on the private or familial since "in what it suppresses and yet is essential to it – womankind as such – [the community] creates for itself its own internal enemy" (Hegel 259.2–4). Encoding a false ideological picture of women in his infamous passage on womankind, Hegel refers to womankind as "the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community," further suggesting that it "changes by intrigue the universal end of the government into a private end, transforms its universal activity into

a work of some particular individual, and perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament of the family" (259.4–10). Hegel's harshly censorious language continues unabated with regard to woman accusing her of "turn[ing] to ridicule the earnest wisdom of mature age which, indifferent to purely private pleasures and enjoyments, as well as to playing an active part, only thinks of and cares for the universal" (259.4–10).

Hegel's 'essentialization' of binaries and privileging of one term over the other where *Antigone* is concerned has been called into question, though. To the extent that "Antigone does not engage," in what Hoy refers to as "hidden intrigue against the state by seducing its young men away from their public, military duties, or by using the state to augment family fortunes" (184), she is in fact the very antipode to this picture of "womankind" as the "everlasting irony" in the community, and at the same time she transcends and removes herself from his gendered paradigm of women as 'naturalized' "ironies of the community."

1.2.2 *Irigaray's Antigone*

In her *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray also poses a rhetorical question by adding irony to Hegel's "eternal irony": "If [Antigone] is so passive and submissive, then why is she considered to be a political threat, a figure of 'revolt', in the eyes of Creon?" (219). The situation becomes even more ironic when, while referring to Hegel's syllogism about the binaries of unconscious/conscious and irrational/rational, Irigaray exposes Hegel's contradiction where Antigone is concerned: "What an amazing vicious circle in a single syllogistic system. Whereby the unconscious, while remaining unconscious, is yet supposed to know the laws of a consciousness – which is permitted to remain ignorant of it" (*Speculum* 223).

Moving beyond Hegel, Irigaray's Antigone is a subversive female agent who acts in a political way as well, by rising up against the patriarch's power. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and in *Thinking the Difference,* Antigone is the same subversive woman as in *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Yet, Irigaray now presents her as an emblem of her ethics of sexual difference and of her feminist politics of "livability" – a term we deliberately borrow from Butler. Actually, the concept of "livability" emerges as intimately associated with Butler's discussion of "grievability" and her corpus of work.[3] "Livability" is not so much about which lives are viable and flourishing in particular socio-political contexts; it is engagement with it. It becomes a fundamentally political activity and one which, for Butler, holds possibilities to direct

itself towards radical social transformation. By the same token, Irigaray's feminist politics of "livability" is about transformation, too. Irigaray proposes "the role historically allotted to woman" should be transformed if an ethics of sexual difference were to be achieved (*Ethics* 119). She also claims that Antigone, as a woman, could be an ethical inspiration to us by stating that "she must be allowed to speak," so that a more feminine 'symbolic' could start to emerge (107). This 're-making' of a feminine 'symbolic' would not only enhance women's "livability" but could also bring men and women closer together, since women could now become conscious subjects -- in contradistinction to Hegel's Antigone, and men would no longer be incarcerated in solipsism – as is the case of Hegel's Creon (107).

More importantly, though, what really characterizes Irigaray's re-conceptualization of Antigone is that she also politicizes Antigone in a feminine manner. She is creating a political feminist philosophy of "social justice," by focusing on "the great mother-daughter couples of mythology," such as that of Jocasta and Antigone, in order to subvert patriarchy (*Ethics* 9), a political aspect also already present in *Thinking the Difference* and in her *Speculum of the Other Woman,* too, where Irigaray connects Antigone to the subversion of patriarchy. Irigaray proceeds to positively re-conceptualize the image of Antigone as "anti-woman" since Antigone is "a production of a culture that has been written by men alone" (*Ethics* 101). Irigaray does so by creating her own feminine and feminist body politics that mainly focuses on the mother and her "red blood" that runs through Oedipus', Polyneices' and Antigone's veins[4] (*Speculum* 116). As she claims in "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," insofar as our culture has been founded on a "matricide," which has resulted in an undervaluation of the mother figure and of her genealogy, any "bodily encounter with the mother" since then has been forbidden (39), and in order to become a subject -- a 'masculine' one, one has to detach oneself from one's motherly origin, as can be understood through the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex. This has resulted in an overemphasis on the masculine 'symbolic', which in turn has deprived women of a genuine "livable" life.

To change this situation, Irigaray proceeds to revalue the importance of the mother figure: women have to place themselves in the "genealogy of women" once more, so that vertical relationships between daughters and mothers may come into being again ("The Bodily" 44). In this way, through this 'shared space', they are bound to achieve a feminine 'symbolic' of their own in order to become speaking subjects, which can only be created through a positive re-instalment of mother-daughter relationships (44).

"We must abandon our mothers," she says, continuing to add that we must "substitute for them, eliminate them in order to be the same, all of which destroys the possibility of a love between mother and daughter," practically pointing towards the intergenerational 'conspiracy' imposed on them by patriarchy where "the two become at once accomplices and rivals in order to move into the single possible position in the desire of man" (*Ethics* 87).

Irigaray considers the re-conceptualization of the negative image of the phallic mother necessary if women are to forge sisterly relationships through which they will no longer have to compete to be "the mother of mothers" but will be able to acknowledge each other as individuals (*Ethics* 87). A "female ethics" of "livability" will come into being, which also has its political consequences, since women as sisters will be able to team up against patriarchic, anti-feminist politics – as she claims[5] (92). With this in mind, we could legitimately claim that Irigaray views the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, as the ideal paradigms for such a politics of "livability" since both figures are political, revolutionary, and subversive feminine agents who want to effect change. Although Irigaray's ideas on mother-daughter relations and sisterhood provide us with a starting point to purge Antigone and Ismene of their former 'masculinist' connotations, it is also true that neither of them escapes the 'clutches' of patriarchic 'penitentiarism', with the prospect of "livability" being infeasible since Antigone commits suicide and Ismene acquiescently chooses not to resist. Antigone's suicide undermines her resistance and, in general, her dissident '*prattein*.' What her act ultimately equates itself with is an act of 'solipsism' at the subversive level since in terms of its political impact it has nullified her polemical dissent. Put otherwise, Antigone's death becomes co-opted for patriarchal order to the extent that the man to whom she is betrothed becomes her post-mortem husband, thus subverting resistance to gender ideology and casting doubt on her emblematic act of fatal 'closure' of heterosexuality as an option while alive, since she decides not to choose Haemon, Creon's son, as a husband, a decision which, in death, she 'undoes'.

1.2.3 *Butler's Antigone*

Butler views Antigone as a "counterfigure to the trend advocated by feminists," such as Irigaray, "to claim the support and authority of the state to implement feminist policy" (*Antigone's Claim* 1). She views Antigone as representing a kind of thinking that opposes the 'symbolic' and, therefore, opposes life, inasmuch as the very terms of "livability" seem to be established by a 'symbolic' that her kind of claim calls into

question. This claim, "does not take place outside the 'symbolic' or, indeed, outside the public sphere, but within its terms and as an unanticipated appropriation and perversion of its own mandate," as she says (54). The heroine's claim signifies her right to grieve. Hers is a dissident voice contesting the state's claim that some lives are dispensable while others are taken to be superior to them. Antigone's insistence on grieving Polyneices challenges hegemonic authority and thus contests that which is politically dominant. In this way, the heroine also questions and emasculates the public/private distinction, which in turn problematizes such normatively circumscribed issues as 'family' and 'family values', allocating gender roles, and the line between legal and illegal sex, thus bringing to the fore how deeply political these matters are. Butler emphasizes that all these political matters could yield insight into what is rendered 'otherwise' to our normative common sense and hegemonic institutional arrangements: "[Antigone] speaks, and speaks in public, precisely when she ought to be sequestered in the private domain. What sort of political speech is this that transgresses the very boundaries of the political, which sets into scandalous motion the boundary by which her speech ought to be contained?" (*Antigone's Claim* 4).

In fact, in the same analysis of *Antigone*, Butler proceeds to add another political dimension to that insight by situating the figure of Antigone "within a contemporary context in which the politics of kinship has brought a classical western dilemma into contemporary crisis," with kinship seen not as a form of being, but as a form of doing (*Antigone's Claim* 5). Butler offers an interpretation of Antigone as a figure whose incestuous genealogy allows her to question, challenge, and transgress kinship norms: "the norms that govern legitimate and illegitimate modes of kin association might be more radically redrawn" (67). However, wondering what sort of kinship Antigone represents and what her role is in the field of politics, Butler goes on to investigate the interdependence of state power and kinship in her book *Gender Trouble* and, more specifically, if kinship can flourish without the support and mediation of the state and if the reverse is true, too. Despite the obvious conflict in the play between Creon representing the state and Antigone representing kinship, Butler lets it be known that Antigone, on the basis of her incestuous genealogy, apparently deviates from kinship rather than represent the quintessential typical family of the time.

It is of the essence to refer here to the fact that Butler sees in Antigone's act "a fatal challenge to normative heterosexuality" (*Gender* 23), one that challenges norms that define the contours of our own society, either with respect to kinship from a racial point

of view, or in terms of single mothers or adoptive queer parents, and so on and so forth, which actually seem to become the essential 'deformations' that the norm needs to exclude. Although Antigone is none of the above, she allows us to revisit and re-read kinship not because kinship actually safeguards the conditions of "intelligibility by which life becomes livable" (*Gender* 23), but mainly on the grounds of those conditions by which life is rendered unlivable. Her unlivable life leads her to take her life herself. Nevertheless, her death also emblematizes a heterosexual fatality, or, at least, nullifies heterosexuality, by refusing to stay alive for her *fiancé*, Haemon, by refusing to become a mother and a wife, and by shocking the public with her 'indeterminate' gender.

Butler's reference to exclusion with regard to the 'perverse' making its claim in the realm of "legitimate kinship" determined by "its exclusion or pathologization" (*Gender* 68), or else medicalization, beyond the question of sexual difference, leaves 'hints' of 'an Antigone' as the 'difference' intolerable to the political body, the *polis*, of which she seems to be a part and by means of the exclusion of which the political body seems to define itself. She is seen as struggling to achieve political renewal. To the extent that Antigone's grief over her brother's death does not take place in private but is expressed through mourning in public, it transgresses the boundaries between public and private. Whereas the public realm of the *polis* is occupied by free men, the private, the household, the *oikos*, is the space occupied by women and slaves, which demonstrates how inequality among the people of the *polis* is perpetuated. Antigone's act of mourning transgresses these boundaries by bringing the private into the public and therefore making it political. Lamenting the loss of her brother in public upsets the political order. Although mourning should have taken place privately, Antigone manages to transform mourning for her brother into an act of political defiance, making a forceful crossover from the strictly separate sphere of the female private into that of the male public.[6]

The figure of Antigone seems to challenge the very logic of a polity whose necessary condition for representation is exclusion -- be it of women, people of color, or other marginalized subjects. In this sense Antigone, outside of the incest context, redraws the borders of the polity so that it will pre-empt herself as resistant subjectivity from being cast out, thus creating a future polity that is not contingent on the political exclusion of some of its members. At the same time, it leaves a lot of unanswered questions about whether the exclusionary logic of the *polis* system then and that of the

polis in modernity chooses partially which of its members to exclude or not when it actually excludes those members it cannot rehabilitate or re-train to make them fit in.

1.2.4 *Kristeva's Antigone*

Kristeva uses a different departure point in her effort to decode Antigone's act, arguing that it is the maternal position that Antigone longs to inhabit as she brings to the fore those 'mysterious' moments when Antigone mirrors Jocasta, looking into her desire to 'embrace' the maternal vocation of care and affection, of sublimation, , despite the fact Antigone dies single and without offspring. Drawing from a psychoanalytical Lacanian analysis of the play, Kristeva's engagement with Antigone revolves around a familiar theme from Greek tragedy, namely that of 'liminality' or limit experience. Antigone is situated between life and death, public and private, inside and outside. She is 'liminal' and without a fixed identity. Nevertheless, she knows what she needs and the way to pursue it, and, as a result, she sets her own standards. 'Inhabiting' the place of the mother, she brings forth an imaginary universe: a world where life is livable at the limit. Antigone's reference to her love for Polyneices, "Friend shall I lie with him, yes friend with friend" (*A* 73), resonates with incestuous desire which is, most expectedly, thought of as evil and socially unacceptable by the law of the 'symbolic'.

In Sophocles' *Antigone,* the eponymous heroine's relationship with her family is based on interdependence, and, as is shown through Kristeva's "maternal," Antigone's relationship is symbiotic. In acknowledgement of the authority of gods, prior to the birth of the *polis*, she cannot know the difference between Eteocles and Polyneices based on their allegiance to the *polis*. Creon, however, as the epitome of the 'symbolic', serves as the embodiment of the hegemony of patriarchal institutions. Just as the superego excludes and categorizes, Creon excludes the body of Polyneices as an 'abjection', and also categorizes Eteocles as the 'good party', privileging his body over that of his dead brother. At the same time, Creon's rejection of "womankind" points in the direction of treating the 'maternal' as of less importance and value. Unsurprisingly, he is seen to be in a paroxysm of rage when he states "I am no man and she the man instead / if she can have this conquest without pain" (*A* 484-5), concerned as he is with the setting and preservation of the boundaries between male and female. Creon says that he would, in fact, rather be "overset by a man" than actually "be called weaker than womankind" (*A* 676-80), suggesting that his being a man is consistent with his embodiment of the hegemony of the 'symbolic'.

Moreover, regarding the tension between the institutionalized discourse of the 'symbolic' and the obscure discourse of the 'semiotic', Clifford Davis makes an interesting remark concerning "the ambiguity of language in the *Antigone*" (14), which also suggests how Antigone's speech navigates the limit of that which is comprehensible to Creon as she speaks and acts in 'liminality'. As Simon Goldhill says, "Antigone's conception of *philos*" is Homeric (qtd. in Davis 14). According to Goldhill, "it refers simply to one's blood relatives, the members of *oikos*" (14). In addition, "Antigone defines *echthros*," 'enemy', "as anyone who threatens or disregards the family" (14). He also points out that "Antigone's values should be seen as anterior to the rise of the *polis*, when the *oikos* was subsumed by [a 'family' of] interdependent citizens," and that "Creon defines *philos* and *echthros* only in relation to political loyalty" (14).

In his "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," Vernant argues that the antinomous conceptions of *philos* and *echthros* re-create the political and religious dead-end through the language they use. He states: "So, the function of the words used on stage is not so much to establish communication between the various characters as to indicate blockages and barriers between them and the impermeability of their minds, to locate the points of conflict" (42). It is obvious that Vernant's reference to "blockages and barriers between them" as a dead-end between Creon and Antigone also surfaces the protagonists' one-sided but also legitimate arguments. Moreover, as Davis says, besides the two tragic heroes "opposing conceptions of *philos*, *echthros* and *nomos*, there is a revealing difference between the most significant example of civic language" (16) between Creon's edict and Antigone's "unwritten laws" (*A* 454). In the language of the 'symbolic', the edict is prohibitory since no member of the *polis* may bury the corpse of Polyneices. The edict is equal to the exclusion, by the 'symbolic', of that which contaminates the *polis*. Like the language of a unitary superego, it represents the biased disavowal of the contaminant by a man, Creon. Also, like the discourse of the 'symbolic', the edict represents the newly-born authority of the *polis*. In contrast, Antigone's "unwritten laws" are so old that "no one knows their origin in time" (*A* 457). These "unwritten laws" are not prohibitory, nor do they discriminate but are instructive, urging the living to bury the dead, which is confirmed by Antigone who says that "Death yearns for equal justice for all the dead" (*A* 519). On the other hand, the antithetical language of Creon and Antigone regarding burial, law, and friendship, is distilled in her defiance to the king: "Nothing that you say is in accordance with my

thoughts. / I pray it never will be. Nor will there ever be anything pleasing to you in what I say" (*A* 499-501).

The king's wail of recognition, when he discovers Antigone's dead body and witnesses the suicide of his son, brings him face to face with the 'other'. Now that he is compelled to acknowledge what he has excluded, he proceeds to pronounce his 'self-scapegoating' through his hysterical desire for suicide:

> Oh no!
>
> I shudder with affright.
>
> O for a two-edged sword to slay outright
>
> A wretch like me,
>
> made one with misery! (*A* 1307-1311)

Obviously, "the hegemony of the symbolic order has become the source of Creon's own contamination" (Davis 17). It is clear that the king "must recognize his own intimate connection with the defilement of Oedipus and the Labdacids" (17), however hard he has tried to keep it in check. The king's recognition of the 'other' emphasizes his demise. At the same time, "the citizens of Thebes come to recognize the legitimacy of Antigone's allegiance to unwritten laws through her loyalty to the deities of *genos*," and, as a result, "the city is cleansed, in some sense, according to Kristeva's concept of 'purification'" (18). Antigone has killed herself and with Creon being a "living corpse" (*A* 1167), his contamination spreads outward, defiling the city, and, beyond that, the whole family, as a result, is exterminated.

Kristeva's theory serves as a valuable 'tool' of interpretation with regard to the analysis of the major strife between Creon and Antigone. As Antigone seems to serve as a symbol of an older period of Greek society when the *oikos* was predominant and allegiance was determined by the family, it is, nevertheless, thought-provoking to see the *Antigone* as representing the ascent of the *polis* and its historical 'unfolding' from its early 'cradle' of culture. The rising *polis* leaves out the authority of the older gods and, as a result, its relationship to the maternal body. Hence, it phases in the new authority of the 'symbolic' over the 'maternal'. The hegemony of the 'symbolic', by extension, involves the subordination of the 'primitive', pre-oedipal phase to the superego.

1.2.5 *Freud's Antigone*

While there is no denying the bravery behind her actions, the motifs in the *Antigone*, however well-hidden in the play, lend themselves to another interpretation.

The heroine's actions impelled by tacit desire for Polyneices, are traceable to within her family history of incestuous relationships. As far as incest is concerned, it is paradigmatically circumscribed by Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, the basic 'building block' of which is incest and how it occurs in human relationships, and, by extension, how it determines personality. Antigone comes from a family which crumbles under a most detrimental prophecy that expands past the incestuous relationship of her parents, Oedipus and Jocasta, to appear in their offspring, Antigone. Cognizant of her role in the manifestation of her father's prophecy, her parents' inability to escape fate -- and by extension hers, because of her limited free will, Antigone starts her dialogue in the play by calling out to Ismene: "Dear Sister! Dear Ismene! How many evils / Our father, Oedipus, bequeathed to us!" (*A* 1-2). However, unlike her parents, Antigone is able to keep her desires in check. Nonetheless, she is fated to die by hanging herself, just like her mother.

Obviously, for the underlying motifs behind the tragic heroine's actions to be better understood, they should be explored in connection with ancient Greek social and moral codes related to sexuality and, more importantly, to incest, since the latter constitutes the one most immoral and incomprehensible act. Freud's *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* allows a penetrating gaze into the logic behind what renders incest and even mere incestuous desires morally unacceptable and socially incomprehensible. He claims that in "primeval human societies, where the alpha man holds the sexual privileges for the entire group, the sons lusting after their mothers and sisters, challenge him – which often leads to the father's murder – and claim his position" (164-67). This primal sexual drive, which could result in the violent 'usurpation' of the alpha man's sexual privileges -- were it not for the so-called incest taboo, does in fact form the basis of the incest taboo which, over the course of time, becomes internalized by most societies, including that of Ancient Greece (164-67).

Furthermore, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud suggests that "the first sexual attraction of a child is towards the parent of the opposite sex," also claiming that "this sexual attraction awakens the desire to exclude and ultimately replace the other parent" (149-50). If applied to Antigone's relationship with her father, Antigone is seen as being able to somehow assume her mother's role by taking care of her father. Her father's condition and her mother's suicide contribute to the heroine's vulnerability and lack of sexual experience which make it much more difficult for her to move past her

hidden desires. After Oedipus' death, these desires are directed towards her brother, Polyneices. Freud, in his analysis of incest, demonstrates how incestuous desire is built into the human psyche; and as it is unable to manifest itself within the family, it seeks other 'ways-out' through which to erupt; otherwise, it remains repressed. Echoing Levi-Strauss' theory on the "elementary structure of kinship," Cecilia Sjoholm states that "the prohibition against incest forces men to search for wives outside of the family" (88). In this light, it is not an exaggeration to claim that through these theories the transgressive tendency in the human psyche, especially when faced with prohibition, is easier to comprehend. At the same time, incest, as such, seems to rest upon and be triggered by the desire for transgression against something considered socially proscribed.

However, Freud's Oedipus complex, as a 'narrative', which is basically and unilaterally concerned with filial relationships, practically overlooking the political as well as the social connotations and dimensions of the 'factory' of human desire, removes the political character of desire, rendering it confined to within a solipsism of private kin relations. In this way, the Freudian 'incarceration' of desire within a strictly patriarchal family structure stops the 'osmosis' between desire and the socio-political state of 'becoming' within which and because of which it is engineered. As a matter of fact, "the strictly Oedipal approach to incestuous relations," which, as stated earlier, is heavily informed by "structures that … exclude and objectify women …[and] impose a specific narrative that sublimates the human into the family and excludes any relations to the social… becomes the means through which the private extricates itself from the public and presents itself as completely independent from external forces" (Markousi 16).

Feminist criticism, on the other hand, abandoning this patriarchal aspect of the Oedipal 'tool' of analysis, brings to the forefront the patriarchal rationality that underlies the Oedipalizing of all family relations, which tends to sideline and neglect feminine desire by attributing prominence and centrality to the male in psychic processes. For example, in Sjoholm's *The Antigone Complex*, the author proceeds to reverse the source of the complex by reversing the story and proposing that the Oedipus complex is based on Oedipus' daughter, Antigone. This new type of complex is intended to incorporate Freud's overlooked female desire, while also questioning Freud's privileging of the male desire over that of the female desire. Where Antigone's act is concerned, this reversing of the 'tool' of the Oedipal complex also makes Freud's

perspective appear problematic to the extent that the latter depoliticizes her transgression since it occludes and further separates the historical, social and political conditions by which her seemingly apolitical 'choice' is (re)produced, failing to also orient his analysis toward the sociopolitical 'factory' that engineers human desire.

1.2.6 *Evaluation*

From Hegel's view of Antigone as a paradigm of 'seduction' – "pervert[ing] the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament of the family" (259.4 – 10), through Freud's 'oedipal' interpretation of incest, to Butler's treatment of Antigone's act as the fruit of a claim to what could make her life culturally tolerable, Antigone's transgressive act seems to travel through the 'tangled forest' of her sojourning *peripeteias* textualizing as she does the patterns of her dissident '*prattein*' in a timeless rhizomatic self that connects her to her sisters – past, present and future. As an intrusive externality to the social order of her *polis*-linked world, she makes imaginary universes possible. She potentiates 'liminal' life in such universes while at the same time serving, through her personal example, as the guarantor of non-exclusion or loss of subjectivity. At the same time, as Kristeva puts it in *Powers of Horror*, "those who step past this threshold usually sink into madness, lose their human contours, and pass away" (86), or, as this dissertation claims, 'return' to reclaim a place in the *status quo*, or, even worse, return to their former place self-reassuringly thinking that they have revolted 'enough', or, even, that they have brought about the change to which they have laid claim ever since their dissident thinking became dissident '*prattein*' only to be converted into 'foreclosed' dissent.

Even Freud's influence on the unconscious and its 'expression' through, sometimes, 'incomprehensible' behavior that runs counter to social stereotypes does not actually explain the heroine's transgression convincingly. On the contrary, Freud's Oedipalization of the whole psychic territory seems to leave Antigone's act enshrouded in enigma since "when Oedipus is applied, the familial relations assumed necessarily fall under the paradigm of the western nuclear family which, of course, is modern and not universally applicable" (Markusi 18). Beyond the *Antigone*, the so-called Oedipal inevitably 'castrates' the much-sidelined and ever-neglected female desire, to the advantage of a more centrally promoted analysis of the male psychic processes, while, at the same time, emasculating the unconscious, and confines it within the realm of the "familial and the mythical, which is ultimately proven to be an ineffective way to actually restore analysis to its full socio-historical context" (Holland 91).

With this in mind, the 'reviewed legacy' of the *Antigone* of this subchapter does not set out to confront all the issues and questions that a reading of the *Antigone* will certainly give rise to. It sets out to address topics relevant both to feminists and women today in such a way as to be contextualized within the two 20th century *romans-à-clef*, *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, under examination in this dissertation. This subchapter, therefore, touches upon such issues relevant to women as female subjectivity and sexuality coupled with gender, the role of the body in our culture, the tension between and interdependence of the private and the public spheres, moral conduct, the possibility of a different future, kinship and the relationship between culture and nature, issues concerning freedom, citizenship, and democracy, the mechanisms that replicate stereotypes, normativity, and pathology and, last but not least, the challenges involved in intersubjective relations. In consequence, a re-reading of the *Antigone*'s 'reviewed legacy' will permit us to tackle these matters in a variety of ways, and, hopefully, will not only provide us with critical hermeneutical 'tools' for use in this dissertation, but will also function as a 'mapped' avenue of insightful analysis that will be a guide in our investigation of how a woman's life two and a half millennia ago can 'teach' us and shed light on such problems as resistance and how this is finally co-opted into the hegemonic patriarchal narrative of every historical generation.

1.3 *Antigone*: Superannuated or Ever-enduring Matrix of Mimesis?

Although studied and interpreted for centuries, the tragedy in question is a work of art that still 'endures'. It is a work of art that still tells the modern reader – or, rather, the spectator that happens to watch it on stage -- that even if it is a play written to strike a chord in the hearts of spectators of two and a half millennia before its examination alongside texts written in the 20th century, it has been adapted in the past and is re-adapted again and again at present to be performed in theaters all over the world, 'outlining' as it does the shared 'thread' between Antigone's dissent and any woman's dissent, as emblematized in plays such as J. Anouilh's *Antigone* through A. Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead and The Island,* Alice Fordham's *Syrian Women Displaced By War Make Tragedy Of 'Antigone' Their Own* or, even, in novels such as *The Bell Jar* and *Her* in which the 'tragic' heroines become 'Antigones', too, using their plight to 'carve' a pathway to meaningful forms of resistance, in a manner similar to their elder 'sister', which, however, are doomed to fail.

Unsurprisingly, *Antigone* is read and re-read on a par with texts that promote female resistance against oppressive regimes, from modes of resistance expressed as anti-Nazi

discourse in occupied France during World War II, through the South-African anti-apartheid movement in the 1970's, or the 20th century fictional Esther's and Hermione's attempts to express dissent and engraft it into a narrative of dissent from gender ideology through their writing and sexuality, to the 21st century asylum-seeking Syrian female refugees surviving civil war. The variety of eruptions and re-eruptions of 'mimetic' image-making through its adaptations and re-adaptations makes *Antigone* a handy image-rendering 'thesaurus' for engaging the reader's as well as the spectator's mind through a *mimesis* that does not 'age' and admittedly has much to offer to our understanding of female resistance to the exclusionary practices of patriarchy and authoritarianism, 'lending' her voice, as she does, to the disavowed 'other', thus attempting to open the political space for those excluded to be treated as equal speaking beings.

Her opposing stance to what Creon embodies seems to escalate to such a degree that transfixes the reader's heart with the hope of change only to spike down and fade into the 'sensibility' of a potential 'maybe'. This is Antigone's fate. Her attempt to 'crack' the narrative of change open for all those disavowed female 'sisters' of hers in time blends into a floating signifier, one to be appropriated by uncertainty and ambiguity. Hers is a signifying alternative that is less attentive to acts corresponding to her presumed feminine nature and more to the guilt of her incestuous origins exposed as culturally contingent upon her actions. Although a native of Thebes, she is also the result of an incestuous relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta, which haunts her throughout the play but does not explicitly reduce her to the condemnation of her 'abject' origins. She is seen as standing in the interface between the 'normalcy' of normative heterosexuality, which her relationship with Haemon attributes to her, and extreme moral 'aberration' that the mere suspicion of an 'abnormal' relationship with Polyneices raised by her near-obsessive persistence in taking care of his body seems to be nebulously surrounding her with.

Examined through this 'lens', Antigone comes to be seen as deregulating heterosexual monogamy in defiance of the fact that the latter is conventionally interpreted as a citizen-making device by means of which she could consolidate her legal status (even by proxy since she could not actually be a 'fully-fledged' citizen on account of her being a woman but could draw 'power' from her husband). Truly, Antigone's post-mortem 'coalition' with her brother politicizes her act of deregulating heterosexual monogamy by attributing her kinship relationship with Polyneices to her

conception of 'normalcy', an act thought to be carrying within it the 'seed' of subversion of the normative family norm since it is interpreted as a problem of a non-citizen versus the citizens of the *polis*.

At the same time, the fact that confuses the reader as well as the spectator of the play is that she allows dying Haemon to play the role of the one involuntarily 'extending an olive branch' to her and, as a result, exonerate her, somehow, from the stigma effect of being suspected of 'undoing' the family norm. His is an offer of a would-be conjugal 'compromise' in death, to the extent that he, even when dead, embodies a 'compromise', or, rather, a blood-sealed 'bond', 'cleansed' through the "the stream of bloody drops" on her face (*A* 208), which carries within it the potential for her to re-signify his suicide as a springboard to reinstating herself as a consummator of heterosexual marriage. On the face of it, Antigone's 'blood-cleansing' seeming allegiance to her *fiancé* posthumously restores the reader's faith in her. The act of having her "white cheek" moistened by Haemon's blood is equal to a gesture-induced disambiguating symbolism of what appears to be an ultimate revelation of her tacit tribute to the function of normative marriage as being inseparable from the inviolability of absolute consensus, of consenting to being a fully included member of the system, namely of her *polis*. It also seems to partially remove our doubt as to her intention to 'undo' the family norm and by extension subvert the *polis*. This 'compromise' between her and Haemon de-escalates the tension felt on account of the obliquity of her intentions regarding her decision to execute her plan to bury the body of her beloved brother despite Creon's "promulgations" to the contrary. Were there no such scene symbolic of a concession to the spectators' 'sensibilities', her act of defiance would be clearly connected with the spectators' suspicion of her involvement in an incestuous relationship and could attribute to it an accusatory streak in the minds of the then spectators – as well as readers in the years to come. She would fall within the execrable exclusions of the disenfranchised 'other', unable to be construed as natural and, as a result, integrated into human society. However, even if her blood-stained cheek conjures up images of melodramatic, abruptly terminated conjugal passion, certainly reminiscent of prior married bliss, there is still ambiguity which could tip the scales against Antigone's side since it is she that rejects her husband-to-be while alive, thus scandalizing the public. As a matter of fact, as Butler says, she does nothing "to stay alive for Haemon, by refusing to become a mother and a wife" (*Antigone's Claim* 76).

This ambiguity-propelled tipping of the scales to both sides contributes to a polarization between Antigone's inclusion and exclusion. This centuries-old 'teetering' on the brink of inclusion and exclusion seems to be capable of disrupting the entire social edifice with its tragic continuity and the heroine's inability to escape it. The doubt incurred is then turned into a discursive space within which her refusal to attest to heterosexuality's prominence by refusing to marry Haemon while alive is undermined by her blood-sealed tacit agreement to allow Haemon to win "the pitiful fulfillment of his marriage within death's house" *(A* 208). In this way, Antigone manages to reformulate the political 'syntax' of her defiance which, albeit bounded by a gap of clarity that forecloses any potential attempt on our behalf to transform her ambiguity into a site of depoliticized void, goes all the political way toward paving the way for a sexuality other than that prescribed by her normative *polis* even in the sensed presence of her ambiguity.

As such, her incestuous sexuality might be construed as allegorizing itself as a "political critique of the social order" inseparable from which is the family and its attendant connotations, both of which are assumed to be the pedestal of "the *polis* -- itself indistinguishable from the *oikos*," as claimed by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*, where she refers to "the contemporary state … [as being] the household of modernity where birth remains the privileged device to allocate political membership" (24). Antigone's effort to render the limits of the *oikos* null by 'broadcasting' her suicidal devotion to her brother sows the seed of doubt in our mind as to where she politically stands as regards kinship. However, at the same time, whereas she seems to champion her right, even in defiance of death, to stop leading an unlivable life, she is seen, in a highly symbolic moment of death-struck 'passion', to be ready to dispel any doubt in our minds as to whether she should be connected with equivocality in kinship positions, when she lets Haemon pour "a sharp stream of bloody drops on her white cheeks" (*A* 208). She restores the spectators' confidence in her as an advocate of heterosexual marriage.

Her reassuring concession does not mean closure as it is but a 'respite' necessary to 'deflate' our nervousness and fear. This does not mean that the *Antigone* fails to excite or arouse in us the *pathos* necessary to re-feel the act of 'hearkening' an ancient woman's resisting voice. Antigone lets her voice reach the 'deaf' ears of the system that on no occasion does she consider abandoning her beloved brother as a 'trade-off' for returning to her near-citizenship status that would find its consummation through

her marriage to the king's son. Her refusal to transact another sexuality for 'legality' –
if the latter is taken to mean citizenship by proxy -- should be viewed as being
commensurate with her refusal to occlude the politics of her exclusion on the grounds
of an 'unspoken' privileging of a non-normative sexuality. Her 'scandalous' privileging
of a non-normative sexuality that runs counter to the family norm over a conjugal
family is akin to *a priori* occluding the political 'collateral' that would elevate her to
the level of being 'legal', a proxy-member of the *polis*. Thus, her claim to becoming
'legal' is irreducible to severing her ambiguity that constitutes her as who she is, which
puts her in a liminal state between the social order's cultural framework of intelligibility
and that of an interdicted sexuality that is not amenable to the strict economy of
reproduction.

However, it also brings to the fore the 'liminality' of thinking and acting
'dissident' to the extent that hers is a resisting voice that is silenced throughout the
centuries, literally and figuratively, again and again, despite initially being received
as an act of resistance which could also come to satisfying fruition but which, in the
end, leaves the 'spellbound' recipient in a state of plausible inadequacy, thinking,
again and again, how to dissipate the 'fogginess' of doubt left within. At the same
time, though, cautiously revisiting the eponymous heroine's *peripeteias* assists the
reader in dispelling the nebulous misperception of Antigone as the resistor, who, in
her opposition to the *polis*, succeeds in enlightening the people of her time and those
of the years to come about the unilateral justice of a single cause. The cautious reader
should not misrecognize in any Antigone impersonated by any character who may
be portrayed as speaking out against the Nazi regime, seeking political asylum as a
Syrian woman refugee, or even revolting against the patriarchal Creons of her life,
as in the case of Ether and Hermione, that her dissidence brings forth any trailblazing
prospect in a woman's life; just the opposite is true: eventually, her dissidence is
turned into an ambiguity that imitates life itself. Life merely betrays the futility of
dissident '*prattein*' against patriarchy. The latter acts as a system ready to defend and
perpetuate itself by convincing any 'tragic' character revolting against her own
'Creons' either to occupy the space filled by subjects punishable by medical or criminal
marginalization or to gradually conscript themselves into the 'elegance' of temperate
resistance, thus 'bartering' for a form of 'rationed *jouissance'* with their right to a
differing model of sexuality and counter-hegemonic discourse. But even this
'alternative' sexuality and discourse are expressed through the 'filter' of a rationality

that makes them think that they have ultimately achieved their goal of self-determination when in fact what they have achieved is to be allowed to think that they have achieved self-determination.

Since life, as stated above, is but a succession of moments of action punctuating its 'canvas', such resistance leaves a trace of ambiguity that does not revitalize life's 'canvas'. After all, the goal of tragedy concerns the knowledge that issues from it, and in *Antigone* the knowledge that issues lies in its encoded message that elevates that which is elided and disavowed but has been traded in on a 'looping' form of *jouissance* expressed as a semi-transparent message of promise. Antigone herself chooses the man to whom she is betrothed, Haemon, as her husband in Hades, letting her transgression displace itself into an indirect pledge that suspends the potentiality of another sexuality and seems to partly neutralize the stimulus behind her initial resisting agency. Through it, there arises the knowledge that the amount of ambiguity that the possibility of post-mortem marriage to Haemon injects into the initial misperception of the finality of tacit sexual implications of incestual desire for her dead brother exposes and 'cracks' open the code of the majority. In so doing, this knowledge becomes a powerful interpretative 'tool' that helps the reader situate herself both within and against the various discourses through which she is called to identify while, at the same time, going through what Butler calls an "uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong" (*Bodies* 219), thereby using this code as potential for unearthing a discourse of a disempowered politics formerly inconceivable by the dominant culture.

With this knowledge as a legacy, Antigone's ambiguity plays out alongside the *polis* which, as a civic and political democratic system, "puts itself on the stage and plays itself."[7] Her ambiguity is tragic enough to establish and push boundaries around and between spheres of activities, provoking the spectator as well as the reader into "deconstructing and reconstructing a world that was both familiar and other" (Euben 58). The *polis* incorporates the hegemonic discourse with which Antigone is expected to comply. She is expected to renounce any ambiguity left suspended through her defiance not only of the hegemon's decree but also of what he represents as patriarchy's proxy. Creon's reaction to his niece's overzealousness in her burial of Polyneices is his direct refusal to grant his consent to his son marrying her, which potentially points in the direction of patriarchy's proxy starting to lose confidence in her until the suspicions raised with regard to her differing sexuality being considered an anomaly have been dissipated.

The familiarity of the world that the reader is provoked into reconstructing assumes form through a pre-constituted logic which, for example, determines the concept of the universal as that which links up with the politics of kinship and with how the latter normalizes family structures within the framework of heteronormativity. When disputed through Antigone's defiance, this politics of kinship is called into question, leaving the reader in doubt as to whether to trace the impact of the heroine's defiance to the way it exposes the parameters by means of which collective social norms are contested. The reader comes face to face with a still-unarticulated 'question-mark' on behalf of the heroine that fails to ask why the politics of kinship selectively legitimizes sexual companions and thus ordains certain universal social forms beyond which any articulated or even hinted-at desire should fall within the repudiated exclusions of particular agencies. Put differently, anyone sidestepping the field of universality automatically ceases to be viewed as a potential candidate of inclusion and is, as a result, considered outside of the normative framework (to which as subject she is subjected) of norms that make normative sexuality an exemplar of the collective good. Antigone seems to fall within such exclusions and as such symbolizes the 'dissident', the heroine struggling against subjugation at the expense of inclusion, viewed, on this score, as an emblem of all heroines -- past and present, and as belonging to that "other" world referred to by Euben (58).[8] It is by way of being suspected of belonging to that "other" world that this emblematic character gets possession of a certain kind of ubiquity traceable to any act of defiance expressed by her fictional peers against patriarchal hegemony through time. No wonder, therefore, Steiner claims that we should speak of 'Antigones' in the plural to the extent that the *Antigone* has for centuries on end required, and still does, much engagement and so many different interpretations.

Such 'Antigones', through their *peripeteias*, have a *poietic* power on us because they touch deep emotions as W. Watson states (*The Lost)*, or, because*,* as Euben puts it, they seem to be able to "sway and enliven [in all their 'tragic' splendor] the mind and the heart, arousing emotions and reason" (58), which is actually what holds on to us as subjects who feel emotions while dealing with such persistent questions as transgression versus obedience in tragedies such as that of *Antigone.* As it extends synchronically into the present, it brings with it the necessary fusion of past and present, and with it the mimetic power of the 'question-mark' carrying within it the ambiguity that plays out in the tragedy, as it is performed, adapted and re-adapted, and is still significant today not because of compulsion but because of the opportunity it grants to

us to 'crack' the code of the majority open. By 'cracking' it open, it helps us to 'steal a peek' through that 'crack' at the machinations of power that depoliticize any sexuality not compliant with the normative constitution of the 'universal'. It also helps us to dig out this unbearable truth, this simultaneous seeing and failure to see desirable identifications, mainly because of the 'wall' of fear casting its shadow over the defiant attitudes of all 'Antigones' against a system that punishes anyone who dares to proceed to recircuit the workings of its exclusionary machinations in order to empower their minority identifications.

Such attitudes seem to be traced to other contemporary attitudes which are expectedly seen to painfully crash against the 'wall' of a common co-opted fate within the allegorical *poleis* where the heroines utter their atemporal iterant 'wails' of failed 'heroism' embedded within a spatially common matrix of cultural intelligibility that methodically eschews their common histories of thinking and acting 'dissident'. At the same time, the system's matrix of cultural intelligibility exposes the heroines' 'hubris' as being responsible for their 'wails' and is also quick to feature their final submission to its disciplinary 'economy', with the heroines thus, most of the times, appearing to be appropriated by a system they have fought against. In other words, the result of their acts of defiance seems to be replicating itself among all those heroines who tragically emblematize resistance. It is ultimately left in the shadows like an eschatology that is pregnant with anticipation but is 'debunked' and proved weak enough to raise suspicions, and which, yet, we wish to recur again, and again, on the off-chance that the 'question-mark' encapsulating within it the ambiguity that raises suspicions among us may deal the decisive blow to the academic 'discretion' with which we reconcile ourselves to passively letting questions of nonnormative sexuality become appropriated by the system's cultural intelligibility. Naturally the heroines' shared fate is the weakening of their proudly expressed defiance following their confrontation with the cold 'granite' of cultural intelligibility that stymies resistance. Through cultural intelligibility attitudes along with desires are changed and become naturalized.

In *Antigone* as well as in the two *romans-à-clef,* the hegemonic model of intelligibility takes for granted that for masculinity that expresses male and for femininity that expresses female there are universal notions of men and women, on the one hand, and 'good' sexuality, on the other, which is "oppositionally defined" through what Butler calls "the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (*Gender* 208). This process of naturalization facilitates the maintenance of hegemony by excavating the

heroines' 'cartography' of dissent across boundaries around and beyond spheres of activities that seem to be of consequence to cultural intelligibility, and, more specifically, to the matrix of heteronormativity. In *Antigone*, the eponymous heroine refuses to become a mother and a wife beside Creon's son, Haemon, preferring, instead, to demonstrate her undoubted devotedness to her brother, Polyneices, dialectizing away the sacredness/kinship duality to act against a system that compels her to continue to lead an unlivable life. Her expressed grief over his loss is such that makes her go beyond the boundaries between what she is allowed as woman to do and what she should do in private. That she laments in the presence of Creon and the public automatically interposes her between suspicion and ambiguity, between being seen as someone of 'indeterminate' gender and someone utterly insane to the extent that she does not comply with social expectations for women as her actions are not in accordance with what a typical Greek woman would do. As a matter of fact, this becomes obvious through the implication that "For they are but women, and even brave men run when they see death coming" (*A* 464). Antigone's unnatural and unfeminine passion for her sibling does not even dread death. It causes her to risk everything to bid his dust-touched body farewell: "burial all accomplished, thirsty dust / strewn on the flesh, the ritual complete," as the Guard announces to Creon (*A* 246-47).

Antigone's defiant action is her ultimate effort to "defy the state through a powerful set of physical and linguistic acts" (*Antigone's Claim* 11), which is suggestive of a minuscule hope within the ambiguity that constitutes her as who she is that along with the conditions for legitimate kinship relations, social and cultural intelligibility will be set anew. Butler asks the two questions that Sophocles' play basically poses to the contemporary spectator and reader, namely "whether there can be kinship without the support and mediation of the state, and whether there can be the state without the family as its support and mediation" (5). By doing so, Butler overtly casts doubt on the ideological framework inside which what is considered an exemplar of the collective good is challenged by Antigone's dissident '*prattein*' which, however, as stated earlier, is methodically eschewed while her 'hubris' is exaggerated. It is true that Antigone's dissidence seems to be an assault on the idea of the family as described by Aristotle; it is also an assault on its heteronormative conception of kinship that informs our conception of family, and, moreover, on the idea of the human, where to be considered human makes being an active member of the family in its normative sense a requirement. However, it is also true that Antigone's dissidence seems to be premised

upon what this work calls a 'looping' form of *jouissance*, which, with respect to *Antigone*, is dissidence displaced into a kind of post-mortem reinstatement of normative heterosexuality. In this way, Antigone, as Andres Castro claims, also "reinstates herself as an advocate of heteronormativity – even posthumously -- on the grounds of a re-signification of Haemon's suicide" (409), who "gasped out blood / red blood on her white cheek" so "corpse on a corpse he lies," thus finding "his marriage" (*A* 1238-40) -- as stated earlier.

1.4   Hegemony versus Resistance in the *Antigone*

Throughout the so-called "ode to man" (*A* 331-75), human existence is described as both rational and natural at once, imprisoned in necessity albeit gifted with freedom, mortal albeit capable of dispensing with the bare necessities of survival and life itself. Whereas the *Antigone* deals with such timeless contradictions, it also narrates the story of a tragic woman that "orbits around two interrelated contestations of political membership" (Castro 2). On the one hand, the eponymous heroine "performs alternative burial rites for the criminalized 'other'," an act of will that calls into question "the 'symbolic' terms by which the sovereign seeks to control the 'border'; and, on the other hand, she enacts such rituals by occupying the space from which she has been previously excluded for being a woman, calling into question the terms of the city's frame of recognition [itself]" (2). Such is, too, the experience of Esther and Hermione as well as that of millions of other women today in the 21st century. They are the subjects who, albeit unauthorized to 'speak' in a way 'alternative' to the mainstream hegemonic narrative of accepted sexuality and stereotypical figurations of relationships, nevertheless, protest the terms of their marginalization (which at its most extreme is expressed as medicalization or criminalization). Thus, "reinvented in other contexts, … [the play] operates as a political framework that makes readable the conflict over the social categories [rendering the 'human'] intelligible or not" (Castro 9).

Employed as a hermeneutic 'tool' able to elucidate the limits of 'human' intelligibility within culture, and also used as a framework through which the eponymous heroine is seen to "carve a pathway to meaningful forms of resistance," the *Antigone* reveals "a resistant political actor, poised to 'articulate' a law" to which Creon chooses to be deaf (Koulouris 4), thus "sketch[ing] a future of a politics to come" – as claimed in Chanter's "Antigone's Political Legacies" (21). Antigone appears to be representing the shared plight of those whose resistance to hegemony does not go

unpunished. Creon, on the other hand, seems to be embodying the very abstraction of what the Theban state represents: a political and cultural hegemony whose 'rationality' cannot be questioned, and even if it is, then it is on pain of exclusion -- if not death. In the duologue with his son, Haemon, Creon unambiguously equates himself with the *polis*: "'Is the town to tell me how I ought to rule? /… Am I to rule by other mind than mine?'" (*A* 734, 736), to which Haemon catapults a dumbfoundingly cynical response to his father's verbalized arrogance: "'No city is property of a single man' / 'But custom gives possession to the ruler'/ 'You'd rule a desert beautifully alone'"(*A* 734-39).

At the same time, the chorus in the play sustains and perpetuates the influence of the hegemonic 'narrative', precisely like the mainstream media in contemporary politics. After Creon has announced his edict, the chorus, addressing the king, says: "For you can make such rulings as you will / about the living and about the dead" (*A* 213-34); or, elsewhere, while Creon has launched a misogynist tirade with regard to his refusal to come to any terms with the mere idea of being "beaten by a woman," the chorus replies: "We think -- unless our age is cheating us -- / that what you say is sensible and right" (*A* 678, 681-82). The chorus seems to attribute to the sovereign the requisite 'credible' legitimating agency that sustains his hegemonic discourse. However, despite Creon's ostensible absolute power over the "living and … the dead," the state still seems to hinge on its reliance on the will of the people of the *polis* as expressed through the chorus, who happen to be both eyewitnesses and earwitnesses to the 'trial', which in and by itself indicates that the 'trial' in question is not held behind closed doors but publicly and is thereby democratically known. At the same time, "the state hinges on its tendency to act beyond, above and against the will and basic rights of the people," as is the case with Antigone who failed to obey a primordial law, "whose sole legitimating agent is the royal edict," as T. Koulouris says (4, 9, 26). The consequence of this 'paradox' is that Antigone is tried in the presence of the people -- as democratically as possible; on the other hand, she is thought of as "stateless," '*apolis*', "a metaphor for the conceptual space afforded to those who … are neither citizens nor, however, in the eyes of the state, living human beings" (Koulouris 9). As a result, the heroine is led to her incarceration, and, under the circumstances, she "is punished for daring to desire a polity more just than that presided over by Creon" (9). In no different way, the female citizen of the modern state, whose plight resembles that of the characters described in *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, seems to be "punished for nothing

more than daring to exist" should her way of living run counter to the stereotypes of feminine ideology (Koulouris 8, 9).

1.4.1 *Ideology and Femininity*

The fact of the disclosure of Antigone's act of defiance in public paves the way for an alternative form of 'hearing' of a claim that defies and opposes the normative order in which she would be allowed to 'live' were she to sever herself from her 'silenced' claim that constitutes her as who she is, which, as she now is, "puts her at the limits of the social order's cultural framework of intelligibility" (*Antigone's Claim* 24).[9] This state of 'liminality' invites the interpretative possibility which, as Castro says, "lies in shifting emphasis away from Antigone's refusal to marry and toward [the connection of her refusal] to her suicide" (54). Stated differently, "Antigone's decision [not] to marry Haemon" could be, on the one hand, "a call for a more decisive opening of democratic enfranchisement," but, on the other, it could also point towards "a greater divorce of political membership from the ways in which state and kinship re-accommodate each other through the regulation of birth" (54-55). Despite its radicalness, such an interpretation casts doubt on the ideology of "reproductive futurism" to the extent that in her death lies a kind of irreproducibility that acquires a political dimension since Antigone chooses to interrupt the relationship that her marriage to Haemon would have ensured.[10] Her marriage to Hades might, in this account, "signify her 'burial' of marriage as the foundation of the political order of civility, which already targets women's reproductive labor as the body to control" (55). At the same time, she is at the limit, again, too, insofar as there is no knowing whether her posthumous marriage points in the direction of something even more spectacular than marrying Haemon while alive, or even whether or not such a refusal constitutes Antigone's 'swan song' where heterosexual marriage is concerned. In this light, her 'liminality' requires not only exploring the ways in which Antigone's disputable sexuality perturbs heteronormativity, but also how such trouble relates to her the alternative 'citizen' status as a *metic*[11] that attributes to kinship a dimension of uncertainty, a kind of ambiguity, thus positioning it at the limit, too.

The above hermeneutic approach to Antigone's act is not without its supporters -- like Lee Edelman or Ayelet Shachar cited by R. Just in his *Women in Athenian Law and Life*. Since, as Shachar in *The Birthright Lottery: Citizenship and Global Inequality* and Edelman in *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive* view Antigone's act as

emphasizing "the exclusions reproduced by linking political belonging to kinship through the privileging of marriage as the political device by which citizenship" is not actually afforded to those who are willing to marry in exchange for their decision to enter into marriage, but to those who through it "gain status" (Just 192), Edelman and Shachar seem to echo and verify Just's view of women in the ancient *polis* as of "derivative" – ancillary -- existence who are provided with "status" through the satisfaction of their reproductive imperative within the boundaries of marriage. In this light, "women's membership of the Athenian *polis* was always derivative, dependent on their associations with the men through whom they gained their status and their rights," as Just argues, adding that "their presence was necessary for the existence of that state...but they were not in their own right members of the *polis* which remained *un club d'hommes*" (192).

That Antigone inscribes kinship in a social space in such a way as to 'upset' the social arrangements that invariably demand a specific form of kinship to distribute "status" requires a re-territorialization of Antigone's act. The critical perspective that Antigone provides us with is one that helps us reverse kinship altogether, perceive it through the challenge that Antigone imposes on the cultural framework of intelligibility, through her dissident '*prattein*.'

1.4.2 *Aristotle's Consensual Inequality*

The extent to which the family uses certain sets of ideas or beliefs that reinforce inequality among people and persuade people that hegemony is fair is contingent upon the necessity for compliance with a model of hierarchy where unjust social relations are represented as naturally conducive to social welfare. This seems to hold true in the patriarchal *polis*, insofar as the family is focused on blood relations and kinship among its members. Also, the fact that women in the ancient *polis* 'embrace' their domination by men works within the context of the broader interpretation of the *polis* perception as a result of the family performing ideological functions. The best way for the social order to maintain itself is through adherence to faith in public welfare which is in turn safeguarded by a regime of conduct modeled on the rationality of what Foucault calls "political pastorate" (*Security* 145). This will be achieved only if all the 'flock' is integrated in the utility of the above self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating rationality. Women, as part of the 'flock', as a result, in this case, learn to internalize the control of the *androcentric polis* not by law but by what appears to be consent which, however, is submission to the necessity for compliance with the model of hierarchy in question.

As such, family becomes an ideological 'tool' used to pursue recognized ends as it seeks to subjugate action to articulated thinking in an attempt to subjugate the uncontrollability of the future to the necessity of a permanent present or to what Aristotle calls a common *telos* (*Politics* 1278b 17). This *telos* can be achieved if all composite parts of the *polis* contribute towards its *koinon telos*, its common advantage, what is best, *beltiston*, for the *polis*. The *beltiston* is erected upon mutual interests on behalf of both citizens and non-citizens who, in turn, rely upon each other for the survival of the *polis*. Cooperation between a citizen, an adult free male -- a master -- and the composite parts of *oikos* may involve an amount of coercion in dealing with non-citizen *oikos* members, such as wife, children and slaves, to the extent that there is conflict of interests, at least between non-citizen female members of a household and their masters. It is by no means effortless nor unproblematic for a non-citizen female member of the *oikos* to recognize her best interests in the productive practices of her husband, since living in a society that values freedom, *eleutheria*, as a primary good makes any argument towards consensual acceptance of the need for submission to a master hardly irrefutable. Despite the tyrannical nature of the idea of coercion, it is defused in the minds of those involved by the "assumption that being ruled as a human possession was a natural condition" (*Politics* 1252a34). Considered naturally able to choose the circumstances of her life, the woman in the *polis* is rational and as a result expected to understand that her best interests are furthered by her membership in the *koinonia* of the *oikos*.

Woman is a *sine qua non* for *oikos* and *polis* alike for biological reproduction. This fact elevates her to a level other than that of the slave. Although no woman can be a citizen, a woman's interests are conjoined to those of her citizen-husband through the institution of marriage. Her 'hybridized' status, between that of a slave, a non-citizen, and that of a citizen -- a 'semi-subhuman' state -- is mediated by her male master, her male *despotes* -- her husband. Despite the fact that unlike a slave, in addition to thinking rationally, she possesses deliberative ability, she cannot be a *polites* due to her "natural lack of authority" (*Politics* 1260a 12-13), which leads to the inevitability of a fate of connubial protection, outside of which her status remains indefinable, at the limit, neither that of a slave nor that of a citizen. Predictably, through marriage and, most importantly, after having been coerced into mastering and internalizing the principles of *politeia*, a woman 'reaps the fruit' of her inescapable submission to conjugal sanctuary exchangeable for a state of diminished or near-zero 'liminality'. Also,

through the institution of marriage, as a woman fulfills her procreative role, she elevates herself from her ontologically 'semi-subhuman' state to that of actual existence potentially coterminous with her reproductive function and coextensive with her integration into the patriarchal family. Within the family context, her children, the male ones, are potential citizens, *politai*. When "properly educated," in Aristotle's words, "and after … [their] deliberative faculties have matured, the child[ren] come to realize …[their] true interests clearly" (*Politics* 1260a 13-14, 31-32). More broadly speaking, it should be assumed that ensuring through education that children realize their interests and understand them to be identified with those of previous generations of *politai* guarantees the political and cultural reproduction of the *polis*. The *polis* itself, for that reason, depends for its self-preservation and self-perpetuation on the *oikos*. Its operation as such is summarized in the relational dynamics between woman and slaves and children as part of the household, woman and man, the master of the household, woman through her status as a wife and her husband, woman as mother of children and their relation to the father, her role as a source of pedagogical knowledge, providing, as she does, through example and advice, her children with fundamental practical knowledge concerning the place of woman in the *oikos* and by extension in the social 'becoming' of the *polis*.

1.4.3 *Friedrich Engels on Family*

In *The Origin of the Family*, *Private Property and the State*, the German socialist Friedrich Engels treats the family as an emanation of the ideological dynamics of a society dependent on private property. The family, as a social construct, serves as the 'accelerator' of the ideological and the physical self-replication of society. Moreover, the family, through certain roles distributed to its members, both encourages and furthers the development and consolidation of forces such as patriarchy, or capitalism, or even what is now known as neoliberalism, insofar as the family as a significant economic unit is built on marriage which, in turn, is intertwined with the possession and accumulation of private property. The latter, the accumulation of which within the family leads to the creation of the notion of property as a constitutive element of the family, is incontrovertibly conducive to woman's subordination to man within the context of the patriarchal family. The patriarchal family as such reduces her to property. By commodifying her, it considers her exchangeable "as valued property" of the family (Engels 10). This seems to be overturned on condition that what we call monogamy comes to an end, and if wealth is no longer possessed by "one… man" and,

consequently, if "the desire to bequeath this wealth to this man's children and to no one else's" ceases to exists, then the organization of the family and its role as a fundamental economic unit will be completely transformed (81). As Engels also explains, on condition that "the means of production … become publicly owned, while private housekeeping and childcare become a communal industry, [then] … the subjugation and sexual repression of women [will be rendered] unnecessary"; and he also adds, "when women are liberated from oppressive notions such as private housekeeping and childcare and from economic dependence on men, they will be free to pursue the love of the men they desire" (81-82). It is self-evident that for Engels the institution of family, as seen and examined above, is actually charged and shaped by the interdependent capitalist and patriarchal relations, and inasmuch as capitalism along with patriarchy cease to exist, the traditional family will cease to exist, too, giving way to a communal schema aiming for more political, social, and economic equality for all the people involved.

Nevertheless, as we investigate how Antigone's challenge becomes dissident '*prattein*,' and, as such, results in political 'trespass', since it could by extension be taken to subvert the notion of traditional family, it is also of the essence to investigate the extent to which kinship circumscribed into a social construction "instills particular values into the family unit" whose 'investment' in the future is synonymous with procreation (Markousi 10). If all sexuality that the socially foreclosed cultural intelligibility can tolerate is actually that which is transformed into discourse circumscribed by the endeavor to expel from it those forms of sexuality that are not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction, then procreation as the family unit's future 'investment' seems to be defined by the basic concern to ensure the smooth operation of the family 'machine' and its expected corollary, namely private housekeeping and childcare. Within the matrix of patriarchal culture, housekeeping and childcare are naturalized as opposed to pursuing a sexuality outside the boundaries of heteronormativity which is pathologized. Engels' notion of family as being informed by patriarchal relations is further enriched by Foucault, according to whom the family unit's future 'investment' seems to be defined by "this basic concern, that is, to ensure population and perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative."[12]

1.4.4 *Foucault's 'Technology' of Docile Subjects*

Foucault's work *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* is mainly linked to the notion of "biopower," namely the "power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (136). Through it, Foucault attempts to make understandable the 'mechanisms' of the family. He views the modern family as the codification of what we construe as household, the social unit consisting of those living together in the same dwelling. Although the modern family as such came into being during the nineteenth century, it was practically dissimilar to its earlier forms, for prior to the 19th century, the family *per se* was more construed as an aggregate of relations within the broader boundaries of kin united by blood bond. Adding a Foucauldian dimension to the concept of the modern family, Chloe Taylor claims that it is "a *panoptic* and normalizing entity, … [within which] parents function as doctors, … [or else] the function of the modern family is … [similar to that] of a psychiatric hospital, which aims to control the manner in which the patients along with their bodies operate through various forms of surveillance" (208). As Markousi says, "the rise of the nuclear family and the manner in which the parent-child relationship took precedence resulted in a more intimate, almost incestuous relation between them," with the modern parent now being called upon "to inspect and control the child's body in a manner that significantly aims at limiting its sexuality" (13). Any sexual 'irregularity' is annexed to deviation. With the norm of sexual development being defined and all the possible deviations being scholastically and medically described, the 'parent-doctor' employs pedagogical controls and resorts to medical treatments to deal with 'abominations' linked to unacceptable sexual fantasies or, even worse, to any discourse attributing legitimacy to genitally centered sexuality should it not be motivated by the reproductive imperative. As a result, the suppression of any 'deviant' sexuality is at least instrumental in the appearance of incest, which, if suspected, is stopped immediately, with the father, in his capacity as the 'parent-doctor', assuming the role of the agent for the state, interfering and enforcing 'nip-in-the-bud' measures, thus enacting the surveillance and regulation of the corporeal entity of his child, and also ensuring that the family functions as appropriately as is dictated by the prescribed modes of socially accepted behavior. In this way, children's subjection to the disciplining force of preemptive rules set by the 'parent-doctor' is not dissimilar to the citizen's subjection to the rules to which (s)he is expected to conform in society. If suspected of straying

from the 'norm' in terms of gender or sexuality, such citizens, even if not automatically 'disenfranchised', become aware that they will be compelled to comply with 'correct etiquette', otherwise disenfranchisement, as a form of exclusion from the body politic, looms ahead as the ultimate measure of marginalization.

Insofar as the state, through the 'parent-agent', as stated above, regulates and co-ordinates the family and its reproductive order, the family plays the role of the 'law enforcement' agent imposing rules on the family members. To control the family, the political apparatus of the modern state has given birth to the modern "police government" whose task will be "integrating the individual into the utility of the state" by improving the lives of and ensuring the happiness and health of citizens (*The Will* 409, 323). This process is achieved through internalization, a detailed yet most often subtle control on the individual, which results in transforming her into a docile subject ready to be integrated into the utility of the state. This transformation is part of the process of the modern political rationality that ideologizes the need for a natural hierarchy within its *koinonia* of citizens. As has been referred to earlier, the mechanism of internalization of external goals, according to Foucault, results from a feeling of being under surveillance that forces the individual to always keep track of herself by examining herself against certain standards of behavior befitting her social role and identifying herself with socially accepted role models. The surveillance culture also exposes her to public view so that she can be externally judged again, and again, with "doses" of improvement being recommended and incorporated into her desired behavior. In this way, she is turned into "an efficient machine" which does not require being under constant surveillance since the mechanism of internalization as an acquired built-in disciplinary mechanism works in the best interests of the system (*The Birth of the Clinic* 164).

1.4.5 *Althusser's 'Family' as Ideology*

So far, the notion of family consisting of members related by blood, or marriage, or even adoption -- nowadays, at least – has been analyzed through the lens of Foucauldian as well as of traditional Marxist optics. However, the fact that the family as such cannot be decoupled from the political dynamics that have played a formative role in the way it has evolved across historical boundaries renders it interwoven with its regulatory "societal and political systems, so any transgression, any attempt to overturn the dominant 'narrative' through which it operates must be a politically charged act" (Markousi 15). Unsurprisingly, incest is such a "politically charged act" which both

exposes and undermines "the political function of the family" (15). By deregulating the reproductive imperative on which the family is based, and which is the main constitutive element of the family, incest renders itself fundamentally contrary to the *status quo*. In this light, it disallows marriage, discourages the subordination of women to men, and also the exclusion of those who refuse to conform to the patriarchal heteronormative stereotype. But while it is seen to constitute an act of emancipation from the oppressive male-dominated family schema, incest also seems to render the family and its attendant problems more noticeable; and it does in a way that it also brings to the fore the family's navel-gazing and self-replicating illiberality, which reveals how incest as a political act can be transgressive in that it upsets "the normative order," and, at the same time, how it can reaffirm it. While transgression as a result of oppressiveness is intelligible, compliance resulting from oppressiveness could be a source of puzzlement. Foucault's 'technology' of discipline – through repressive coercion -- alone cannot explain how subjects become co-opted into the system, or, even if they do not, how while rejecting 'investing' in the patriarchally regulated order of the family, they have been so irreversibly conditioned to feel guilty about not 'investing' in such a future that their internalized "efficient machine" rejects anything that runs counter to what is likely to undermine it -- as is the case with Antigone who does not 'draw the line' at what kind of sexuality she prefers.

At this point, mention should be made of Gramsci's conception of hegemony with the ruling class's hold on power dissociating itself from the need to resort to mass coercion to support itself with. In his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, he uses the 'suffrage' argument to prove his point, namely by extending suffrage and thereby by integrating the population into the political system, hegemony offers new methods of legitimation, with whatever pockets of resistance left becoming co-opted by the state by way of channeling dissident impulses into moderate parties of loyal opposition (176). Gramsci's conception of co-opting resistance into the hegemonic power discourse of society could inform our hermeneutic perspective on Antigone's act of transgression turned compliant since she decides to take her life and posthumously marry Haemon. However, Gramsci's theory is better complemented by Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," which suggests that since the role of the family is such as to provide us with a social identity, its function is ideological.

Althusser argues that a key function of the family should be described as that which teaches the next generation to obey and submit to hegemony in the same way that

Aristotle circumscribes the instructive role of the family through which the male child is "properly educated, and after his deliberative faculties have matured, the child comes to realize his true interests clearly" (*Politics* 1260a 13-14, 31-32). This guarantees the political and cultural reproduction of the *polis*, the state. Althusser's state perpetuates itself through "ideological state apparatuses" that function behind the shield of morals and ethics (112-6). They include educational institutions, religious institutions, family, media outlets, trade unions, cultural groups, political groups, legal groups etc. (112-13). In all ideological state apparatuses, the set of ideological discourses at work are always dominated by the ideology of hegemony. So, whenever an individual or a group of individuals challenge "the dominant ideology" of the state, the latter uses "repressive state apparatuses" to stabilize the former (112).

In Althusser's conceptualization of the role of the family, the latter is described as giving us a social identity. Its function precedes that of the school in that it shapes the minds of the people by inculcating in them the morals and ethics built into the dominant social narrative that "interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (116). Althusser contends that ideology has a material existence because "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (112). Ideology always manifests itself through actions, which are "inserted into practices," for example, rituals, conventional behavior, and so on (113-4). As a matter of fact, Althusser proceeds to adopt Pascal's formula for belief: "Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe'" (114). By means of this example, he intends to show that what continually instantiates us as subjects is our performance of our relation to others and to social institutions.

Such is the penetrating power of ideology in its constitution of subjects that it fashions our very reality in such a way as to appear to us true or obvious. Through interpellation, individuals are transformed into subjects. Althusser gives the example of the "hello" on a street, attributing to it the dimension of a ritual, to claim that "the rituals of ideological recognition ... guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (117). This process is itself 'ideological'. Exemplary of a similar ideological impact is Althusser's example is the hail from a police officer: "'Hey, you there!'" (118). If we suppose that "the theoretical scene referred to above occurs in the street, the hailed individual will turn round," which puts him into ideological subject position and if we also take into account that suggestive of the implicit power of ideology is our inability to recognize this oral

communication as ideological, what thus seems to occur outside of ideology (in the street, that is), actually occurs inside of ideology (118). This also explains why those in ideology consider themselves outside of ideology. In fact, one of the effects of ideology is the practical disallowance "of the ideological character of ideology by ideology" to the extent that ideology never allows that it is ideological (118).

Although Althusser's example of interpellation appears to occur within a temporal context (that is, the moment one is interpellated one becomes a subject and thus one enters ideology), he makes it clear that 'subjectivation' -- the process by which one becomes a subject -- takes place even before one's birth. As Althusser admits, such a "proposition might seem paradoxical" (119). Nevertheless, the fact that "an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is ... the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all" (119). Even before the child is born, says Althusser, "it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived" (119). Since most subjects regard their ideological self-constitution as either 'nature' or 'reality', they rarely find themselves on a collision course "with the repressive state apparatus" designed to punish anyone who defies hegemony (112). Hegemony is basically reliant on ideological state apparatuses by which ideology is inculcated in all subjects, one of which is the family, rather than on repressive state apparatuses.

Although the essential feature of Althusser's argument is both the structure and functioning of ideology mainly about how 'subjectivation' is achieved in the context of capitalism, Althusser's 'ideology' is temporally confined within the last two centuries and therefore, as such, it could be considered anachronic to be applied to Antigone's act twenty-five centuries earlier. However, according to Althusser, "ideology" has no history, as history represents change and ideology; and being an integral part of the repressive state apparatuses that controls the actions of the individuals, it has material existence. At the same time, it represents an imaginary relationship of the individuals to their conditions of existence, makes the people subjects, and also controls the people. Ideology, as he maintains, is "an organic part of every social totality . . . not an aberration or contingent excrescence of history [but] a structure essential to the historical life of society" (232). This is true to the extent that ideology performs an omnipresent social function in every community, in view of the fact that in all

communities both women and men must be formed, transformed, and 'properly' prepared to respond to their conditions of existence, a process that calls for a system of values, beliefs, and ideas, in conformity with which they experience their world as a coherent whole and find their place as subjects.

1.4.6 *Antigone's Resistance Appropriated*

Employing the 'tragedy effect' of the *Antigone,* namely how and to what extent it tests limits, defies norms, gives a certain kind of outlet for 'anti-social' feelings, this dissertation takes this 'tragedy effect', examines how it is worked into the 'modern' picture of Antigone as a female dissenter in order to bring to the fore a 'rebel' against the values which an audience of that time would likely espouse and practice in real life. As such, the *Antigone* involves a complex interplay between *polis* and its 'tragedy effect', or else between the reception of things in real life and the reception of things in the theatre -- a form of *jouissance* connected with the 'anti-*polis* fantasy'. To this effect, this work locates the crucial dialectic as lying not between *polis* and tragedy but within democratic ideology.

As stated in Introduction,[13] if we are to construe the voice of the *polis* as being on Creon's side and, at the same time, take the voices against him to come rather from elsewhere, we will manage to distinguish them, identify where they come from, and observe how they converse, which will ultimately be to this dissertation's advantage. Moreover, ideology can be arguably used to support either Creon or Antigone (Foley 143). Since, therefore, *Antigone* is often read as a case for the eponymous heroine's political status as a feminine figure who defies the state, in this case the voice of the *polis* can be identified as being rather more on Creon's side. In this light, tragedy, being indeed ambivalent and multivocal, is, for this very reason, able to provide a 'mirror' of resistance, of the state, of femininity, all of which are so characteristic of the cultural and historical contexts embedded within which is the same patriarchal discourse that spans almost twenty-five centuries of resistance to gender ideology. It can also provide a 'mirror' of gender power-relations worthy of closer attention with insights into how men and women are represented in the text, to help us identify to what extent, then and still today, these representations contribute to, contest, or influence gender power-imbalances in society. Lastly, it does provide us with a 'mirror' of what Butler calls "a timeless organizer of resistance against the dictates of an oppressive" (if not immoral) state and how this works for the timeless *polis* two and a half millennia later ("Can One Lead" 15). As such, it helps us to see her through the mirror of a dissenter that goes as

far as to become a 'favorite alternative' who, on the one hand, gratifies our anti-*polis* fantasy and does not inconvenience our disciplinary 'economy' but who, on the other, does not radicalize that alternative femininity.

Revisiting the *Antigone* with a view to pointing out the analogy "between the conceptual parameters of her resistant subjectivity and the potential for effective resistance in the present" (Koulouris Abstract), through such emblematic literary women's works as *The Bell Jar* and *Her,* we can draw a parallel between the *polis* then and the *polis* in modernity since the citizens of the modern state, too, are able to testify to a process of widening rupture between their innermost will and the objectives of the state. In this light, dissent becomes certainly more powerful, with the *Antigone* story turning itself into an expression of civil dissent. Dissent is investigated not only as a common attribute of an intertextual 'tragedy' but as an actual element of uncertainty, introduced into the *polis*, which, coupled with the heroines' choice to act against the 'order' of the system, turns itself into some kind of 'hubris' for the renegotiation of the boundaries of their allegorical*,* too. Their 'hubris' is submitted to a disciplinary 'economy' until it is turned into a desire identified with the *polis* as phallus, with the heroines thus being appropriated by the system they have fought against.

From Creon's perspective, his defense of his edict manifested in his declaration that "[no]woman rules me while I live" (*A* 525) brings to the fore "an 'essentialist' gender ideology that aligns political identity and gendered characteristics and dichotomizes them into categorical binaries" (Minglu).[14] His declaration accentuates his gendered hegemony through his faith in a hierarchy in which even the possibility of submitting to a woman is felt to be an inner conflict -- namely the mental discomfort one feels if confronted with knowledge that runs counter to one's deeply rooted beliefs. That Creon employs the wider category of "women" is indicative of how Creon regards his conflict with Antigone, namely not as one between the individual and the *polis*, but as one between a woman and a man. Even when Creon considers the political realm to be masculine and regards women as stateless or undeserving of the right to participate in it, he loses no time whatsoever in reacting to the Guard's news of Polyneices' burial with "What man has dared to do it?" (*A* 248), thus assuming that the act of defiance of his edict -- a politically charged act -- is possible only by a man, taking as granted that acts of civil disobedience are inherently masculine.

While unraveling, Creon's way of speaking, strongly connected to gender ideology, also emerges as a most important reason for his insistence on the heroine's punishment.

Creon passionately insists that he "not let [himself] be beaten by a woman. /Better, if it must happen, that a man / should overset me. / I won't be called weaker than womankind" (*A* 677-680). Even when the king proceeds to safeguard his edict with "there are other furrows for [Haemon's] plough," his analogy deprives the heroine of individuality. In so doing, he imputes to Antigone "the feminine function of being an 'object' of marriage," confined to within the reproductive imperative as her sole function, inasmuch as "Creon's sexual analogy" points in the direction of Antigone's potential procreative "function as Haemon's wife" (Minglu). Besides, the image of Haemon cultivating the land immediately associates man with one who is capable of exploiting nature. At the same time, the image of Antigone as soil to be ploughed points toward femininity associated with nature to be exploited. It is obvious that the sovereign's views echo a kind of gender 'essentialism' in ancient Greece that links being a man to dominance and femininity to subservience respectively.

Even worse, Creon's gendered 'lens' is so distorting that it 'incarcerates' his own son's defiance within a mental framework befitting a woman, thereby relegating Haemon to feminine inferiority. He criticizes his son for being "on the woman's side" (*A* 740), or, elsewhere, for being "[weaker] than a woman" (*A* 746), and, finally, for being a "woman's slave" (*A* 756). Also, when Creon declares that Haemon's mind has been "poisoned" (*A* 746) by Antigone, whom he accuses of being "sick with... disease" (*A* 732), underlying his accusation is his tendency to equate femininity with toxicity and immorality since it is he, again, who has formerly accused Ismene of "lurking like a viper... who sucked me dry" (*A* 531-2). Each insult is well chosen to associate his son with weakness and subordination. This is hardly pragmatic to the extent that Haemon has opposed his father's critique of Antigone and tried to refuse his father's subjection, which further means that Creon stubbornly refuses to stop viewing events through a gendered 'lens' despite evidence to the contrary.

That the sovereign is not alone in his gendered tirade against femininity is to be expected since he is one of the many who, before coming to power, is like all other citizens as ideologically conditioned as they are to relegate femininity to the realm of inferiority. As has already been mentioned earlier, the chorus is seen, in the same manner that the media nowadays are seen to sustain and perpetuate the influence of the hegemonic 'narrative', to support so-called gender essentialism by making use of gendered imagery in such a way as to attribute passivity and weakness to femininity, and power and aggression to masculinity. In the very beginning, the play begins with

the chorus describing the masculine warrior as "screaming shrill, / like an eagle over the land" (*A* 111-2). The chorus likens men to birds of prey, extending their sway over vast stretches of land whereas it portrays Ismene as being aligned with such characteristics as emotional excess and passivity: "She loves her sister and mourns, / with clouded brow and bloodied cheeks, / tears on her lovely face" (*A* 40). Ismene's face is referred to as "lovely," suggestive of the male point of view that reifies the emotional intensity of the female face to negate the female subject's agency. The chorus is further seen to combine humankind with masculinity through descriptions of dramatic force:

> Many things cause terror and wonder, yet nothing
>
> is more terrifying and wonderful than man.
>
> This thing goes across the gray
>
> sea on the blasts of winter
>
> storms, passing beneath
>
> waters towering 'round him.
>
> ……………………………………………………
>
> This thing ensnares and carries off
>
> the tribe of light-minded birds,
>
> the companies of wild beasts, and
>
> the sea's marine life
>
> with coils of woven meshes--
>
> this keenly skilled man.
>
> ……………………………………………………..
>
> Both language and thought swift as wind
>
> and impulses that govern cities,
>
> he has taught himself, as well as how
>
> to escape the shafts of rain
>
> while encamped beneath open skies.
>
> ……………………………………………………
>
> By integrating the laws of the earth
>
> and justice under oath sworn to the gods,
>
> he is lofty of city. Stateless is the man with whom ignobility
>
> because of his daring dwells. (*A* 331-72)

Portraying man as pioneering in human civilization and as harnessing the natural elements and forces for his own ends, the chorus attributes to mankind's perspective the robustness, alertness and power typically combined with the masculine within ancient Greek gender norms. Thus, as a result, it manages to naturalize gendered bias within the wider Theban society, re-narrating, sustaining, and perpetuating the hegemonic 'narrative' within a gendered framework similar to that of Creon's.

So forceful is the ideological impact of gendered discourse that even Haemon, who is seen to rise up against his father's gender 'essentialism', is also seen to have internalized hegemony's gendered bias to a degree that he reacts to his father's underlying accusation of feminization -- that he is "on the woman's side" (*A* 740), by countering, "If you're a woman" (*A* 741), thus using an equally gendered insult, too. Even Ismene, who, as a woman, is expected to be more on her sister's side, at least in the beginning, when Antigone seems to be running afoul of the sovereign's edict, she seems to retreat not out of her disagreement with Antigone but because of her gendered fear that she and Antigone should "remember that we two are women, / so not to fight with men (*A* 61-2). She also seems to retreat because since "we are subject to stronger power / we must hear these orders, or any that may be worse" (*A* 63-4). If "men" are associated with power and are equated with authority and order, then, by contrast, "women" are assigned the inferior role of "subject[s]," forced to obey even the worst "orders" of their male rulers. Ismene's appropriation of the voice of the one she feels too powerless to stand up to carries within it traces of the self-effacing idiom reserved for women by men with hints of the 'natural' submissive position which, most probably, mirrors her contemporaries' views regarding female subordination in the play. Ismene further renders this gendered bias more material when she admits that "in these things I am forced, / and shall obey the men in power. I know / that wild and futile action makes no sense" (*A* 66-8). It becomes evident that Ismene's feeling "forced" reflects "a gender ideology that is encultured and contingent," further indicating that "her options for agency are limited" by institutions and norms that naturalize such gendered stereotypes as "men" "in power" / irrational, inferior and "wild" and "futile "women" (Minglu).

1.5 Critical Analysis

From the moment Creon is told of Antigone's violation of his edict, his gender ideology appears to betray characteristics attributable to his niece, Antigone, which are not consistent with femininity. For example, when he says that he will tolerate "No

more free running," adding that "[they]must be women now (*A* 578-9), he indirectly suggests that agency, movement, and freedom have been present in Antigone and that she has ungratefully turned them into disobedience against him and his rule. Although the above suggestion does not foreshadow Antigone's dissent, it nevertheless points in the direction of femininity incapable of complying with Creon's attribution of normative masculinity to deference to authority when he says that his ideal son should be "dutiful" and "obedient" (*A* 642). At the same time, Antigone's presence in the state as "[allowing] disorder in [his] house" and her act of civil insubordination, as being able to "[ruin] cities," "[tear] down our homes," and "[break]the battlefront in panic-rout" (*A* 659, 673-4), are presented as associating femininity with an image of anarchy. This, however, seems to be in stark contrast with Creon's initial idea that his orders would, if at all, be defied only by a man. Likewise, an attempt to bury Polyneices' body could not but be attributed to a man and not a woman, suggesting that Antigone's dissident '*prattein*' politicizes itself to the extent that she speaks and acts her own mind in a way precluded to women in ancient Greece.

Butler underlines that Antigone speaks and acts her own mind by appropriating the same language and behavior by which she is repressed. "She assumes the voice of the law," Butler writes, "in committing the act against the law, thus her autonomy is gained through the appropriation of the authoritative voice of the one she resists, an appropriation that has within it traces of a simultaneous refusal and assimilation of that very authority" (*Antigone's Claim* 11). Although, from a Kristevan perspective, Antigone's position has to be understood in terms of 'liminality' -- as has been stated earlier, between unpolitical kinship and political resistance, in Butler's words, Antigone *cannot* "represent the sanctity of kinship" (9). If she can assimilate at least some measure of political authority, she cannot be consigned to the realm of unpolitical family bonds. As has been claimed before, Antigone's act is thought-provoking insofar as she brings us to the point of reconsidering how kinship rests on conditions of "intelligibility" by which life becomes unlivable, thus dealing a fatal blow to our thinking of normative heterosexuality as the only 'norm', and, as a result, calling into question norms that structure and shape our own society.

Therefore, "even if Antigone's desire" and act dictated by her desire for her brother are "not politically motivated, [they are] certainly politically produced" (Markousi 28). Her "actions," as is explained by Markousi, do not occur outside hegemony, and, moreover, "they are certainly not strictly confined" to within the realm of mere kinship

duties (28). While a certain emotional 'distance' could be noted in Antigone's obsession, her declaration "shall I lie with him" (*A* 73) introduces the unmistakable aura of the incest that has been haunting the family. This declaration of desire, however, is also a statement of Antigone's confirmation of her membership in a family composed of the tragically dead. Butler contends that "when she buries her brother, it is not simply that she acts from kinship, as if kinship furnishes a principle for action, but that her action is the action of kinship, the performative repetition that reinstates kinship as a public scandal" (*Antigone's Claim* 58).

As Antigone "exposes the socially contingent character of kinship" through her appropriation of the methods and language "of sovereign authority and action" (*Antigone's Claim* 6), her desire towards the dead brother does not constitute the cause of her act. It becomes the way transgression against an unjust law is translated into the play. As such, her incestuous desire could be viewed as giving birth to behaviors that are capable of destabilizing and exposing their unstable roots. As has been stated earlier, Irigaray's conceptualization of the image of Antigone is that of the "anti-woman" (*Ethics* 101), because Antigone is the production of a male-written culture that infiltrates the public realm with a private affair that is not as private as it seems. This is true to the extent that the incestuous connotations of her transgressive act, which seems to emanate from the private realm, bring to the fore a relationship overly obsessed with the family and the personal relationships among its members to such an extent that it overrides the needs of the political. While the private realm, as evidenced in the work of Aristotle,[15] is assumed to be inferior to the political, in *Antigone* the private is implied to be superior and thus placed at the center of the tragic conflict. Incest, in brief, elevates the importance of the private to the point where it exposes its relevance to the political. It mainly exposes the interrelation of family and *polis* through the hindering of the successful reproduction of the citizenry. It calls into question the reproductive imperative, useful 'tools' of which women are considered to be. At the same time, it goes further than that by challenging the *polis* not only by denying the *polis* its genetically guaranteed continuation but also by postulating the 'possibility' of a different sexuality that is not circumscribed into normative heterosexuality since she rejects Haemon, her future husband.

Although the *Antigone* seems to conclude on what could be construed as a note of disputable 'freedom', which the eponymous heroine ultimately seems to have attained with her suicidal final act of 'resistance', and, as a result, on a note of optimism, her act

of suicide, this work contends, seems to conclude on a possibility, a 'not-yet'. Practically, the heroine could be perceived as incarnating enough to turn her into an admirable woman whose resistance to masculine authority has made her a feminist icon in time. But beyond our idealization of the heroine for obvious reasons, it is true that her dissidence seems to be an assault not only on the idea of the family as described by Aristotle and as understood through its heteronormative conception of kinship that also informs our conception of family, but also on the idea of the human. If to be considered human makes being an active member of the family in its normative sense a requirement, it is also true that Antigone's dissidence seems to be premised upon what this work calls a 'looping' form of *jouissance* which is dissidence displaced into a kind of post-mortem reinstatement of normative heterosexuality. In this way, she also reinstates herself as an advocate of heteronormativity – even if this seems to occur posthumously -- on the grounds of a re-signification of Haemon's suicide, who "gasped out blood / red blood on her white cheek" so "corpse on a corpse he lies," thus finding "his marriage" (*A* 1238-40).

Furthermore, even if her dissidence were decolonized from such a pursuit, her straightforward admission that "there shall [she] lie forever" (*A* 75), next to Polyneices' corpse, is also suggestive of heterosexuality which, even if forbidden due to the fact they are siblings, is consummated in a fantasy tied to what appears to be a 'sexualized' desire for lying "there" next to a masculine body. Either way, the impetus behind her initial resisting agency also seems neutralized since Antigone, as a subject, is finally co-opted into the 'narrative' of *androcentric* hegemony mainly because such hegemony is internalized by the heroine, which reflects real life, too.

That such an emblematic figure of world literature is subjected to ideological subjection which determines her real conditions of existence in exactly the same way that it does twenty-five centuries later proves that the subject is brought under control and then in turn limited and restricted by ideology to such an extent that both freedom and individual agency are inevitably diminished. In oppressive systems such as patriarchy, ideology takes away the 'voice' from the disavowed female 'other'. It also closes the political space for those trying to fight off exclusion from being recognized as equal speaking beings or endows them with a 'false voice' like Althusser's (false) consciousness that "inspires and instigates the subject to behave in certain ways, adopt certain attitudes and participate in certain regular practices which conform to the ideology," inside which they recognize themselves as subjects (108). Within the

ideology, "the ideas of the subject are inscribed in the ritual practices," which, according to Althusser, are based on the 'correct' "principles of that ideology" (108). As a result, "despite the imaginary distortion by ideology, a subject derives her beliefs from the ideas which become her material actions and practices governed by material rituals which are all defined by material ideological apparatus and derived from the same" (108). As such, even if she is seen to act as a 'free' subject within an ideology, this is only misrecognition, since the conception of a 'free' subject in ideology is only an illusion (108). The fact of the matter is that the subject is controlled to such an extent that her freedom is limited and her individual agency inevitably diminutive. It is therefore on account of such a misrecognition that the subject "acts and practices rituals steeped in the dominant ideology that are detrimental to his/her own welfare" (108).

As the *Antigone* invites its audience to interrogate sovereignty and especially the way it constructs its outcasts, this work uses the eponymous heroine's defiance to reflect on the conceptual parameters of such resistant subjectivities as that of Plath's and H.D.'s fictionalized doubles. Insofar as the *Antigone* story, therefore, brings to the fore a discourse of 'disobedience', it shows that what remains unanswered is how it is to be 'othered' for offenses committed by others,[16] or, indeed, for "participating in a socio-political system which, you are also told, is not only inevitable but also necessary" (Koulouris 13). Thus, under the circumstances, Creon's *polis*, Thebes, metaphorizes itself into the conceptual space afforded to those who have little -- if any at all -- choice in the eyes of the hegemonic culture. Finally, as the *Antigone* teaches us, the reason underlying futile attempts to undermine the dominant 'narrative' should be examined as the result of ideology that subjects the resisters to 'othering', with dissent being either criminalized or co-opted by their *polis* metaphor.

Notes

1 According to Butler, Antigone "hardly represents the normative principles of kinship, "steeped as she is in incestuous legacies that confound her position within kinship. [...] Antigone is already put in question," and on this account she does not represent normativity with regard to kinship (*Antigone's Claim* 2). Actually, as "a figure for politics, she points somewhere else, not to politics as a question of representation but to that political possibility that emerges when the limits to representation and representability are exposed" (2).

2 Butler's actual words are:

> Although not quite a queer heroine, Antigone does emblematize a certain heterosexual fatality that remains to be read. Whereas some might conclude that the tragic fate she suffers is the tragic fate of any and all who would transgress the lines of kinship that confer intelligibility on culture, her example, as it were, gives rise to a contrary sort of critical intervention: What in her act is fatal for heterosexuality in its normative sense? And to what other ways of organizing sexuality might a consideration of that fatality give rise? (*Antigone's Claim* 72)

3 See Butler's *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, in which, according to Butler, "the amount of livability is increased when a transformation of gender norms takes place (either under the influence of progressive gender politics or because of the acts of an agent that tries to destabilize the gender binary of masculine vs. feminine through 'subversive repetition'), since more people will be seen and recognized as subjects of their own" (42).

4 See *Speculum of the Other Woman* where Irigaray employs the concept of "red blood" to refer to a maternal genealogy.

5 See Irigaray's *An ethics of sexual difference* where she speaks of "female ethics" as the prerequisite for the existence of an ethics of sexual difference between female and male subjects -- an ethics that literally creates life, that renders "livability" feasible.

6 Honig actually refers to the extent to which mourning could be considered expressive of the process of resistance insofar as it is, on the one hand, "capable of monumentalizing the enormity of what has been lost and, on the other, in a position to stage conflict as a state of affairs between two commensurate, albeit rival, (political) economies" ("Antigone's Lament" 5). More importantly, "the will to resistance

presupposes a tacit reconciliation with sacrifice and, as a result, with the possibility of mourning," which is the main reason for which "Antigone is still relevant today" Koulouris 18). Because "to know how to mourn," as he says, "is to know precisely what has been lost and, more to the point, what *could* be lost further" (18).

7 See Vernant's essay "Greek Tragedy: Problems of Interpretation" (273-89).

8 As stated earlier in this dissertation, Antigone's "ambiguity," tragically enough, creates, pushes and even crosses boundaries around and between spheres of activities. Through this cross-border motility, she forcefully influences the spectator or reader to start "deconstructing and reconstructing a world that was both familiar and other" (Euben 58).

9 This dissertation includes a number of references to Butler's *Antigone's Claim* that accentuate the relationship between kinship and cultural intelligibility and how Antigone comes to represent kinship in "its deformation and displacement" (24).

10 The term "reproductive futurism" is used by Edelman in his *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* where he transvalues the claim that, since homosexuals cannot reproduce, they have no 'investment' in the future. In a culture dominated by the imperatives of "reproductive futurism," Edelman says, the child serves as the "perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics."

11 A *metic* is an alien who has changed his residency and lives in Athens with a status above other foreigners but with military and financial obligations. As such, he is neither a citizen of his native *polis* nor that of the Athenians. The reference to Antigone's *metic* status, however, extends its semantic function beyond its literal dimension in order to suggest the ever-hybridized state in which woman finds herself and in which she is treated accordingly by patriarchal literature or literature that appropriates patriarchal discourse.

12 See Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (37).

13 See Introduction in this dissertation (33-34).

14 Check the article by Luka Cai Minglu, *Fragility of Gender*: *Gender Essentialism in Sophocles' Antigone*, at https://artsci.wustl.edu/fragility-gender.

15 Aristotle's distinction of the private/public is in Introduction (29-30).

16 Creon promulgates a decree that goes further than Athenian law since he not only forbids Polyneices to be buried but also posts soldiers to ensure that the body is devoured by birds and dogs: "Leave him unburied, leave his corpse disgraced, / a dinner for the birds and for the dogs" (*A* 205-6). Although the Athenians forbade traitors to be

buried, their bodies could at least be buried elsewhere in Attika by relatives. Creon could have allowed the corpse to be buried outside Thebes or had it thrown over the border rather than leave the corpse exposed to rot.

CHAPTER 2
PLATH'S ESTHER FIGHTING WITH THE CULTURAL FORCES

2.1 Exordium

Primarily read as Sylvia Plath's autobiography interspersed with the necessary fictional elements, *The Bell Jar* is also a *roman à clef*[1] that brilliantly presents "the oppressive atmosphere of the 1950s and the soul-destroying effect this atmosphere could have on an ambitious, high-minded young woman like Plath" (Bonds 49). With the very first paragraphs of the author's narration catching the reader unawares, the narrator – Plath's fictional double, Esther, sets a gloomy tone for the circumambient atmosphere of the period in question: "It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York" (*TBJ* 1); also, elsewhere, expressing her terror at this dramatic turn of events: "I'm stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers -- goggle-eyed headlines staring up at me on every street corner and at the fusty, peanut-smelling mouth of every subway" (1-2); with her desperation and fear climaxing in "It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, *being burned alive* all along your nerves" (1-2).

The excruciating ambience described above, with its concomitant signs of depression and sense of sorrow, which succeeds in painting the grim picture of the early 20th century tinged with the dark hues of the general mood of the time, impresses itself indelibly on Esther's psyche and finds expression in the way she describes the 'funereal' climate of that "queer, sultry" morning in New York (1-2). The adjective 'funereal' seems to color "the impact of the Cold War on American society, the [dreary] roles of women after the Second World War," not to mention "the prevalence of mental health issues among most of the women in the country in the 1950s" (Dunkle 65). In consequence, it would not be unrealistic to claim that Plath's novel is embedded within a historical period that coincides with the promotion of a widespread fear of a potential rise of communism or anarchism by the official U.S. government. It is a period which is mostly known as the Red Scare. As a term, it is used in connection with the red flags used by communists. It is also associated, in most people's minds, with Senator Joseph McCarthy who has gone down in history as notoriously employing smear tactics to legalize a persecution launched against alleged communists, Soviet spies and sympathizers, among his compatriots.[2]

If seen from a narrow perspective, *The Bell Jar* may be misconstrued as the fictional façade behind which lie hidden Plath's aspects of her real life. While speaking about her novel, Plath confirms: "What I've done is throw together events from my own life, fictionalizing [them] to add color -- it's a pot boiler really, but I think it will show how isolated a person feels when she is suffering a breakdown . . . I've tried to picture my world and the people in it as seen through the distorting lens of a bell jar" (qtd. in Harris 83). However, "exploding onto the best-seller charts" in 1971, it sells "more than two million copies in the United States alone" (Dunkle 64). It is a novel that "has been translated into nearly a dozen languages and was made into a feature-length film in 1979 starring Marilyn Hassett [let alone its] …. adaptation …starring Julia Stiles … released by Plum Pictures in 2012," having had brief appearances in American movies "as disparate as the teen comedy *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), where it is shown being read by the cynical feminist protagonist, Kat Stratford, and *Natural Born Killers* (1994), in which the book appears to be lying on the bed next to Mallory Knox a few moments before she murders her abusive parents" (64). Mention should also be made of the fact that *The Bell Jar* is still cited as symbolic of "teenage angst," especially in films "often on the part of a female protagonist" (64). It is not an exaggeration to say that it ranks alongside such "acclaimed *bildungsromans* as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,*" to name but a few (64). Moreover, as Marjorie Perloff notes, "despite *The Bell Jar*'s seemingly dated setting," the book "bec[a]me for the young of the early seventies what *The Catcher in the Rye* was to their counterparts of the fifties: the archetypal novel that mirrors, in however distorted a form, their own personal experience, their sense of what Irving Howe calls 'the general human condition'" (qtd. in Perloff 508).

Moreover, although *The Bell Jar* is "very much about the fifties," as Elaine Showalter says (438), this does not preclude it from extending into decades to come. The heroine, Esther, is as transtemporal as can be, with the novel being construed as an insightful examen of American society of the 1960s, or 1980s, or even 2000s, and even of the present time, in the same effective manner, since the writer paints an enduring portrait of a young woman coming of age in a *bildungsroman*, inside of which the threat of a common internal enemy is still as ubiquitous as the threat of persecution by the people living under the McCarthyite Red Scare regime of Plath's time, most realistically exemplified through her inclusion of such events as the Rosenberg trial,

their execution, and the controversy that surrounds them. It is true that the heroine lives in a kind of collective hysteria, with Red Scare stories terrifying the U.S. citizens to such a degree that they all rally behind patriotic ideals whose effect on the public is such that even any voices of dissent that differ in issues other than those concerned with the official politics of the time, as, for example, whether a woman should combine career and a family life, or, even if she should be free to decide whether or not to have a family, are 'hushed up'. It is also certainly true that the society in the 1950s internalizes and practices the faith in such strict gender roles as those delimited by compliance with society's expectations of women being confined to within the domestic life of the wife and mother primarily, for which roles they are trained to be fit from infancy on.

However, at the same time, Plath's self-probing narrative, which circumnavigates the 'temporal capsule' inside of which float her internal conflicts between her opposition to the gravitational pull toward predetermined roles and her attraction toward escaping predetermination, does not stay in 'orbit' round the same 'capsule' but lends itself to further exploration even as far as into the present. Esther, as narrator, lends the contemporary reader the narrative's perceptive 'eye' to investigate similar 'faiths' and helps her to attempt to disidentify herself from the dominant narrative by using the heroine's experiences unfolding in the narrative as a benchmark against which the reader's life is measured and dissected in such a way as to assist her in addressing issues that have been lying hidden and untapped for long. The 'blueprint' for the 21st century woman's successful disidentification reveals the key to Esther's dissident '*prattein*' being appropriated by an allegorical *polis* that channels her dissent into mild forms of resistance interspersed with motherhood even if outside of the boundaries of heteronormativity. Practically, this seems to be what the system can tolerate: any *Esther*'s resistance usurped and turned against her as disguisedly as to make her passively accept that what she has accomplished results from her own volition and is not the 'fruit' of social manipulation and conditioning, which does not, after all, put the system's tolerance to the test.

In addition, the 21st century woman, like Antigone's sisters, in all her unheroic but 'tragic' splendor, too, is as ideologically conditioned as Esther to treasure a faith in roles that she seems to be trained from early on to adopt. She may not be living under a regime of 'McCarthy-style paranoia' like Esther in her allegorical *polis*, but is certainly persecuted by her own allegorical *polis*, too, a society plagued by neoliberal

high-handed policies that seem to position competition as the defining characteristic of all human relations. Despite its concomitant sweeping consequences in the domain of interpersonal relations, this integral part of the 'new' humanity is so defining that it becomes synonymous with who she is, with her identity. It becomes so self-defining that it is inescapable. It is so pervasive that she seems to have internalized this utopian faith as a kind of biological law. As a matter of fact, this 'near-Darwinian' impact of her faith in the neo-liberal type of human -- men not excluded, either -- on her is so corrosively drastic as to be able to gradually reshape human life and shift the locus of power without letting her recognize it as what it is: an ideology. This ideology not only redefines citizens as consumers exercising their 'democratic' choices within the matrix of neoliberalism's fundamental trajectory; it is also a process that rewards 'measurable', money-engineered merit and punishes lack of profit. As such, the measure of the 'new' citizen is that of the consumer and that of the consumer is that of the citizen. Inevitably, inequality makes itself savagely present while at the same time it is recast as virtuous since the disembodied market ensures that everyone reaps what they sow in a tactically interventive 'you-get-what-you-deserve' logic. Any efforts directed toward the creation of a more equal society are considered counterproductive and hostile to the 'welfare' of the community.

This 'new' welfare-oriented market-ripe atmosphere is the allegorical *polis* of the neo-liberal type of human with hegemony as its bodiless sovereign -- its Creon -- producing creeds that the citizen, in turn, internalizes and reproduces. The result is that our faith in the irrefutability of these creeds does not waver. It enables us to buffer ourselves from ideas opposed to this collective perception of the 'winners-losers' hierarchy. If, for instance, you are racially different from most of the community of which you are a member, and unemployed, your state of unemployment is attributable to a lack of enterprising skills, so you blame yourself for your failure and feel stigmatized. If you are a woman in a lesbian relationship, opting for motherhood while at the same time pursuing a career, yet to no avail, you also blame yourself for your failure and feel stigmatized. In both cases, you convince yourself that you belong to the 'losers' and you deserve what you receive in return for your lack of merit, ignoring the other parameters of your identity through which you are constituted, such as race, non-heteronormative sexual orientation combined with intended motherhood, which may have played their part in 'anchoring' you to the 'losing' end of the spectrum -- the non-winners, or else the contemporary disavowed 'other'.

In her allegorical *polis* of such trying cultural events with a personal coming-of-age story as that occurring synchronically in Plath's *roman à clef* and extending diachronically into the present time, *The Bell Jar* remains a powerful, emblematic text which is as transtemporal as can be. Like Esther in the 1950s who is hospitalized, in two minds over motherhood, and befuddled over her sexuality, which, albeit inviting, is also scary since it is a *terra incognita* to her, 'Esthers' today are faced with such irresolvable dilemmas as deciding not to choose to be in a relationship, avidly supporting their right to sexual experimentation, which may result in their being considered hostile to the accepted model of heteronormativity, or opting for single motherhood along with a bisexual orientation, or even settling on a career combined with motherhood within the boundaries of a homosexual marriage. According to the current neoliberal orthodoxy, choosing such life paths underlies a tendency to depart from the established ideology that is not market-friendly and by extension does not contribute to prosperity. As a matter of fact, Penny Griffin, elaborating on how deviation from the neoliberal orthodox 'tenets' which attribute to commitment to heteronormativity the success 'script' necessary for one not to be considered one of the excluded 'other' of the neoliberal dominant narrative, states*: "Sex and gender* are not merely incidental to the formation and perpetuation of neo-liberal discourse, they *are absolutely central to* it," adding that so-called "*neo-liberal discourse is predicated on a politics of heteronormativity* that (re)produces the dominance of normative heterosexuality" (Griffin Abstract). To illustrate her proposition, she refers to the World Bank which, as she postulates, "is an excellent example of … a heteronormative discourse of economic viability [reproduced] through policy interventions that are intrinsically sexualized, that is, predicated on a politics of normative heterosexuality" (Abstract). She further explains that "bank discourse, although articulated as value neutral, 'straightens' development by creating and sustaining policies and practices that are tacitly, but not explicitly, formulated according to gendered hierarchies of meaning, representation and identity," concluding that "one effect of contemporary neo-liberalism's inherent heteronormativity is to associate successful human behavior almost exclusively with a gender identity embodied in dominant forms of heterosexual masculinity" (Abstract).[3] Obviously, those materially deviating from the norm, even if a low standard deviation could be allowed for, are thereby positioned outside of the dominant narrative's trajectory and as a result subjected to stigmatization as harboring anti-market ideas that are not conducive to the 'good' of the welfare of the community.

They are as misunderstood as Esther, who, 'going against the grain' of society, are not satisfied with the choices available to them by their dominant culture, and, who, due to these choices that seem to be as close to the mean of the set choices of her culture, are expected not to disrupt the dominant narrative of their culture, or else they will have to face the consequences, among which a mental breakdown also seems likely.

In this regard, thanks to its ability to transcend the temporal and cultural constraints of the 1950s and extend its trajectory of appeal into the 21st century, *The Bell Jar* is read, and re-read, not only because it can 'crack' the code of the minority open, then and now, probing the depths of the 'sign' to which the reader does not belong but wishes to be under,[4] but also because it can help the reader identify the machinations employed by the dominant culture to channel this wish into mitigated resistance which, in turn, should fall within a low standard deviation, and which involves no exclusionary practices on behalf of the dominant culture. That this is reminiscent of the tactical 'subterfuge' used by the system to integrate the code of the minority into the 'grand' narrative of the system and thus legitimate it seems to be evident especially if combined with Gramsci's 'suffrage' argument stated earlier in this dissertation.[5] If it is, it hardly escapes one's notice that the system allows for low standard deviations so that it will perpetuate itself without suffering any losses in case it might have to enter a headlong confrontation with those opposed to it.

As seen from above, the novel is not only a mere *bildungsroman* or a *roman à clef* in the strict sense of the word; it is much more than that. The story 'cracks' open a code of "sexual and personal politics with wider historical processes and breaks silences concerning women's feelings of alienation and barrenness, and the negative, devouring aspects of motherhood" (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 860). While writing *The Bell Jar*, Plath "becomes acquainted at first hand with the domestic ideology of the postwar United States" (Dunkle 67). She is exposed to the ideals officially "championed by the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 1955," Adlai Stevenson, that a woman's patriotic duties are practically distilled into those of the "'humble role of the housewife', who could take part in the 'greater issues of our day' by devoting herself to home, husband, and child rearing," (67). She is also exposed to the stark reality of the vengeance with which the U.S. punishes political dissent. Finally, she encounters death during her suicide attempt, a fact that mobilizes the system that sees fit to 'incarcerate' her in a mental hospital. The story, therefore, that Plath has written is one that adds the external tension of the political and cultural realism to the adventures of a

girl coming of age. It lends universality to the novel to the extent that it draws such direct parallels between a young woman's internal personal struggles and the larger, cultural conflicts at hand, extending those parallels between a young woman of the near past and all 'Esthers', nowadays, living through the 'bulldozer effect' of the neoliberal approach to life, along with the symptoms which a modern woman trying to accommodate herself to behaviors within the framework of the system's cultural intelligibility experiences, such as depression or anorexia-induced disorders, to name but a few. As a result, it continues to be as controversial and culturally relevant six decades after it was first published as it initially was, rendering itself a timeless and universal story. Also, read as a means to 'unlocking' the conundrum of her suicide, Plath's novel also raises a subject of political contestation, namely the paradoxes that Esther encounters in her allegorical *polis*, which, among others, include the contradictory responsibilities imprinted upon her and her female peers that being a 'proper' woman entails, and the political stigma that failing to honor them carries, medicalized as mental illness, which, predictably enough, sends the heroine to the mental asylum. Esther's prognosticated 'fall' into insanity as early as the heroine's expressed repulsion at the Rosenberg death sentence is but a symptom of the fake but vengeful society in which she happens to be born and raised and, as foreshadowed, her attempt to set herself free from her responsibilities and duties as an American adult woman have no happy ending, either.

To the extent that psychiatry, which is known to have a bearing on the politics of the time, functions as a 'rheostat' that regulates the people, it administers treatments such as ECT -- electro-convulsive treatment -- and lobotomy, when and if deemed necessary. Besides, insofar as psychiatry, Cold War politics, and gender interact in Plath's *roman à clef* in the same way that they do in the temporal context the book describes, they are reflections of an American society violently submitted to a postwar conformism, which further reflects the disciplinary methods employed by all types of institutions – psychiatry included -- to regulate the population and keep it under constant control. They become the 'tools' of the system aiming to use the socially engineered ideological 'apparatuses' to achieve what Foucault calls "an efficient machine through habituating the internalization of surveillance" (*The Birth of the Prison* 164). In this light, *The Bell Jar* could permit a Foucauldian analysis of how society -- and more importantly, women -- enters the "machinery of power that explores [the body], breaks it down and rearranges it" (138). It is not surprising therefore that

after her treatment in the asylum Esther refers to herself as having been "born twice, patched, retreaded and approved for the road" -- probably because of her having been resuscitated 'miraculously' (*TBJ* 223). In other words, she has been explored, analyzed and rearranged and as a result re-adapted to the present environment, which is her 'cure'.

Obviously, through the narration of her heroine's 'treatment', Plath censures the methods employed by the system's 'limb' of the 'law', like mental institutions, which employs the abovementioned methods to control the population. Her knowledge of a system not visible to the naked eye, coupled with her expert narrative technique, presents how a Esther, a female individual, is forced to experience a compromise of principles and ideas under the pressure of disciplining regulations, and also how such an individual is often confronted with the consequences of acts of dissidence either in the form of expulsion from the system through 'incarceration', through self-induced, martyrdom-oriented death -- in hindsight, appearing to be a self-sacrificial transcendence, or even through ideological rehabilitation. Last but not least, Esther's 'heretic' confession also lets it be revealed how it is that she resists gender ideology only to be later integrated into the system's narrative, thus allowing patriarchic hegemony to co-opt her resistance by channeling her initial dissident impulses into moderate outbursts of 'loyal' opposition. As the story unfolds, the heroine, initially being against motherhood and expected female docility, learns to 'train' herself to become a mother who, all the same, can also discuss being sexually active outside the boundaries of marriage after discovering the "fitting coil," thus concluding the Esther story on a note of false optimism that transubstantiates itself into a semi-certainty of achieved emancipation.

2.2 Plath's 'Bell-Jar' World

It is true that Plath's icon-generative presence in American Literature exerted and continues to exert tremendous influence on readers in the U.S. and across borders and generations even posthumously. Her embrace of death as a vehicle of escaping her deep sense of alienation from her social and cultural *milieu*, which unfortunately is doomed to find no remedy, "neither for the mystic nor for the intense and brilliant poet, searching for a cause to serve" (Debata 6), has turned her into the 'icon' young readers of her poems and prose works need in order to sublimate their youthful, most of the times futile, resistance to the myriad reasons for disappointment in their lives into the ennobled image of a postmortem self-validation. In the following poem, her voice of

desperation, in view of the -- now -- fading joy derived from a pseudo-knowledge of having "seen God," sobs out this lack of satisfaction that seems to be her personal lament, the result of the torment of the after-effects of realizing that she practically knows what lies beyond. However, she still struggles within herself to find the "remedy," despite her newly acquired knowledge that the Elysian after-life is so uninviting and illusory that even if the last line seems more of a desperate admission, it is a macabre reconciliation of the self to it. At the end of it, she comes across as saying that what has been learnt is that there are no mystical epiphanies but human beings who, like her, dwell on earth when the reason why they should be is really absent:

> Once one has seen God, what is the remedy?
>
> Once one has been seized up
>
> Without a part left over,
>
> Not a toe, not a finger, and used,
>
> Used utterly, in the sun's conflagrations, the stains
>
> That lengthens from ancient cathedrals
>
> What is the remedy? (*Collected* 268)

But the 'epiphanies' she is looking for in her adult life draw their power of fascination from early on in childhood. Growing up in the U.S. (1932-1963), Plath found everything around her holding a fascination for her; no wonder her faith in 'epiphanies' even inside the 'mundane' is indicative of her curiosity for change, transformation. She found even the humblest things in life to look fascinating. Naturally curious, she learnt from her early youth to look deep into things, and it came as no surprise to the people around her that she should be asking so many questions about even the simplest things in life. When she grew older, she channeled all her natural inquisitive power into writing, especially poetry. "Her poems became as expansive as her own country," as claimed by Pradeep Debata, embracing "in their multiplicity not only her anxieties and concerns, but also the cultural profile of the age in which she was living. The poetic vision in a way was dictated by her unsettling drifting mind which knew no boundaries. Plath was the only American writer ever to receive the Pulitzer Prize posthumously" (1). However, living in the postwar years with a 'legacy' of atrocities being the inevitable corollary to a period of bestial dehumanization and death as well as with her husband, Ted Hughes, a British poet, constitute a major part of her poetry. Death is so cataclysmically present in her life that she often finds her mind rhyming her death-bound thoughts into the imagery of an anciently-formed

female figure celebrating the 'beauty' of death blessing the woman's corpse referred to in the poem with such a lifelike "smile of accomplishment" that it resembles a "Greek necessity," which is actually an illusion, since it is the smile of a corpse which 'smiles' in Plath's mind as if to confess to the blissful release from life's torture:

> The woman is perfected
>
> Her dead
>
> Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
>
> The illusion of a Greek necessity
>
> Flows in the scrolls of her toga,
>
> Her bare
>
> Feet seem to be saying:
>
> We have come so far, it is over. (*Collected* 272)

It is also true that Plath's creations strike a chord in many a woman's and man's heart at the time and afterwards. "Plath" is actually the 'voice' that, as Debata says, "speaks to people from across the social and cultural spectrum, and her writings have the enduring appeal and charm to draw the attention of readers cutting across class, gender and nationality" (1). This is the main reason why Plath's work still survives; because, besides being transtemporal, it is also transcultural; or even because one cannot help but notice that Plath's work is grounded in 'wounds' still left open, in 'scars' still looking ugly, in 'smiles' gone unnoticed, from so many people in so many countries over so many years across the social and cultural spectrum of the world's literature. Also, it would be an omission not to mention that in addition to the world issues of the time that elevate Plath to this level of the 'icon', her personal struggles through her role as a woman in a man's world do, too. She was not unaffected by the gender-specific discourse of her time. In fact, she played the roles of a wife, mother, daughter, poet, as well as those of a U.S. and also British citizen. Throughout those life's roles, she found herself on a collision course with her artistic creation. That was too much of a strain on her to endure unaffected, and in the end she collapsed. Her collapse adds to her being even more icon-worshipped. In one of Plath's naturally unembellished but eloquent accounts of why her writing has such a tremendous impact on people, she says: "My health is making stories, poems, and novels, of experience: that is why, or, rather, that is why it is good, that I have suffered & been to hell, although not to all hells. I cannot live for life itself: but for the words which stay the flux" (*Journals* 286). At the same time, this 'suffering' basically gives rise to her suicide

attempts, as is described in a verse of hers from "Daddy": "At twenty I tried to die / And get back, back, back to you" (*Collected* 244), and is made into *The Bell Jar*, which fundamentally serves as the "necessary backdrop to understand[ing] the context" that scarred her so tragically and led her to "present a critique of psychiatry" of the time as well as her personal drama in and out of mental asylums (Debata 6).

From early on in her life, Plath is adversely affected by several opposite values imposed on women in that era. Confined within an illusory "bell-jar," she undergoes the throes of a mental state consequent upon her inability to decide on responsibilities, to make choices, let alone the externally imposed need to comply with a fragmented identity as a woman of the ultra-conservative 1950's world. This leads her, along with the women of her generation, to feel 'fractured' within, because of the pressure to fulfill her role of wife and mother imposed on her by the 'official social consciousness', on the one hand, and her ambition for education along with a life of career, on the other. She resorts to writing as a 'breath' of hope that also coincides with her already expressed dissent from society's demands, which is reflected in *The Bell Jar*. Her struggle against the societal rules and regulations of the time, double standards, and emotional as well as physical constraints on herself and women in general makes *The Bell Jar* a personal traversal of Plath's autobiographical heroine's world from within her 'jar-like' interior to the real world without.

Plath's heroine "seems intent on exploiting and punishing … out-smarting …[men] to prove she's not inferior" (Bundtzen 114). If truth be told, such female-oriented bigotry stems from the striking division between the masculine and feminine roles of the time. It is true, too, that hegemonic patriarchal discourse attributes to the masculine role the ability to be rational and therefore renders him a fully-fledged member of the public world, on the one hand; it attributes to the feminine one the ideological label of being emotive and sensual, fit for the private sphere, on the other. Such a model of gender-divided society is mainly promoted by the government, too, and cleverly propagated by means of communication such as TV, magazine or radio programs. The model is skillfully explained in Friedan's renowned work, *The Feminine Mystique*, where Friedan explains that "the image of woman that emerges from … magazine[s] is young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and female; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home" (82). She also explains how the press of the time, especially magazines, "does not leave out sex; the only passion, the only pursuit, the only goal woman is permitted is the pursuit of a man," finally adding

that "women do no work except housework and work to keep their bodies beautiful and to get and keep a man" (82). Much like the chorus in the *Antigone*, the press seems to serve the purpose of the propaganda 'machinery' of the time ideologically brainwashing the subjects into 'loyalty'. As stated in the 1st chapter, it serves as the 'town crier' of patriarchic hegemony. As such, both the chorus in the tragedy and the press could be taken to serve as the joint analogical expression of the ideological workings of hegemonic discourse then and now. As shown in the *Antigone* chapter, after Creon has launched his misogynist tirade in connection with his refusal to reconcile himself to the idea of being "beaten by a woman," the chorus replies: "We think –unless our age is cheating us -- / that what you say is sensible and right" (*A* 678-82).[6] The chorus 'generously' attributes to Creon the requisite 'credible' legitimating agency that sustains his hegemonic discourse. In *The Bell Jar*, the magazine in question is a 'tool' of the media, an ideological state apparatus itself, that 'bountifully' affords the women of the 1950's U.S. their gender identity, an identity based on a role behavior within the family and society different from that of men. The press, thus, as a major ideological institution, structures and shapes female identity with its attendant procreative imperative in such a way as to present it as socially commendable, certainly an ideologically based stereotype that sustains hegemonic patriarchy.

At this point, we should make mention of how the procreative imperative then, a decade after the end of the war, was seen to be at odds with the pre-war *avant-garde* sexually emancipated woman ideal. For although female sexuality was an integral part of female identity then and, moreover, although sex was not such a taboo issue for women's magazines, "the only passion, the only pursuit, the only goal woman is permitted is the pursuit of a man*"* (Friedan 82). Women are divided into those who are sexually 'correct' and those who are not, from which categorization also emerge the binaries of purity/impurity and virginity/prostitution. For the women of that time are considered to be little more than appendages and sexual and domestic slaves to men -- as Dodo Conway and Doreen demonstrate in the *The Bell Jar*. For that reason, to offer to have sex outside of the boundaries of marriage is synonymous with the loss of dignity. Realizing that her neighbor "Dodo raised her six children and would no doubt raise her seventh" (*TBJ* 121-2), and also seeing that she pays a visit to her house to "take some family snaps of the three of us one hot afternoon," adding that "Mrs. Greenwood asked that this picture [the three of them] be printed in hopes that it will encourage her daughter to return home" (*TBJ* 213), make Esther feel disturbed since

she knows that she has to embrace the constraints of a heteronormative life, leaving no room for sexual emancipation, if she is to be properly rehabilitated and back on 'normalcy's track'.

The contrasting standards of the time infuriate and disgust Esther. She risks losing her chastity while not becoming unchaste at the same time. By actually becoming rebellious against the "double sexual standards" in a society that privileges men at the expense of women, she is willing to forfeit virginity without forfeiting dignity (Austin 2). Practically, her attempts to lose virginity aim at achieving a level of freedom, which men are privileged enough to enjoy at will. She thus challenges the social hypocrisy and conventions. However, combining challenging the "double sexual standards" and at the same time maintaining dignity is no mean feat. Through the 'electroshock' of a rape experience, Esther comes to experience the consequences of what is viewed by a man as 'violation' of the first term of the first and second binaries (namely those of purity/impurity and virginity/prostitution), which she attempts to call into question. Actually, while attempting to gain freedom from the socially instituted transactional expression of virginity as a 'trade-in' for marriageability, she decides to rid herself of her virginity without, however, jeopardizing her integrity. However, she receives brutal prostitute-like treatment by Marco, which becomes more evident when Esther is practically raped while being called a "slut" by him. She rebels against it with the dignity of a physically expressed 'gesture', namely clenching her fists and "smash[ing] them at his nose" (*TBJ* 116). With this 'gesture', she fights the system on two levels: she strives for sexual emancipation and at the same time she resists resigning herself to her integrity being compromised, an act by no means consistent with the dominant 'femaleness protocol' that requires that woman -- in this case, Esther -- be an appendage to her husband and that her sexual life be part of her conceptive and procreative role.

2.2.1 *"Double Standards," ECT and The Bell-Jar*

The psychological space within the "bell-jar" separates Esther's self from society. It makes her asphyxiate under the knowledge that there are no 'cracks' on the glass walls of the 'jar' for her, and for any woman like her 'imprisoned' inside, to 'steal' some oxygen and stay alive. Be that as it may, it also provides a sense of safety, on which she soliloquizes: "At first I wondered why the room felt so safe. Then I realized it was because there were no windows. The air-conditioning made me shiver" (*TBJ* 134). Albeit 'secure', the "bell-jar" reduces her to an object, which makes her feel more isolated and depressed: "I felt myself shrinking to a small black dot…a hole in the

ground…getting smaller and smaller and lonelier and lonelier rushing away from all those lights and excitement at about a million miles an hour" (17).

This sense of worthlessness gives way to a wish for self-punishment for being responsible for what is happening to her. The way in which Esther reacts to the electroshock treatment that she is administered at the mental institution is a manifestation of this feeling: "I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done," she confesses (*TBJ* 151). Upon her electroconvulsive shock treatment, Esther is aware that she is being chastened in the same way as the Rosenbergs, who, too, are subjected to 'othering', primarily because of Ethel's adamant attitude in her husband's case. Ethel's lack of 'remorse', made much worse by the fact she does not seem to bend out of respect for her being a mother, tips the scales against them – as will be explained below. They are finally subjected to electrocution. This fact is so depressing for Esther that the reality she experiences outside of the 'jar' becomes intolerable. Refusing to "fulfil her role as a woman" and, as a result, "being considered a terrible a 'traitor' to her country, as Ethel Rosenberg was" (Alarcon 14), Esther realizes that she is 'branded' as different, as a 'heretic', and as such she can find no compassion in a hypocritical society that aggrandizes its altruism and sensitivity when, in fact, the reverse is true: "'So', I said, 'Isn't it awful about the Rosenbergs?'" -- the couple were to be executed in the electric chair that day, to which Hilda responds affirmatively: "'Yes!' Hilda said, and at last I felt I had touched a human string in the cat's cradle of her heart," quick to add an after-thought to that: "'It's awful such people should be alive'. . . 'I'm so glad they're going to die'" (*TBJ* 96). At that moment, through the quick conversation with Hilda, Esther realizes that she does not belong; and even worse, she knows that she is viewed as the same as "those who already do not belong" (the Rosenbergs, or, more precisely, Ethel Rosenberg), and "at whose cost the narrative of belonging has been made" (Alarcon 14).

It is at the beginning of the novel that Esther's fears of her self-entrapment in her 'jar'-like world include the Rosenbergs who, having been branded as 'heretics', too, are considered unfit for rehabilitation and are therefore executed. The idea of electrocution intertwined with her subjection to electroconvulsive treatment is proleptically made obvious initially in her narration, resonating further in the novel, when she undergoes electroshock therapy: "I'm stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers" (*TBJ* 1). Symbolic of the impact their execution has on her is the electroshock treatment that takes her to

the innermost regions of the soul where its 'punishing' seizures forcing their way through with loud "crackling" noises bring Esther's physical self to the point of disintegrating: "Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee, shrilled, through an air crackling with blue light, and with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the saps fly out of me like a split plant" (151).

But it is not only her subjection to ECT treatment; the fact of her being clinically 'attacked' by her psychiatrist's unfriendly attitude is unbearable, too, since it is not only traumatic but also invasive, aggressively infringing on her personal space. As stated above, Esther connects this violation of her space with remorse for not complying, so laconically expressed through her distress-fraught aside: "I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done" (151). Doctor Gordon decides that ECT is the best option in her case. Esther thus begins questioning him why she deserves such an ordeal. His impersonal approach, though, causes her to believe her disease is her own fault. His unsympathetic, incommunicative and impersonal attitude aggravates her condition, making her remorse even more intense. His use of the 'proper' psychiatry protocols, during a time when ECT is considered an efficient and effective psychiatric practice, embodies the entire patriarchal women-oriented 'wrath'. It is expressed through the male-defined logic of sexual rationality to subject the 'dissenter' to unprecedented medical ordeal and scrutiny to turn her female logic of sexual 'irrationality', namely her indecision to comply with the expected social requirements, into one of compliance.

As Esther considers Dr. Gordon's shock treatment to be punishment for an 'unknown crime', she feels 'imprisoned' in his mechanical 'jar', which in turn shocks her into feeling an overwhelmingly bigger fear than what his handheld electrodes purport to cure. Esther deciphers the whole situation not as a treatment but as a "never-ending" punishment and an act of violence aimed at her: "Once I was locked up, they could use [ECT] on me all the time" (*TBJ* 159). Actually, "the mechanical, detached scene depicts the power of doctors over a female patient" (Bloom 43), with patriarchal hegemony successfully 'injecting' guilt into Esther and pathologizing her 'unknown crime'. Before the coming electroshock treatment, she automatically associates herself with the executed Rosenbergs: "I would have gone down the hall… resigned to execution" (203).

As a response to rejection of its norms, society chooses electroshocks as the most effective therapy to reinstate women's 'womanly qualities', the most 'important' of which involves raising a family and taking care of her household, to achieve prosperity

as a society. Ironically enough, the 'effectiveness' of the therapy is distilled into being "taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets, or physicists or presidents" and, also, into being socially trained in accepting "that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights" such as the "independence and opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (Friedan 15-16). This attitude to socially prescribed female roles is a political one, practically aiming to control a woman's private life initially, and, through controlling it, to control the realm of public life in the long-term, since to the extent their private life has a significant effect on the realm of the public, by controlling the private realm they also control the public realm, too.

2.3 Esther Decoding Official 'Consciousness'

Esther's sense of living in this world is crucial to the space-as-experienced: the space in which she lives and acts, which is the psychological space where her life unfolds and, more importantly, the space experienced between society and self, soul and body. She illustrates as vividly and critically as possible the devastating effects of gender ideology on women who are gradually driven insane. As an intelligent but unmarried woman of the 1950s, her intelligence is overlooked whereas her being single inevitably equals being a virgin. As such, her fate is marriage to a husband who dominates wife. At its most 'alternative', she is condescendingly expected to pursue a career in secretarial duties while at the same time promoting herself as being fit for marriage. But such confinements have unsurprisingly 'dismembered' her existence in an already fractured society itself.

However, it is true that her resistance persists unabated. The general situation of those gloomy times does not 'gag' her from being overly critical of the "double sexual standards," which "gives men a privilege of premarital sex" while at the same time women are denied such a right (Austin 2, 12). This is best manifested in the way in which Esther's childhood friend, Buddy Willard, who epitomizes "double standards," is portrayed by the narrator as "a fine, clean boy…a model person … so intelligent" who, nevertheless, is "an awful hypocrite" (*TBJ* 75). He wants her to remain and act like a virgin while having an erotic relationship with a hotel waitress. Esther is furiously critical when she expresses her justified intolerance of such hypocrisy: "What I couldn't stand was Buddy's pretending I was so sexy and he was so pure, when all the time he'd been having an affair with that tarty waitress and must have felt like laughing in my face" (75). Under the circumstances, Esther feels stifling, enjoined, as she is, to

participate in all this sexual hypocrisy that she, as a woman, is expected to enjoy herself as unreservedly as possible. When receiving an article entitled "In Defense of Chastity" clipped off from *Reader's Digest* by her mother, she is baffled by its blatant cultural dichotomy regarding gender roles presented in the article, which actually claims that a man's emotions are so different from those of a woman that it should be expected that the two 'worlds' could only be reconciled through marriage (*TBJ* 86).

That Esther cannot accept the notion of the two different 'worlds' on account of arbitrary mental and emotional expressions assigned to gender roles that legitimate man's "double life" and ideologize the need for woman's purity is obvious when saying she "couldn't stand the idea of a woman's having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not" (86). It was practically a 'compulsion' as old as patriarchy itself. The issue of the "double standards" set within the female community in terms of chaste and unchaste women is emphatically raised elsewhere (Austin 2), with the heroine still being confused over America's sexual hypocrisy that seems to exaggerate the importance of safeguarding female chastity by all means available even at the expense of such critical religious or political issues concerning the divisions of Catholics versus Protestants or Republicans versus Democrats. As Esther says, "When I was nineteen, pureness was the great issue. Instead of the world being divided into Catholics and Protestants or Republicans and Democrats or white men and black men or even men and women, I saw the world divided into people who had slept with somebody and people who hadn't" (86).

The extent of the 'compulsion' to guard female chastity is even present in the mass media of the time that keep warning young women against risking losing their "pureness" and keep repeating the consequence of not defending their 'virtue', since, should they not, they will not be rewarded by being chosen by the man they want to marry. A telling illustration of this 'transaction' is best expressed in a film that the young women together with Esther watch: the blonde movie character is finally chosen as a spouse by the man she is in love with, whereas, on the other hand, the "sexy black-haired girl" ends up "with nobody" (*TBJ* 38-39). Through this sexual identity they recognize each other and understand who is 'good' and who is 'bad', who is chaste and who is unchaste, which, for the standards of the middle-of-the-century U.S. society, constitutes sufficient proof of a girl's marriageability. The implicit yet hard to miss message is a warning to the young woman of the time to 'sacrifice' her physical side, to be "loved for denying her needs, or [should she not conform,] … abandoned as

punishment for exploring the world on her own, for using her unprecedented emotions and desires as a guide" (Leonard 70). Cinema, too, as a major ideological 'tool', brainwashes the women into a sexual identity premised on gender bias that involves a socially based gender role behavior within the family and society different from that of men. It thus shapes female sexuality in such a way as to present it as socially acceptable or despicable, certainly an ideologically based binary that is one of the pillars of hegemonic patriarchy.

But whereas society's view of femininity stresses what men desire in women, rather than what women wish and desire in men, a message already ingested by Esther, beneath this view lies a contradiction since it is not as one-sided as expected. Actually, it stands in striking contrast to the media-held opinion that women should also be "encouraged to travel to Mexico," for instance, when embedded in the mainstream perspective is that they should "stay home and learn the best way to cook a chicken" (Smith 6). Other articles, too, "often provide their readers with dual messages" (6). In other words, whereas women seem to be presented with a very limited -- if any at all-- number of choices for achieving self-sufficiency, they are also frequently encouraged to be independent. The reverberation of inconsistent messages concerning femininity within the context of the post-WWII world seems to distract not only Plath's fictitious heroine but also the women of her time. While, on the one hand, they are expected to remain next to their husband having successfully traded in their virginity for their marriageability, at the same time, as the media of the time show, they are also stimulated to move beyond the private realm of the home.

At this point, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the above contradiction should be construed as corroborating society's conception of woman both as an object that sustains patriarchal society and as a consumer "encouraged to actively participate in her own oppression… [since] as an inert subject drawn to the desirability" of advertised travelling and its attendant material and social benefits, as Elise Bærevar claims (45), she is seduced by the image of an 'active' self and the excitingly attractive atmosphere of travelling. However, deep-rooted in her is her crystallized ability to distinguish between a sexuality that makes her marriageable and one that does not. So, she may acknowledge her objectification but easily trades it in for being made into an 'icon' of and for herself, therefore incapacitated from achieving individuality outside of the binary marriage/motherhood. The ideological effect of this 'air' of independence resulting from travelling becomes an effective tactic for orienting women towards a

false belief of independence, or, in other words, for making them too busy to question its validity. In this way, women are caught within the 'tentacles' of an ideological alibi that patriarchy uses as an effective 'counterweight' to any resisting mind in order to make them channel their quest for autonomy into a fallacious self-image since it is easier to have them think of themselves as emancipated or autonomous from within the 'air' of excitement incurred by travelling or career than to actually risk destabilization.

As a matter of fact, as Caroline J. Smith indicates, concentrating on *Mademoiselle,* a magazine that Plath is familiar with, its female readers are presented "with conflicting messages about their place in relation to the home" (4). It is mainly the historical circumstances included within the period spanning the two decades from 1940 to 1960 that add to the ambivalent 'household ideologies' presented in women's magazines. In the novel, this is reflected in Esther's experience which, in turn, reflects "a 'problematic' of women's subjectivity and cultural position" (Cooper 4). Society keeps 'engirdling' young women's freedom, with a young woman doing everything in her power to treasure her chastity only to trade it in for domestic 'incarceration', such as a 'good' marriage next to a 'good' husband who will help her fulfil her reproductive imperative. In the meantime, periodicals occasionally undermine this ideology, urging women to seek out experiences away from domestic confinement. This seems to be the case with Jay Cee, the editor of *Ladies' Day*, the fictional equivalent of *Mademoiselle*, in New York, who pushes Esther to work harder and harder saying "You'll never get anywhere like that," reproaching her for her indecision about her future and warning her by adding "Hundreds of girls flood into New York every June thinking they'll be editors. You need to offer something more than the run-of-the mill person. You better learn some more languages" (*TBJ* 31).

Of the same mind as Jay Cee is a famous woman poet at college who wonders why Esther does not want to build a career and urges her to forsake domestic life. Like Jay Cee is Joan Gilling. Joan is symbolic of the 'new woman' emerging within the first decades of the century. Such a woman sees through the ideological tactics of the system and disparages marriage. She prefers living in women colleges and demands sexual freedom. Moreover, she is suspiciously regarded by society as favoring lesbianism. Although Plath, through Esther, seems smart, creative, and professionally ambitious, she has, like most of her peers, 'set her sights' on finding the right man. Also, although the novel reeks of a vivid feminist tone, such as laying claim to female identity, equality, and freedom, it cannot be said that Plath indiscriminately embraces feminism,

for she rejects female homosexuality considered the 'new' form of dissidence for the 'new woman' of the early 20th century. Her heroine is repelled by and emphatically rejects Joan Gilling's lesbian advances towards her during their residence in the mental hospital: "'I like you'," says Joan, to which Esther replies "'That's tough, Joan … Because I don't like you. You make me puke, if you want to know'" (*TBJ* 210-11). She neither comprehends nor accepts the notion, declaring to her doctor she cannot "see what women see in other women" (210). Esther detaches herself from these women on the grounds that she regards them as being unfit for her, not the right role models to follow. She expresses bewilderment at the reason why she is seen as a potential companion by those women: "Why did I attract these weird old women? There was the famous poet, and Philomena Guinea, and Jay Cee, and the Christian Scientist lady and lord knows who, and they all wanted to adopt me in some way, and, for the price of their care and influence, have me resemble them" (211).

Despite her critical view of the social perspective, embedded within which lies marriage, Esther is quick to separate her own view of female emancipation from the lesbian alternative as a form of expression of the 'new woman' of her time, as shown through the *tête-à-tête* between her and Joan above. Whether this is indicative of Plath's /Esther's involvement in the social 'compulsion' of "pervasive heterosexism of [American] culture" (10), as D.S. Bonds says, it is also indicative of a heteronormative imperative that 'quarantines' homosexuality as the necessary 'other' in the organic medical model of mental health and, by extension, of a society that pathologizes difference. In the same way, twenty-five centuries earlier, Esther's elder tragic 'sister' "does not achieve another sexuality," either, despite going as far as to appear to "de-institute heterosexuality," in Butler's words, since she does not stay alive for Haemon -- her *fiancé* (*Antigone's Claim* 76).

Despite automatically rejecting Joan's 'advances' towards her, Esther does not embrace the idea of heteronormative marriage as forcefully as she rejects Joan's lesbianism. She thinks that the institution of marriage puts a curb on female creativity by granting the man absolute authority. She refers to Buddy Willard's mother as the most fitting example of the typical American wife acting like "a slave in some private totalitarian state" and expressing contentment in doing so (89). Also, upon Buddy Willard's exposing his male genitals to her, Plath confesses that all she can think about is "turkey neck and gizzards" (75), with the male organ not stimulating her sexually. To demonstrate that the sexual act leads to suffering on the part of females, she narrates

a sexual encounter that she has had with a man other than Buddy Willard, Marco. Her account of the incident aims at paying Buddy back for his complacent attitude towards sex, during which she is not only assaulted but also injured. More specifically, as Esther narrates her being almost raped by Marco – whom she characterizes as a "woman-hater," she equates the sexual act with an act of violence towards females. Although she becomes involved in the act, she describes him as an enemy: "Marco weighed me to the earth [throwing] himself face down as if he would grind his body through me and into the mud… [like] two bloody-minded adversaries" (116-17).

That she is not keen on heteronormativity is not hard to notice. What is, however, hard not to identify is how, while narrating the incident to Dr. Nolan, in a reflex-like manner, she grimaces away the image of Joan's 'advances' that "make her want to puke," while, at the same time, she craves Joan's presence in her life: "I looked at Joan. In spite of the creepy feeling, and in spite of my old, ingrained dislike, Joan fascinated me" (210). However, momentarily, she 'corrects' herself by saying, "It was like observing a Martian, or a particularly warty toad. Her thoughts were not my thoughts, nor her feelings my feelings, but we were close enough so that her thoughts and feelings seemed a wry, black image of my own. Sometimes I wondered if I had made Joan up" (210). But her heartfelt concluding remark, "Other times I wondered if she would continue to pop in at every crisis of my life to remind me of what I had been, and what I had been through, and carry on her own separate but similar crisis under my nose," is more than suggestive of her ongoing conflict within regarding her attraction to and, at the same time, her repulsion at Joan (210).

In this light, the fact that Esther dismisses the prospect of a homosexual encounter with Joan out of an impersonal social automatism, while simultaneously expressing desire for her – "Joan fascinated me" (210), does not actually arouse suspicions with regard to how quickly she 'copies' and perpetuates the ideological taboos of a culture that verbalizes an actually automatically occurring nauseating repulsion to it – as suggested by "puke," thus medicalizing homosexuality and marginalizing its supporters. This certainly shows that Plath's heroine does not 'float' in a cultural vacuum. Her heroine is not outside of the constituting components of American culture with its societal prescriptions that require women to dutifully carry out their ontological and biological imperative by rendering themselves marriageable and able to bear children, a requirement legitimated only within heteronormativity. More specifically, the cultural requirement, in Esther's case, works towards interpellating Esther and all

the women of her time into complying with the idea that the only path for them to become subjects and to justify both their being and relation to others is through the mediation of men as husbands and fathers of their children.

To this effect, Esther does not dare to achieve any other sexuality, and if "any other sexuality" is taken to mean lesbianism, then lesbianism is *a priori* rejected. This is mainly because lesbianism is a threat to the whole 'ritual' of 'proper' female growth and maturation repeatedly enacted in every girl's life "to secure gender identity by heterosexual initiation into womanhood" (MacPherson 81). Lesbianism is also a threat to procreation. On this account, it is circumscribed by the endeavor to expel it from those forms of sexuality that are not amenable to the strict 'economy' of reproduction, which accounts for the reason why a girl's initiation into heterosexuality is a *sine qua non* and is felt as such by the young woman whose gender identity has been associated with the 'ideological urgency' of reproductivity. In the novel, even when Esther goes and has sex with Irwin and is thus initiated into real womanhood, Joan is the one to take care of Esther when she is found bleeding strongly after the act. Albeit "fascinated" by her, Esther refuses to come face-to-face with an ideological 'demon', thus taking refuge in a 'compromised' life which she, nevertheless, provocatively enough, calls into question.

2.4 Esther versus Culture

The impact of the final words of *The Bell Jar* seems to be favorable both on the reader and the heroine. Esther is a new self, as she declares, with the "bell-jar" appearing to have been removed, yet still holding out as an inducement over her, beckoning invitingly. Her "aberrant femininity" labelled "madness" still seems to be haunting her -- as Jane Ussher says: "Madness (aberrant femininity) is replaced by acquiescence (acceptable femininity)" (174-75). After the prescribed administration of electroconvulsive treatment, the woman's "madness abates because she can no longer think, she cannot remember" (174-75). Inevitably, it is treatment protocols adhered to by psychiatrists that attribute to ECT the ability to transform the female into a new self (Warren 144). ECT is administered to those women whose 'insanity' is certified and certainly to those whose behavior is construed as symptomatic of expressing resentment of the cultural mold of normative sexuality within the boundaries of marriage. To this effect, ECT becomes a treatment protocol that medicalizes female sexual 'deviation' inasmuch as it weakens the latter and beatifies the social supremacy of normative connubiality. As a result, the 'patient' undergoes a quick 'feminizing' process, seeing

herself transformed into a 'blank slate' onto which the historical category of 'wife-helper' and 'mother-caregiver', as gender-specific and socio-political credentials needed for social acceptance, must be indelibly re-written.

As Esther is traumatized by Dr. Gordon's electroshock treatment, feeling that her body is undergoing invasion, she also has her sense of privacy shattered since, in order for her to be graded in gymnastics, her body must be placed under the scrutiny of the camera. So gone is the sense of security she finds in the 'jar'. According to Deborah Nelson quoting Foucault, "there is no such thing as privacy, as the private is already penetrated by power" (27). She goes on to say that "there is only an illusion of privacy established by political institutions," when in fact there is "no actual space one can perceive as private" (27). In *The Bell Jar*, this is reflected and exemplified through the role of the head of "households or church or school… distributing power on the basis of tribal law", always held by a man, "and carried out through the older women characters' effort to uphold this patriarchal view" through their attempt to play their 'formative' role toward Esther, since, as Linda Wagner-Martin says, "as for the traditional male, Esther exists to be shaped" (47, 52).

Immovable underneath the "bell-jar," Esther is also placed on exhibition, as her mother, Mrs. Willard and Buddy, who play a primary 'formative' role in her life, put considerable effort into circumscribing Esther's external duties as a future 'mother-caregiver' and 'wife-helper'. Unsurprisingly, Esther revolts against her mother during the summer she spends with her. Her rebellion targets the 'femininity protocol' on which her mother's character traits and daily routine seem to function as a 'micro-lens'. Through her eyes, 'frozen' in her mind, as if in a painted gaze, *visus iconae*, Esther feels that she is able to trace her mother's socially-charged 'all-seeing' gaze in the same way that she can trace an identical gaze in Mrs. Willard's and Buddy's eyes when looking at her. Mrs. Greenwood, together with Mrs. Willard and Buddy, "materializes as the 'spokesperson' for familial control" (Lant 631).

As 'spokespersons', they become Esther's internal critics. They seem to be on a collision course with her untamable nature: her 'enemy' within. Her diminished health and freedom of behavior is caused by the 'enemy' within, or, put otherwise, her inability to compromise with the 'femininity protocol', in connection with her perception of constantly being under surveillance, in the private realm, through her mother, and in the public realm, through Buddy Willard and his mother. In other words, this kind of self-policing occurs through the gaze of the others that Esther and her female peers have

internalized and as a result feel inspected by. It occurs as the ultimate test of Esther's -- as well as of any one of her peers'-- sexuality as well as femininity, which leads to her constantly observing herself. She has created her own *panopticon* with her 'monitoring panoptic I' encompassing the intrusive gaze of all 'outsiders' and, as a result, she has to defend herself both to herself and to the invisible 'others' for any deviation from stereotypical behavior considered inappropriate for women.

2.4.1 *'Femininity Protocol' vis-à-vis Foucault's Panopticon*

For Foucault, the *panopticon* is an architectural design or plan that signals a convergence of a historically situated political and social ideology, a socio-material epistemology, and a pragmatics of social control and resistance (*The Birth of the Prison* 203). Analyzing Foucault's conceptualization of *panopticon* as a metaphor for the modern disciplinary society, Miran Bozovic, in *An Utterly Dark Spot: Gaze and Body in Early Modern Philosophy*, argues that the disciplinary society that emerged in the 18th century continues to sustain itself through techniques that assure the ordering of human complexities, with the aim of docility and utility in the system (95). Foucault describes the *panopticon* as "a type of institutional building and a system of control designed by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century" (*The Birth of the Prison* 198). As a matter of fact, "the concept of the design is to allow all prisoners of an institution to be observed by a single security guard, without the inmates being able to tell whether they are being watched" (198-200). As regards the architecture, it consists of a *rotunda* with what resembles a guardhouse as an inspection point at a central position so that all inmates can be watched at all times. It is true, however, that "it is physically impossible for the single guard to observe all the inmates' cells at once" and the fact that "the inmates cannot know when they are watched means that they are motivated to act as though they are watched at all times" (198-200). As a result, the ones confined behind the prison walls are virtually compelled to keep their own behavior under control. Conceiving this basic plan as equally befitting asylums, sanatoriums, hospitals, and even schools, Bentham directed his efforts toward developing a design for a *panopticon* prison. Therefore, as can be understood, the term *panopticon* is taken to widely refer to his prison.

In its most concrete form, the *Panopticon* is a socio-material template for institutional orders of all kinds ranging from prisons, through schools and hospitals, even to factories. Through the term in question, Foucault intends to highlight the analogy between the all-seeing gaze of the 'warden'-fellow-citizen and that of the real

warden of the penitentiary establishment as described above. The efficacy of *panoptic* control aims at keeping the social system dynamic by developing better and more efficient protocols for training the members of the social organism to act in accordance with appropriate norms. Compliance with norms is achieved, in Foucault's words, through making members of the community "simply internalize society's norms," the most strategic task of which is "integrating the individual into the utility of the state" ("The Political" 409). Besides, he also claims that the state thinks that "the individual exists only insofar as what he does is to introduce even a minimal change in the strength of the state" (409).

Foucault's theory confirms the concept of internalization as a form of control on the self, describing how control is exerted and how power relations are formed through the apparatus of surveillance. To further add to the effect of internalization on one's actions, Jessica Benjamin quoting Foucault rhetorically asks, "if power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?" (4). The 'tool' of 'panopticism', as Pat Macpherson also argues, partly explains the connection between the pervasive atmosphere of fear, secrecy, ignorance and propaganda of the Cold War years and the heroine's approach to the norms that privilege authoritarianism "through the medical, commercial and lawful collective gaze" (3). He further argues that *The Bell Jar* constitutes "Esther's analytical reflections on the collective gaze and the troublesome process of defining one's life and self" (3). Her female identity is thus formed in a monitoring *panoptic* world. Practically, it is shaped in the 'crucible' of the disciplinary society of 1950's America. As a result, she is conditioned to perform self-policing on two levels: firstly, through the paranoia-triggered fear of surveillance resulting from a 'witch-hunt' against communists that culminates in the execution of the Rosenbergs and, secondly, through navigating the male gaze to master the act of seduction that finally comes to be a touchstone of Esther's femininity and sexuality.

2.4.2 *Political Landscape of 'Panoptic' Control*

To the extent that the *panopticon* effect works towards incapacitating the inmate in a penitentiary establishment from being aware she is under constant observation, and also from being able to realize who is keeping close watch over her, the individual remaining confined in the institution is compelled to follow the establishment's rules and regulations and to engage in her "anticipated roles in a self-policing fashion" (*The Birth of Prison* 200). The power system emphasized in the *panopticon* is not

unsophisticated. On the contrary, "it calls for multiple separations, individualizing distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and ramification of power" (198). According to Foucault, "the more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed" (32). The analogy between the inmate and the ones observing him is thus extended to include the society at large: "One also sees the spread of disciplinary procedures, not in the form of enclosed institutions, but as centers of observation disseminated through society" (212). For example, the disciplinary role played by religious groups throughout history is similar to the phenomenon known as the 'Cold War hysteria' which is to be understood as the outcome of continuous and careful observation systems used by the state and put into execution by the government and, above all, by citizens themselves keeping close watch over each other in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and through acquaintances. In Esther's world, one does not know whom to trust, since anyone could prove to be a Communist spy or sympathizer and, under the circumstances, American citizens are always 'on the watch' as the "gaze is alert everywhere" (195).

With the so-called Red Scare or Red Menace lurking in the background, which Esther alludes to at the beginning of the novel, the politics of conformity expresses itself as a self-imposed social "fear of Communism, which in turn leads to a self-imposed surveillance system between the government and the individual citizen" (Bærevar 2-3). With its emphasis on national security and its attendant interests, it leads to severe societal anxiety, more so as regards women insofar as the power that the surveillance system exerts on women in combination with socially repressive attitudes affects the formation of female identity. This is made obvious in the text primarily through the role the Rosenbergs play in Esther's narrative.

At this point, mention should be made of what happened "in the summer of 1950," when, according to Ellen Schrecker, "Julius and Ethel Rosenberg" are charged with being Soviet spies. As she explains, "three years later, in June 1953, the couple is electrocuted for treason," with their death automatically elevating them to "the ultimate symbols and victims of the 'Red Scare'" (127). Whether they have actually been atomic spies working for the Soviet Union, or whether through their case the American state has fervently tried "to promote its conspiracy politics to gain supporters, the fact of the matter is that most citizens eventually consider their execution to be a matter of justice" (127). With "Edgar Hoover, the Director of the FBI, being head of this 'witch-hunt'

era, the anti-Communist 'crusade' in the U.S" (Bærevar 6), and in the western world in general, is the result of "a growing ideological gap between the Soviet Union and the US" (Schrecker 127). Moreover, with the American Communists supporting the Soviets, and with the former believed to be providing the latter with "sensitive governmental information, the anti-Communist agenda is easy to promote" (127). Thus, the pro-Communist 'enemies' are viewed "as the ultimate threat to domestic peace" since they are directly "accused of subversion, espionage or sabotage," which attributes to McCarthyite America the requisite 'credible' legitimating agency that sustains 1950's America's political 'witch-hunt'" (128).

No wonder the Rosenberg case is used to confirm the Communist threat, with the American public opinion being unreservedly against the Rosenbergs' guilt. The most "'horrifying' aspect of the Rosenbergs," according to Jacqueline Rose in *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath,* seems to be the fact that they were wrapped in a semblance of normalcy and, more specifically, they found it easy to infiltrate the workforce without being singled out (6). Of the two, Ethel Rosenberg's character seems to have fascinated historians the most. In a number of ways, she manages to become an anti-heroine in the heat of the paranoia-permeated atmosphere of the Cold War world. Thought of as a proponent of civil rights and feminism, Ethel, despite being Jewish, is an educated person of modern views, who increasingly devotes time to radical causes, while, at the same time, she struggles to raise her two sons (Antler 203). When she is arrested, she is pressed to reveal any information she is aware of to the police regarding the secret activity of her husband. However, the police's failure to achieve their goal does not prevent them from inferring "she must have been the brain behind the spy ring due to the fact that she has [been] three years older than her husband and [thus] the psychologically superior partner in their relationship," which, according to them, attests to the fact that she has manipulated him to become fully involved and support her in this treason (206). At the same time, the judiciary attempts to subvert and nullify her credibility. The fact that she pleads the Fifth, or, in other words, her constitutional right to remain silent during the trial, makes her appear a "cold, well-composed woman, lacking normal feminine characteristics" (206). What deals the decisive blow to her image is when the FBI files reveal that she is "a *bad mother* after all," which seals her fate since even Hoover's attitude towards her, mitigated with sympathy at first because she is a mother of two sons, later toughens, making him change his mind and finally stand in favor of a death-sentence (206). The same gender-based logic is used by

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the US president himself, who, while presenting his opinion to his son, John, in a letter, says that "it is the woman who is the strong and recalcitrant character, the man who is the weak one" (206).

Whereas motherhood should be outside of or even above politics, in Ethel's case it is presumed to be inextricably linked with it. At the same time, whereas straying from conventional femininity seems to be associated with un-womanlike characteristics leading one to be ineligible for marriage, in Ethel's case it is inextricably linked with even a president's perception of Ethel as being the underlying cause of a political scandal. It is as if any sympathy owed to a 'defendant' until proven guilty is *a priori* denied her for being an 'improper' mother and an unfeminine woman, something considered even worse than being a spy. Ethel's real crime is that she stands opposed to most behavioral stereotypes befitting a mother. She seems to be a 'hard-bitten' *persona* in a political 'drama' in which the protagonist is a woman who not only refuses to be co-opted into the prescribed gender roles but also appears to defy even death despite the fact she is married with two sons. The fact she proves unfeminine and unmaternal tips the scales against her and costs Ethel her life. For Plath's Esther, Ethel's adverse outcome of her short life is the 'lens' on her own limited choices. It is the "dybbuk segment," through which she looks into Ethel's life and carries it out through the image of the "fig-tree" parable.

2.4.3 *The "Dybbuk Segment" and the "Fig-Tree" Ideological 'Demon'*

Of allegorical importance is the way Esther and Hilda act upon each other to the extent that the heroine's mind 'roams' over a play she happens to have seen involving a "dybbuk."[7] This helps her recognize the features of the "dybbuk" through Hilda,[8] which, according to Jewish tradition, "is a dislocated soul of a dead person believed to have escaped from hell," believed to inhabit that "person's body until it has fulfilled the purpose he or she did not complete in his or her former life" (*Encyclopaedia Brittanica*). Esther depicts Hilda as acting in the shape of the "dybbuk," "infiltrating the environment of *Mlle's* guest editors, creating an atmosphere of darkness and evil" (Bærevar 12). Morton J. Horwitz comments: "The 'dybbuk' allegory may also be linked to the Rosenbergs' Jewishness and could be interpreted as a parable of McCarthyism, as McCarthyism, deepened by the Rosenbergs Jewishness, touched every raw nerve, every terror of renewed genocidal anti-Semitism, every nightmare that Nazism had embodied" (259).

Hilda seems to represent "a McCarthyite citizen" (Macpherson 35). The fact that Hilda considers their execution a *desideratum* is indicative of her McCarthyite mind, which overcomes Esther with consternation, though. "I'm so glad they're going to die" says Hilda, with Esther staring petrified at "the blind cave behind her face until the two lips met and moved and the dybbuk spoke out of its hiding place…" (*TBJ* 96). David Suchoff thinks likewise, claiming that the Rosenbergs' Jewishness was taken to be interlinked with ideological anti-Communism: "The statecraft of the Rosenberg's execution consisted of using subversive Jewishness as a means of containment, without the end of policing ethnic assimilation ever having to be named" (162).

Equally conducive to mapping out the "bell-jar" of her psyche is the "fig-tree" parable with its multiple parameters. Finding herself in an impasse, Esther considers her life "branching out" before her. She also reflects upon her lack of ability to make decisions about her future in general: "I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked" (*TBJ* 62). However, she is too baffled over which of them to opt for as she self-resignedly declares: "One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor… and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out" (62-63). Esther is plagued by her inability to decide on her life, on the one hand, as she believes each of the 'fruit' of the fig-tree symbolizes a different style of life with herself, sitting under the tree, "starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose" (63); and also plagued by 'hunger', on the other, as she claims that she would rather have "each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet" (63). Esther's indecision is further reinforced by an increasing sense of alienation from those around her and from herself, too.

The 'fig story' that Plath's heroine narrates is one that the writer of the novel has drawn upon from Stanley Sultan's "The Fugue of the Fig Tree." Most notably, in the above "fig-tree" passage, Plath uses Sultan's "fig-tree" metaphor to 'zoom in on' Esther's 'hunger' for a sort of life that is out of reach for Esther. In fact, her provisions prove to be unfulfilling because she may be surrounded by figs but is unable to decide upon what to consume, which results in her metaphorical starvation. Despite her major dilemmas saturating this dream-like confession, Plath's "fig-tree" passage betrays her

agonistic rejection of marriage and motherhood and her desire for the "fig [that] was a famous poet and another fig [that] was a brilliant professor, and another fig [that] was Ee Gee, the amazing editor" (62). There are two dominant categories for women: childrearing women, a role she thinks is equal to imprisonment, and those remaining by the man's side and demanding equality -- fictionalized as a "mean-faced" woman. Esther, wanting to be a writer, reads the story and realizes that she wants to be treated as equal to men and not to be like the "dark nun" who, on giving birth, locks herself in the "convent." She knows that such desires are not without consequences that she will have to pay for this anti-feminine stance of hers. As she lets it be disclosed through her boyfriend, in the novel, it is her stance that constitutes her neuroses. "I am never going to get married," she announces to her boyfriend Buddy Willard, who responds, predictably, "You're crazy" (62). Her choices seem to be too contoured by other people's likes and dislikes in accordance with a standardized 'femininity protocol' to be able to choose at will -- or at least to think she can, and thus comes face-to-face with madness.

2.4.4 *The Gaze of the Others*

To Plath, life seems to be all gloom and doom, with a kind of suicidal 'determinism' of its own unlikely to escape even the *bona fide* reader's notice: "I knew something was wrong with me that summer because all I could think about was the Rosenbergs" (*TBJ* 2). Life appears to revolve round the Rosenberg scandal with its attendant consequences. With the 'gaze' of the state on her, 'denuding' her very soul, the consequences are best 'articulated' in the silence of her narrator's reaction to Hilda's expression of ideologically-conditioned public sentiment on the Rosenbergs: "I'm so glad they're going to die" (96), which confirms how McCarthyism implements its "normative tyranny" (Macpherson 39).

Besides the gloomy political landscape of Plath's world, American and generally western society is one which thrusts upon its members the conventional values of the time in order to preemptively secure social stability and also control, by means of the advancement of early marriage, the promotion of the 'dream' of a new domesticity delimited by a suburban life purged of anything suspect and radical, and the 'illusion' of family togetherness, which, in turn, 'cement' the patriarchal prerequisite: a gender ideology of tacit femininity in which suburbia participate as an ideological reference point for 'correct' society.

Through the novel's flashbacks, we see Esther act out the socially prescribed patterns of behavior determined by her being female. We also see her comparing her qualities with those of other characters. She seems to want to identify with certain characters; equally, she finds herself eager to disidentify from others. For instance, while being in New York, she cannot help but compare herself to such diametrically opposed characters as that of Doreen and Betsy. Belonging to the upper middle class, Doreen, a fellow intern, assertive and confident, is likely to be noticed because of her "bright white hair standing out in a cotton candy fluff round her head" (*TBJ* 4), and due to her defiance of "the American virgin dating norm," both of which fascinate Esther (Bærevar 62). Betsy, by contrast, coming "from rural Arizona" and representing the norm for women in the 50's, for whom defying "the virgin norm" outside the boundaries of marriage incurs stigmas and culpability, may appear to be tedious but she becomes the person that Esther goes to as a last resort at the end of her 'adventure' in New York (62). Although she admires Doreen, attracted by her version of femininity obviously different from Betsy's honest, benign, and pure nature, she narrates that she "had nothing to do with Doreen" and wishes to dissociate herself from her (*TBJ* 18).

The result of being caught up in this 'whirl' of identifications and disidentifications could be summarized in what Helen O'Grady refers to as "lack of spontaneity and the weakening of the chances of active participation in the making of the female identity" (32). O'Grady proclaims that comparing yourself negatively with others results in personal isolation. As a further result, "negative comparisons with other individuals," she states, also makes "unity with others difficult" (32). That in turn means imposing upon yourself a state of self-exile, since, according to O'Grady, "women have a tendency to police themselves and criticize their own performances within the broader culture," which inevitably leads to a feeling of "disempowerment and a deepened feeling of meagerness," which ultimately leads to female segregation (32). According to Sandra Lee Bartky, this is seen as actually resulting from a feeling of a broader inadequacy, a feeling of scantiness: "The need for secrecy and concealment that figures so largely in shame experience is disempowering as well, for it isolates the oppressed from one another and in this way works against the emergence of a sense of solidarity" (Bartky 97).

Against this sense of female 'insulation' is Mary Evans' claim that *The Bell Jar* "debates how the self ought to be preserved by women in an era seeking to flatten and weaken women's sense of a secure identity" (83). *The Bell Jar* illustrates the extent to

which a woman tries to create the self. It also draws attention to how the self is ensnared and imprisoned in conventional culture which, as a result, is empowered because of subliminal conditioning, with the female self failing to achieve construction of the self, resulting from her failure to cope with a cultural hegemonic order that inherently bars the self. At the same time, the cost in terms of gendered isolation as well as mental health should be regarded as a direct result of self-policing.

The efficaciousness of the policing of the self is, according to O' Grady, "its ability to get hold of the individual at a very early stage of self-understanding and the norms that direct our identity patterns" (19). Consequently, when the heroine realizes that she cannot accommodate herself to the collective outlook, she feels the self as 'wrong'. She thus experiences the self as such because she does not confirm the collective outlook and by extension the patriarchal culture, which inevitably makes her realize "her lack of collective affirmation" (Bærevar 29). Moreover, she understands the inevitability of her inability "to obtain a feeling of self and autonomy as a result of the wider societal devices, in terms of power and control, which ultimately leads to her mental collapse" (29). O'Grady quoting Lois McNay emphasizes that the self-policing culture in "women's identity development is a consequence of the historical notion that claims that women are inferior to men based on comparisons with male bodies and male measurements" (27). Also, according to Vanessa Swan, "the female's sense of being second rate is understood to be a direct consequence of the ways patriarchy operates in women's lives to undermine our sense of self and thus, through self-surveillance, maintain particular relations of power" (105).

In *The Bell Jar* there appear "to be few leading male characters whose actions draw the storyline forward, directing the tale, women characters and the narrative's outcome" (Wagner-Martin 47). These characters are set inside of a *panoptic* cultural context that is also a source of power to them. In fact, they are symbolic of institutionalized patriarchy: Buddy, Ether's boyfriend, Manzi, her teacher, the U.N. interpreter, let alone Marco who almost rapes her. They are the 'limbs' of men's power, through which Esther comes to learn through emotional as well as physical encounters with them the callous reality of their 'power' and "how undermined her sense of self comes to be" (Wagner-Martin 47, 50). The collective outlook of patriarchal ideology informs the heroine that whenever she is taken advantage of, she is responsible for it as is any female who happens to be exploited. As Jean Grimshaw claims, women "are prone… to the feeling that they should never put their own needs or desires before those of

others" since, always feeling scrutinized under their own gaze that itself has internalized the gaze of the others, they easily become "prone to guilt, and to a form of concern for relationship with others which can lead, for example, to the feeling that 'not upsetting people' must always be given priority, and that it can never be right to do something which will fracture a relationship" (196).

Esther's manners attest to this kind of gender-specific remorse. In one of the early passages, Esther narrates being involved in a conversation with Buddy in which she answers him back abruptly when he asks her if she knows "what a poem is":

> 'No, what?' I would say.
>
> 'A piece of dust.'
>
> And he looked so proud of having thought of this that I just stared at his blond hair and his blue eyes and his white teeth -- he had very long, strong teeth -- and said, 'I guess so.' (27)

Esther could not disagree more, yet she does not utter her real opinion, acquiescing to his comment. She seems to have a strong need to please and 'belong' to her surroundings. Whether this is the result of a self-surveillance culture perpetuated by the male-defined logic of power relations privileging men because of comparisons with "male bodies and male measurements" at the expense of women, it also brings to the fore "Esther's behavior as a product of her divided self, the split between Esther's inner self and outer behavior" (Perloff 508). This is obvious when, after being questioned by Jay Cee about her plans after graduation, the self within witnesses the self without respond: "'I don't really know,' I heard myself say…It sounded true… and then suddenly comes up and introduces himself as your real father and looks exactly like you, so you know he really is your father, and the person you thought all your life was your father is a sham" (*TBJ* 30). It should be noted here that the use of "father" in this context is suggestive of patriarchy, which, according to Rose, "denotes that the male gender is at fault, as the female [internalizes and] withdraws from her own self, in order to escape from the cruelty of the society outside" (6).

If we return to Esther's need to please, it is obvious that this tendency of hers does not actually proceed parallel to the resisting character that the reader sees unfolding in her narrative but is the sign of a "divided self" (Perloff 508), as stated above, which has internalized the gaze of patriarchic hegemony and keeps policing itself and is also ready to 'censor' itself at the slightest signs of non-conformity. Esther's self is performing self-policing through the 'fashioned' self while navigating the male gaze. In *Discipline*

and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Foucault attributes to the *panoptic* gaze of the others the 'proneness' to creating a sense of inferiority within the human body as "[s]he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; [s]he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; [s]he inscribes in [her/]himself the power in which [s]he simultaneously plays both roles; [s]he becomes the principle of [her/]his own subjection" (202-3). To the extent that relation to the self and female identity is conceivably still given shape by this structure of surveillance, this is an important approach since it is applicable to Esther and to all 'Esthers', beyond time constraints, after her.

2.5 Up Against the Ideological Impasse

As Esther, like any other individual, is, quoting Foucault again, "subjected to a field of visibility" (*Birth of Prison* 202), and therefore feels the impact of the constraints of power upon her, she is made to feel inclined to be acquiescent to others, and her acquiescence is, at times, expressed as silence. Silence should not be seen as a reflection of passivity. It should be thought of as a vehicle through which one can stand up to being part of the social environment and ideologically alienate oneself from it, albeit even for a mere moment. As such, what appears to be a passive affirmation of Esther's inability to stand up to others is exactly the reverse. For instance, while in Boston, she decides to remain silent as a means to the end of being no one, a decision resulting from her realization that she has been deprived of her hope since her desire to be a writer has not been met, as she admits while in New York where she becomes aware that she is not accepted to the "writing course" to which she has applied: "All through June the writing course had stretched before me like a bright, safe bridge over the dull gulf of the summer. Now I saw it totter and dissolve, and a body in a white blouse and green skirt plummet into the gap" (*TBJ* 110).

Even though this reaction of hers might appear to signal yet another bout of self-withdrawal as a symptom of the impact of the "constraints of power upon her" (*TBJ* 202-3), it actually signals resisting hegemonic ideology, which is what directs her to act like her doctor boyfriend's "cadavers," like a 'docile body' believed to be unable to resist, which, nevertheless, begins to exhibit signs of awakening. Foucault theorizes about the "docile body" as "something that can be made out of a formless clay, an inapt body [from which] the machine required can be constructed" (*Birth of Prison* 135), or, put differently, something like a malleable object on which disciplinary force is acted, a 'node' in the complex field in which power is arranged. In *The Bell Jar*, the 'jar'-like

world of Esther's is a world where the power of observation and the enforcement of discipline strip her of her power and also continue to investigate her in order to force her to comply. She becomes as docile and "retreaded" (*TBJ* 233) as the forces acting upon her want her to be. She feels the pressure of the "bell-jar" world "stewing in [her] own sour air… The air of the bell-jar wadded around[her] and she couldn't stir" (178). She goes from her struggle to be someone to being no one -- as 'malleable' as possible, so that she can be 'constructed' anew. Foucault views such a body as acted upon by power, which helps us to understand the "mechanics of power" that defines "how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines" (*Birth of Prison* 138). It is a body like an object that can be defined -- or, rather, deciphered -- through its movements, its postures, its positionality to bring to the fore the discursive forces that have shaped it.

2.5.1 *From the Panoptic Gaze to Interpellation*

Turning herself into her own *panopticon*, Esther can observe the self "in a white blouse and green skirt plummet into the gap" of self-exile from the cruel *panoptic* reality around her (*TBJ* 110). For an infinitesimal fraction of historical time, she is, or rather she feels she is, not under "one's hold." She can resist in the same way as any other woman who employs such similar ploys as silence to escape the "hold" of patriarchic hegemony on her. This also occurs at other moments while at home. She watches people from her window carefully, creating her own alternative *panopticon*. One such moment is when she hides, at will, while becoming aware that Dodo Conway, a neighbor with six children, also serving as the quintessential symbol of the American mother in Esther's world, is beginning to watch her carefully. The moment "she is in hiding is her moment of resistance to surveillance," to the *panoptic* reality around her, her resistance to her 'jar-like' world (Sabanci 71-72). At that moment, Esther chooses not to be seen. She chooses to remain unobserved, uninvestigated, thus creating "a power relation that renders her more powerful than the domestic ideology that Dodo represents" (71). However, this lasts for a single moment since the fact that she crouches down to hide also indicates that she is unable to oppose the power of the surveillance culture in which she lives since she fails in her desire to remain 'unseen'.

This is even more obvious when her mother takes her to Dr. Gordon's office to be treated. While at his office, Esther automatically -- and without choice -- turns herself into the one being observed by the male doctor. The doctor's private practice becomes

a kind of 'prison', in which the patients become vulnerably exposed to the gaze of the custodians. As Esther narrates, Dr. Gordon is the custodian. His clinic is without windows (122), a medical *panopticon* par excellence, where any resistance is neutralized. However, he is not 'unseen', and therefore an easy target for Esther's resisting mind. She withstands the effect of his medical power by choosing to tell her own version of the story, deliberately omitting details, choosing to silence herself, and she thus "feels pleased at [her] cleverness" (125). Although hard to notice, as Susan Bordo suggests, through the bodily expression of silence "disordered women in this way offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the interpreter -- a text that insists, actually demands, that it be read as cultural statement" (16). Esther offers herself as such: a text demanding to be "read as cultural statement." She degrades a 'representative' of patriarchic hegemony while, at the same time, reclaiming her 'stolen' dignity with her "cleverness," the latter presenting itself as more reason for seeing her detachment as a 'tactic' to change the power relation. This "text" becomes a "language of protest" insofar as it negotiates with "the system to be able to practice freedom of expression" (Sabanci 72). It negotiates with a male-regulated system its right to dissent from it -- even through silence. Although Plath's Esther's "text" does not overturn the *status quo*, it does as much as possible to help her to convince herself that she is protesting. It also portrays her as trying to overcome her sense of lack and insufficiency, her being seen as a 'body' whose "forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, improvement" (Bordo 14).

Such silence, however, is easy to misinterpret since it is easy to misconstrue as a false means of protest which could culminate in nothing more than mere powerlessness, an easy way out of coming face-to-face with the self. In Esther's case, however, refusing to speak could easily be said to be her own "texts," her own 'narratives' of resistance to the dominant ideology. But refusing to leave the house or avoiding communicating could not be interpreted as such "texts." When Esther locks herself indoors and attempts to commit suicide, she turns herself into the 'ultimate' "docile body" while, at the same time, denouncing her social function. It is interesting to note that Foucault, in his *Ethics: Subjectivity and the Truth*, considers suicide to be "a way of altering power relations because when it can truly be claimed that one side has [total power over the other], power can be exercised over the other only insofar as the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or killing the other person" (292). He further suggests the freedom of ending "allows the powerless side to

feel powerful" for an infinitesimal fraction of historical time, with "the power of the individual" coming from his ability to end his life (292). Suicide as such becomes equal to altering power relations. Self-inflicted death thus becomes the individual's triumph over "disciplining social norms, since it promises release from the power dynamic, without defeat" (292). At the same time, though, is it not evident that suicide should also be construed as what it really is, namely an act of mimicry contained within the boundaries of hegemonic ideology?

To the extent that suicide means killing oneself and killing oneself imitates other examples of self-killing, thus becoming what Butler calls a "performative act" analogous to gender construction (*"*Performative Acts" 521), then it is an act of mimicry contained within the boundaries of hegemonic ideology. In Esther, this act of mimicry finds expression in her decision to commit suicide. To accomplish her goal, she reads articles in newspapers reporting methods used by suicidal victims. George Pollucini's attempted suicide story, who does not manage to kill himself as he is saved after jumping, leads Esther to conclude that "the trouble about jumping was that if you didn't pick the right number of stories, you might still be alive when you hit the bottom. I thought seven stories must be a safe distance" (*TBJ* 131). Esther tries to learn the method which will guarantee death. One option is cutting her wrist, another one is hanging herself. The idea of even trying swimming out until she is too tired to swim back also seems to be beckoning. Despite her calculations, though, she picks a method that may be pain-free but is certain to bring about death, which makes her decide to take an overdose. When she wakes up in a hospital, she realizes she is saved and "at the same time defeated in a power relation that she has tried to alter" by committing suicide (Sabanci 73). Her body, at the 'pinnacle' of its docility, is still used to ensure that society will continue to exist. For although hoping to alter the power relation harbors an investment in the future potential of such an action, namely that it will alter the power relation, it perpetuates hegemonic discourse. It is through such feelings of self-defeat that hegemonic discourse continues to degrade such acts of lack of courage and considers them equal to self-debasement on the grounds they are symptomatic of human weakness. As a result, it pathologizes suicide and makes it appear part and parcel of either a medical condition or admission of criminal guilt and as Esther's suicide attempt is suggestive of weakness and anomaly, it is also susceptible of 'normalization'.

2.5.2 *Esther Rehabilitated*

For the process of 'normalization' to produce results, the state, according to Foucault, can also employ such 'coercive' methods as medicalization and criminalization to attain the required result: rehabilitation, or, put differently, a return to normalcy, if the 'mechanism' of internalized consent to docility and conformity that targets one's internal discipline fails. Internalization occurs through incorporating 'appropriate' guiding principles within the self via training or socialization which causes "the individual to judge herself" by comparing and identifying herself "with socially accepted role models" (*Birth of the Clinic* 164). Situating herself amidst a network of collective expectations, the subject renders herself seeable so that she can be externally judged again. and again, with 'doses' of improvement being recommended and incorporated into her desired behavior. In this way, 'an efficient machine' can be created to the benefit of the system. Such a 'machine' does not require being under constant surveillance since the 'mechanism' of internalization works in the best interests of the system. Internalization, however, could fail in an individual but there needs to be a reason why this should occur as, for example, when the individual resists it.

Esther seems to go against it. Looking at her suicide attempt, one could easily argue that it is not an act of weakness but, on the contrary, an act of courage in which her dissident thinking becomes dissident '*prattein*' against the "bell-jar" *panoptic* world of imposed imperatives and attendant 'penalties' incurred when the imperatives are not fulfilled. When asked by Dr. Nolan what disturbs her the most, she expresses her refusal to feel manipulated like a puppet by a man who is lucky enough to be spared the burden of motherhood: "What I hate is the thought of being under a man's thumb. A man doesn't have a worry in the world, while I've got a baby hanging over my head like a big stick, to keep me in line" (*TBJ* 212). However, at the beginning of the novel, Esther lets it be disclosed that she has finally acquiesced to motherhood, with her being described as making baby toys for her own baby (3). Also, choosing to die from a pill overdose is not actually an act of bravery or resistance especially if such a decision is an act of mimicry as supported by Butler and quoted above ("Performative Acts" 521). It is rather subliminally chosen especially since Esther has examined all other suicide choices, certainly a more drastic option, before settling on pills.

Since, as stated earlier, Plath's heroine does not live in a 'cultural vacuum'[9] insofar as women all over the world have been and still are, up to a point, encouraged to

embrace the wholesale societal prescriptions that call for them to fulfil their 'ontological' and 'biological' purpose by becoming wives and giving birth to children, how is it that, although repelled by 'motherhood', which arms her willpower to turn against herself, Esther 'silences' her own dissent in exchange for becoming a mother "cut[ting] the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with" as excitedly as to admit "I got such a kick out of all those free gifts showering on to us" (*TBJ* 3)? The answer lies in the intersection between her own understanding of subjectivity and the ideological conditioning she has been subjected to. Because of an internalized pressure to align herself with her procreative role and its attendant duties and her individual need to choose a career, sexuality and education that are in line with her personal preferences, Esther cannot distinguish between her 'indoctrinated' drive to let herself feel 'haunted' by the role in question and her individual tastes. This is evidence of the very process of interpellation in ideology, which, according to Althusser, as already presented in chapter 1, consists in the supplanting of individual convictions with those born in ideology to constitute a subject loyal to other subjects' needs and wants before her own, just like Antigone in the previous chapter.[10] Inevitably, Esther, likewise, is interpellated into *exchanging* her desire to actually overtake the cultural forces *for* her willingness to be docile.[11] Serving as the springboard to the embodiment of 'idealized' femininity, this exchange will act as the 'binding agent' between her and her future predetermined role, a role circumscribed by the promise of gender-specific 'beatitude' that finds affirmation solely within the "bell-jar" of heteronormativity.

In view of the above, Plath's heroine's identity is a 'copy' of the always-already made-up identities of female subjects living in patriarchic societies before her and after her. Interpellation gradually and methodically integrates the subject into the 'narrative' of ruling ideology, turning her into a compliant subject through the family, the church, the school and even the media that give subjects an identity through which we recognize each other (Althusser 119). As subjects, we misrecognize what should be beneficial to our welfare, taking it for granted that what we are presented with by the dominant ideology is to our advantage since that is also accepted as such by our colleagues or neighbors who recognize us and shake hands with us in the street or identify our work as 'good'. It therefore comes as no surprise that since we recognize others as who we think they are, 'free'-thinking subjects, and who recognize us as who they think we are, 'free'-thinking subjects, too, we do not and cannot deduce from what we think we

understand around us that we are not 'free' enough to recognize any mental or ideological restrictions that might detract from our ability to judge our life as disadvantageous since the others, too, whom we recognize as 'free'-thinking subjects and by whom we are recognized as such judge it as conducive to their happiness.

Although interpellation, as a process, might sound as a masterminded conspiracy stratagem against humanity to many a detractor, it presupposes ideology that transforms individuals as subjects by the process of attributing identity to them through "hailing" (Althusser 119). Althusser sheds light on the 'grey areas' of his conceptualization of interpellation, stating that the process in question is in operation even before a child's birth as it predetermines its identity before it is born. Thus, an individual is always-already a subject (119). An individual is subjected to various levels of ideological subjection and each level of subjection determines one's real conditions of existence (119). Moreover, he alleges that the recognition of oneself as a 'free' subject within an ideology is only a misrecognition because the concept of a 'free' subject in ideology is but an illusion – as illustrated above (119). As a matter of fact, the subject is subdued, restricted, and controlled by ideology to such a degree that one has limited freedom and reduced individual agency. Due to misrecognition, the subject acts and practices rituals steeped in the dominant ideology; and these rituals are detrimental to his/her own welfare (119). In *The Bell Jar*, the author's narrative technique affords us insights into how Esther's mind appears to be ideologically shaped to fit the cultural mold of female docility through which patriarchy will reward her, as any other woman, by further 'helping' her to see it as the springboard to the embodiment of 'idealized' femininity.

A question likely to arise at this point is whether being interpellated into an ideology can fail. Although Gramsci has done enough to rule out such a possibility by stating that resistance to hegemonic culture can be offset by the system's countermeasure of co-optation, namely through its decision to mitigate resistance by funneling nonconformist feelings into middle-of-the-road opposition (Gramsci 119).[12] As mentioned previously in this work, Gramsci succeeds in arguing in favor of his point using the 'suffrage' argument to prove it. He cites an instance of co-optation while discussing how during the beginning of the 20th century the ruling class decides to extend suffrage to include all free citizens, both men and women.[13] His argument is that this does not actually pose a threat to the ruling class's hold on power inasmuch as "mass suffrage offers new methods of legitimation," and provides the state with opportunity to co-opt resistance "by channeling dissident impulses into moderate

parties of loyal opposition" (119). Gramsci's example extends to the world of *The Bell Jar* and what it represents then and now. More specifically, Esther's dissidence is co-opted by her allegorical *polis*. This occurs on the grounds that her dissidence is premised upon her commitment to an internalized patriarchic fantasy including marriage and motherhood, which is, fallaciously, tied to her individual success since she has come to equate her own individual success with the success of the surveillance culture which she tries to resist. In view of this, Esther's desire to master her real relation to heterosexuality leads her to resist such role models as Betsy and Doreen but also Dodo. Most importantly, though, she wants to rid herself of role models like her mother and Mrs. Willard. She believes she can master her relationship to men and by extension to her biological purpose as a woman if she tries to combine career, education, and sexuality. However, this proves to be a paradoxical blueprint for resistance insofar as entering a union with a masculine 'other' signals self-effacement since at the same time she obediently participates in an ideology that mandates female subjects to a negation, even destruction, of self to fulfill their ontological purpose. Thinking that she can rise to the status of molder of her life in such a way as to be able to substantiate it on her own terms, she underestimates the fact men do not 'float' in a cultural vacuum. As a result, she is confronted with the recognition of the futility of her initial 'ambition' which, however, she is co-opted into presenting as success when it is nothing more than her misrecognition of an idealized existence which is substantiated on her own participation in the material reproduction of patriarchy. It is in this way that both Plath's desire and method to rebel is a product of her interpellation as a subject in patriarchic ideology.

2.6 Critical Analysis

Esther's narrative lets us 'watch' the unfolding of the heroine's passage from being an inexperienced young woman to becoming a seasoned woman able to handle her life through the 'cinematic' eye of the narrator that often storms the stage of the reader's imagination with recollections of past memories caused by associated moments in the present time. The story seems to contain a variety of optics afforded to the reader, too, on account of Esther's mental collapse, her indecisiveness, and under-confidence, which reflect the author's state of mind, too. Viewed as an account of Plath's collapse followed by recuperation, or, more expansively, by her return to 'normalcy', on the one hand, and regarded as a feminist '*manifesto*', on the other, the novel concerns Esther's struggle for power and autonomy despite adversary social forces while, at the same

time, it points in the direction of society that emasculates and finally ruins the female character, as has been developed and analyzed in this chapter.

In her search for space in a man's world, Plath's heroine discusses the choices she has: marriage and children *vis-à-vis* sexuality, education, and career. For although women in the 1950s 'enjoy' envying the so-called "happy housewife heroine" described by Friedan, Esther 'envies' men, as the source from which social power comes, while deploring woman's actual confinement to her home despite the "happy housewife" dream which the media always show "to be healthy, beautiful, educated, having no concerns except for her husband, children, and home" (*The Feminine* 18). No wonder, therefore, unlike her contemporaries, Plath does not fantasize about marriage. On the contrary, she notes a repulsion to it. As she so characteristically but iconoclastically admits, "I could hold my nose, close my eyes, and jump blindly into the waters of some man's insides, submerging my-self until his purpose becomes my purpose"; or, elsewhere, "One fine day I would float to the surface, quite drowned, and supremely happy with my newfound selflessness" (*TBJ* 98-99). Her alternative is finding a cause to anchor herself to, like authoring books of poems, becoming a professor while dreaming of being an editor,

However, the 'femininity protocol', by which her female peers, her mother, and even characters like Buddy's mother or Dodo seem to be abiding, exerts such a 'convincing' influence on her that through her mind's eyes she sometimes covetously watches other women perform a kind of femininity prescribed by women's magazines or films, the 'town crier' of the time. In the same way, in the *Antigone*, the 'press' of the time, represented by the chorus, does what was done in Plath's time by magazines and the radio, and what is being done by the printed and digitized *hoi polloi* of the present, twenty-five centuries later, namely the newspapers, magazines, and the internet. Both the *hoi polloi* of the past and the press and the internet of the present time constitute ideological apparatuses that condition individuals to embrace a 'narrative' in which they will participate as supporting characters, the protagonists always being the ones who constitute hegemony. As shown in this chapter, the ideology imposed on American culture throughout the beginning of the Cold War points in the direction of containment, a life enclosed in a "bell-jar" world, within which women's lives are portrayed as socially acceptable insofar as they are equated with the image of domesticity, as the only probable way to survive. This image seems to be reminiscent of the ideal of the Victorian 'archetypal' woman that embodies such female qualities as

loyalty and supportiveness that find expression in her selfless and unreserved devotion to her husband and children. As a result, women ideologically conditioned to be 'good girls' seem to resign themselves to being in 'domestic containment', captivated at home, losing their political and social voice, which is key to comprehending Plath's as well as Esther's reaction as the latter seems to shape the lives of Plath and Esther thoroughly.

Esther's rage against social restrictions pushes her into a desperate attempt to prove her subjectivity that ends in her suicidal attempt when she reaches an 'impasse'. For although the heroine's character is strong enough to challenge society, she feels as trapped and 'deadlocked' among the stereotypes presenting themselves along the way as she feels uncertain about how she should be able to combine choices such as education, career, and sexuality on her own terms, which leads her to so much mental anguish that depresses and alienates her from the world which in turn leads her to madness. For this reason, she is hospitalized, treated with electroconvulsive treatment, and kept in a medical asylum for some time, expected to be cured of her dreams of career and to be returned to society as a 'normal woman'.

In the final chapters of *The Bell Jar*, Esther is "born twice -- patched, retreaded and approved for the road" to a motherhood which she despises but which, at the same time, lets her 'celebrate' her "re-birth" (233) since, at the early stage of narration the heroine confesses to already having a baby (3). She is a mother and not the "mean-faced" woman of the "fig-tree" dream (52-53). She has been subsumed into the same narrative which has been trying to define her as marginal, 'othered', mad, and which she self-deceptively calls "re-birth". The novel ends with the reader imperceptibly letting herself become immured within the walls of a 'jar'-like world deceptive enough to afford an illusion of hope. As a matter of fact, from such an illusory world her elder 'tragic sister' 'departs', with Haemon following suit, their temporally overlapping deaths conjuring the image of the same 'jar'-like world interred within which does not lie Antigone's body but the same ambiguity as to how the message of "There shall I lie with him" referred to Polyneices should be interpreted: is it carving a pathway of extended boundaries of cultural intelligibility for all her younger 'sisters' to follow, or is it the 'corpse' of a truth wrapped in layers of maybes and pseudo-optimism?

Esther, too, at the novel's conclusion, seems to be involved in a scene that links back to the introductory scene of the book with its allusions to motherhood which, as analyzed in this chapter, is a prescribed female role that Esther has been resisting. For

Esther has finally been 'feminized', despite initially resisting fitting into the cultural mold of normative heterosexuality. The "fig-tree" parable seems to have been prophetic since she becomes the "nun" with the "little bird," a mother who would "cut the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with" (3), having had herself subsumed into her full-time maternal role. Esther, convincingly enough, looks healthy and 'normal'. She has already reconciled herself, firstly, with the bygone adventures of her life as, for example, with Buddy and Irwin, secondly, with Joan's death, and, lastly, with the possibility of her exit interview. Nevertheless, seeing ourselves inside of the walls of the "bell-jar," from within the same illusory world that Esther does, we cannot but ask ourselves, in all our surrounding atmosphere of 'normality', if all her efforts came to naught since we, as readers, too, found ourselves carried away on a false note of optimism thinking, self-deludingly, we could rid ourselves of our 'jar'-like *polis* metaphor, too.

Notes

[1] The novel combines both the basic components of a *bildungsroman* and those of a *roman à clef*. As far as the *bildungsroman* is concerned, it basically involves the hero(ine) setting out on his / her 'journey' of self-exploration while some form of loss 'jars' them loose and throws them violently away from the familiar setting of the home into a state of uncontrolled turbulence, inside of which they undergo the repeated clashes between their needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an impersonal and unyielding *status quo*. The hero(ine) is gradually seen to be accommodated into the role (s)he is expected -- by the system -- to play, with the story ending with the hero(ine) evaluating his/her new place in society. On the other hand, a *roman à clef*, which is a term for 'novel with a key' in French, is a novel narrating real-life events through fiction. The 'key', lying hidden in the text, is actually the deciding factor of the 'riddle', a nebulous façade of names and events that, if combined, may reveal to the careful reader the correlation between the fictionalized events and characters and those of the hero(ine)'s real life. Finally, the most important reason why an author might choose the *roman à clef* format is the need to write about topics that could stir up trouble or be considered libelous.

[2] Taken from M. Pufong's article on McCarthyism at https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1061/mccarthyism.

[3] See Griffin's Abstract of "Sexing the Economy in a Neo-Liberal World Order: Neo-Liberal Discourse and the (Re)Production of Heteronormative Heterosexuality."

[4] It has already been pointed out in Introduction that "Esther actually goes as far as to destroy the process by means of which she is treated as 'alien' to the system, thus calling the very truthfulness of the discourse of the *status quo* into question" (2). Thus, she "opens a 'crack' for exploring a new sort of narrative that accounts for what Judith Butler calls 'the persistence of disidentification' crucial to 'facilitat[ing] a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern." (2)

[5] As stated in Introduction, Cramsci's historical argument with regard to extending suffrage to women is actually predicated upon the conviction, which later historical events prove right, that extending suffrage does not pose a threat to hegemony's hold on power. He claims that with suffrage being offered, the state is able "to co-opt

resistance by channeling dissident impulses into moderate parties of loyal opposition" (19).

[6] In Chapter 1, there is mention of the analogy between the chorus in the *Antigone* and the current mainstream media as ideological 'weapons' that defend the *status quo* -- "the chorus in the play sustains and perpetuates the influence of the hegemonic 'narrative'-- like the mainstream media in contemporary politics" (64).

[7] See under entry "dybbuk" in *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*: "In Jewish folklore, a disembodied human spirit that, because of former sins, wanders restlessly until it finds a haven in the body of a living person. Belief in such spirits was especially prevalent in 16th–17th-century Eastern Europe. Often individuals suffering from nervous or mental disorders were taken to a miracle-working rabbi (baʿal shem), who alone, it was believed, could expel the harmful dybbuk through a religious rite of exorcism."

[8] When Esther rhetorically asks whether Hilda thinks it horrendous that the Rosenbergs are on death row, Hilda bluntly answers that people like the Rosenbergs should not stay alive for long (*TBJ* 96).

[9] See analysis of how ideologically conditioned Esther Greenwood deals with the prospect of homosexuality in this chapter (106-8).

[10] See Chapter 1 where Antigone's dissident '*prattein*' is finally neutralized and co-opted into the narrative of hegemony mainly because hegemony is internalized by her (40, 82). Hailed by Creon as "*You there*, whose head is drooping to the ground, / do you admit this, or deny you did it?" (*A* 441-2), Antigone is *interpellated* into a social identity of one who is being charged with violating the law. Actually, according to Louis Althusser, in his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," "hailing" 'recruits' subjects … by that very precise operation … called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace … hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (174). Antigone assumes the role of subject who, albeit subjected to Creon's accusatory *logos*, also reasons in a way that is compatible with the *polis' logos*.

[11] Intended emphasis.

[12] Gramsci's "suffrage" argument is explained in Introduction (19).

[13] See Introduction (19).

CHAPTER 3
HER: FROM LAW OF GART TO "GAMBLER'S HERITAGE"

3.1 Exordium

Like Plath's *The Bell Jar*, H.D.'s *Her* is a *roman à clef* that revolves round her autobiographical heroine, Hermione, an aspiring female artist who struggles to define herself 'against the grain' of hegemonic ideology. Through its portrayal of Hermione's lesbian relationship with Fayne Rabb, and her claim to becoming a writer, *Her* portrays H.D.'s heroine as expressing herself frankly both as a woman and as a writer from within a discourse imposed on her by patriarchal hegemony which her father, her mother, and her social *milieu* seem to embody. She is actually seen to struggle through the 'pitfalls' of a "tangle of bushes" in the Pennsylvania forest (*Her* 3), in a bid to create discursive space for herself as a woman artist, and also claim for herself the right to subvert the 'narrative' of heterosexual romance in order to valorize a lesbian relationship. Thus, emerging from within a tradition of female silence to undermine heterosexual romance, Hermione succeeds in offering a narrative revision of love between women as being rooted in the rejection of the mother, Eugenia, often functioning as 'patriarchy's proxy', and in heterosexual desire. The social side-effects of her act of dissident '*prattein*', like the 'pitfalls' along the way of the "forest's" ambivalent and "meandering" ground (*Her* 3), are somatized, as this dissertation claims, incurring suffering while being diagnosed as a physical symptom of "dementia," precisely because hegemonic discourse is internalized by her as subject while, at the same time, it is being resisted.

Indicative of the 'pitfalls' on the forest's tortuous ground that seems to conjure an image analogized to the same tortuous ground her 'tragic' sisters, Antigone and Esther, have had to tread on is the side-effect of her dissent as a physical symptom -- "insanity," the form of 'punishment' from which Hermione seems to be suffering. Whereas in the case of Antigone punishment takes the form of criminalization, in the case of Hermione it takes the form of medicalization. However, this is nothing more than the system's response to her anti-gender stance that also surfaces as a symptom, "dementia," as H.D. calls it at the beginning of the story, even if it is being combatted until the end of it: "Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, 'I am Her, Her, Her'" (3). As a

matter of fact, H.D.'s Hermione Gart, along with Plath's Esther Greenwood, each becomes the Antigone of their time, as already claimed in Introduction.

Like Antigone, who is condemned to die in a sepulcher outside Thebes, Hermione is 'punished' for disobeying patriarchal hegemony in her own allegorical *polis* -- in her *polis* metaphor.[1] In all three works, the heroines are involved in a clash with patriarchy since the hegemonic culture is eager to enforce compliance on them. Their resistance, therefore, does not let them escape with impunity. As expected, it subjects them to 'othering', either by criminalizing or medicalizing their dissent, which actually 'seals' their fate, too. Twenty-five centuries earlier, the face-to-face clash between Antigone (the dissident) and Creon (the hegemon) is a sign that Antigone's fate has been 'sealed', too, when she decides to call Creon's hegemony into question: "I did not think your proclamations so strong" is her boldly articulated response to Creon's "And you dared anyway to transgress these laws" (*A* 453, 449). Since, in the eyes of the *polis* and its ruler, she has committed a crime, she must be punished as a result. Likewise, Esther's and Hermione's rejection of patriarchy's enforced compliance on them is translated as 'dementia', madness, and, therefore, the dissidents must be 'cured'.

In *Her*, the heroine is seen to defy patriarchy. She is seen to try to dispose of the role of being a mere 'amanuensis' of all those literary male figures --more importantly of George Lowndes -- she associates with, and to embark on writing in order to prove she is capable of writing better than her male-dominated *milieu*. She is also seen to even expose the errors in their work. She goes on to subvert the literary canon that imposes on her and her female peers a kind of 'invisibility' in their writing. Finally, she proceeds to challenge Freud's discourse who locates lesbian desire in pre-Oedipal attraction to the mother. All these constitute her acting against being under the yoke of the "law of Gart" and by extension under that of patriarchy (*Her* 154). After all, she is a fighter who prefers a voiced "certifiable insanity" rather than the muted 'madness' of her sister-in-law, Minnie. Nevertheless, even so, she is seen, in the end, as this work purports to show, to be going through a form of 'cure', the process of gradual "rehabilitation" which her mother, Eugenia, inspires but which Hermione dreads and detests: "She must escape Gart and Gart Grange, the Nessus shirt of guilt, phobia, rehabilitation… [since rehabilitation] meant tearing fiber and flesh out with the Nessus shirt of 'Be careful of the hall floor'" (*Her* 24). At the end of the novel, Hermione is still engaged in the life situation that she has been making strenuous efforts to overturn, the only optimistic note being her newly-found 'mermaid's "feet" with which she can run like Pheidippides

and enter the "forest" so far off limits to her. Although this could be thought of as a 'window' to a livable life, it means 'borrowed feet', George's 'feet', which will help her live a life by proxy. It reintroduces her, as already "patched, [and] retreaded" (*TBJ* 223), into the Gart-defined "bell-jar" state analogous to that of her 'tragic' sister's, through which Hermione can look out through the 'distorting' glass of the 'jar'.

At this point, it should be noted that as Hermione's 'punishment' seems to be a result of her daring to desire a life away from the 'fantasy' of hegemony, and, as a result, away from her and her sister's allegorical *polis*, she is punished for nothing more than daring to exist since her existence is thought to pose a threat to the rationality of her allegorical *polis* as paternal signifier. To avert the conversion of such a threat into resistance, the allegorical *polis* averts such a possibility through co-opting resistance, thus either preempting dissident '*prattein*' or neutralizing its effects after they have been made manifest. As a result, it integrates the resisting subjects into the logic of hegemonic discourse, "allowing" the allegorical *polis* "to almost always co-opt resistance" by mitigating dissidence, thus channeling the tempered dissident impulses into a kind of mild opposition expressed by systemic moderates rather than radicals who can be assimilated into the system and who can actually contribute to the consolidation of the dominant discourse of hegemony (Gramsci 176). Nevertheless, it should not be taken for granted that this happens due to the system's amazing powers or the economy of the irresistible rewards that it deploys but mainly because it makes this economy of rewards seem the only one that appeases its subjects' anxiety. As a matter of fact, what hegemony does is to smoothly co-opt dissidence since this dissidence is often based on the dissident's commitment to the "imaginary version of our relation to the real world or in other words the stories we tell ourselves about our relation to the real world" (Althusser 4), practically what we have referred to as the dissident's dependence on their *polis* fantasy.[2]

This is actually the case with H.D.'s heroine. For the heroine, a livable life is one within the parameters of which the survival of the 'law', as paternal signifier, or as hegemonic culture, does not seem to depend on its 'steely' resolve to brutally quell resistance by making use of the letter of the 'law' (Engels 107). It depends on 'violence' in the form of enforced 'amnesia', achieved through ideology. To the extent that this 'amnesia' means the result of internalizing the 'fantasy' that tells us we are in charge, whereas in reality we are not, ideology interferes with our psyche to make us believe in the "illusion that we're in charge, that we freely chose to believe the things we believe,

and that we can find lots of reasons why we believe those things," or even why we choose to tell the stories of ourselves our own way misrecognizing who we are in relation to what we think we freely believe in (Althusser 2-4). This form of 'violence' becomes the guarantor of its authority: simply put, without this 'violence' (or its possibility) there can be no *polis* metaphor and what the latter represents. More specifically, as far as Hermione is concerned, her self-explorative narrative offers just that: the heroine's departure from being a 'dissident', because of her alternative version of femininity, to playing the role of the 'conformist' subject who internalizes hegemony's enforced "illusion that …[she is] in charge" (Althusser 2), narrating to herself and to us her 'alibi' of how she has traded in her love for a woman for her auto-social, auto-erotic role, a role which she thinks will help her free herself from interpellation within a narrative of indeterminate gendering since, although she negotiates her homosexuality within the confines of the 'Gart-sign', at the same time she "is part of next year, part of last year," as she says in the end, adding to that 'alibi' the credibility of temporal fluidity and therefore its potential for self-reversal (*Her* 224). Her 'hybrid' existence is later confirmed through the intertextual continuum of her life's work in her *Trilogy* where she decides to implore a masculine God, Ram, a symbol of heteronormativity, to "devour" her (31), a manifest symbolism of a 'gross' co-optation discourse articulated by Hermione or H.D. or Hermione whose initially significant resistance narrative is finally subsumed into the cultural 'pole' that she has been so eagerly fighting.

3.2   H.D.'s Legacy: Inside and outside of the Male Canon

Albeit currently considered a canonical modernist poet who has also tried writing prose, H.D. (1886-1946) is a writer whose works are, up to a point, sparsely cited where modernist literature is concerned. As a matter of fact, H.D. is known more as an Imagist poet than a modernist literature author especially by the mid-1970s. The literary activities connected with H.D. date from the beginning of the 20th century. As early as in 1911, H.D. leaves Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and follows the example of so-called expatriate poets who decide to move to London, namely Ezra Pound, T.S. Elliot etc., where she is introduced to Richard Aldington. They form a literary circle, becoming the people who start the movement of Imagism. Imagism is an avant-garde poetic movement which employs precise imagery, free verse, and clear, sharp-witted, caustic language and which, as a result, revolutionizes modern poetry. Pound soon regards H.D. as the movement's most charismatic practitioner. It is not surprising, though, that Pound

proceeds to acknowledge Hilda's first poem as enthusiastically as only a fellow poet can. He expresses his opinion of her with a most characteristic compliment "But Dryad… this is poetry!" (DuPlessis 7), thus putting her on the highest pedestal of Imagism.

With the deep roots of her artistic talent, however, in writing, H.D.'s essence of her work as a poet has earned her other titles, in addition to Pound's invention of his paradigmatic "*Imagiste*," which seem to capture the quintessential aspects of her work. As L.S. Dembo declares, H.D. is "a writer of much greater significance than has commonly been supposed" (433). Georgia Kreiger says that H.D. is "a re-vitalized modern erotic language" crafter while "Michael Kaufman repositions Hilda Doolittle as the actual inventor of the imagist form around which Pound shaped his eclipsing body of theory" (3). Although there are some who "place the poet's work at the forgettable margins of the Modernist canon … feminist and other critics continue to add names and accolades to the ambiguous signature H.D., following various politically-interested quests to recover, revise, and finally to characterize adequately this Modernist woman writer" (Kreigger 3-4). However, loyal to 'patriarchy protocols', Pound, obviously in an accumulated burst of ideological frenzied paternalism, dips his pen into the inkpot of the age-old collective self-perception of male supremacy only to disprove himself and detract from his former exclamatory acknowledgement of his "dryad's" poetry --"But Dryad… this is poetry!" (DuPlessis 7), as stated earlier, by "slash[ing], cut[ting], shorten[ing] and authoriz[ing]" H.D.'s poems, as he scrawls "'H.D., *Imagiste*' at the bottom of the page" (DuPlessis 6). As Ingrid Galtung mentions in her thesis, "Pound's creation of H.D.'s signature, which she [decides] to keep for the rest of her life," 'seals' her fate (8); it interpellates her. Such incursion on behalf of Pound into the 'heart' of her artistic expression "shapes her career in a twofold way": firstly, he transmogrifies her from Hilda Doolittle into H.D., clearly pointing "to the modernist notion of poetry" as a male-defined locus, a male property, with Pound enabling while, at the same time, restricting H.D.'s artistic career (Galtung 8); and, secondly, his creation of her signature points in the direction of how he paternalizes "the female artist's identity and her literary reputation," since, by signing H.D.'s poem "H.D. -- *Imagiste*," Pound associates her name with the "specific literary movement he is championing" (Galtung 8-9). Even though H.D. decides to disengage herself from this label, i.e., '*Imagiste*', it continues "to be regarded as an integral part of her name,

even though H.D. saw most of her later work, her prose production, as 'not-H.D.' and 'not-imagist'" (8-9).

H.D. is all the same not as immediately adversely affected as expected. For some time, she feels exultant at having achieved success despite her male peers' paternalizing treatment of her -- albeit not for long. Eager to leap out of the 'conclave' of the great 'spirits' of Imagism, she claims: "Yes, the poems are satisfactory, but unlike most poets of my acquaintance (I have known many) I am no longer interested in a poem once it is written, projected, or materialized. There is a feeling that there is only a part of myself there" (*Tribute* 149). It is shortly after 1920 that her Imagist poetry begins to be replaced by "long, associative and exploratory poems, always evolving around a female heroine," foreshadowing her embrace of epic poetry, which, as expected, gains "little attention from her contemporaries," and "her turn to prose," not as openly acknowledged as it should have been by her male peers, either (Galtung 10). It is true that on hearing her intention to write a novel, her husband, Aldington, who not unlike Pound seems as eager as the latter to catalyze her career in a way that he feels he can control, writes: "Prose? No! You have so precise, so wonderful an instrument -- why abandon it to fashion another, perhaps less perfect?" (qtd. in *Penelope's Web* 33). This is broadly reflected in reviews contemporaneous with her prose work. In fact, they echo both Aldington's and Pound's views of prose as a medium that is not as ideal as poetry, which, for a woman who seems to have succeeded as a poet, is nothing short of discouraging. Such views seem to gradually undermine her confidence. Her initial imperviousness to criticism seems to give way to a sense of inadequacy. As H.D. observes, "No one really much likes my prose, people don't think [it] worthy of H.D." (*Penelope's Web* 28). Negative criticism of her attempts to write prose continues unabated. "Her semi-autobiographical, stream-of-consciousness prose texts" seem to be compared unfavorably to "her mastery of poetic form," which make them look unfinished, and hence unworked, and by extension imperfect (Galtung 10); and also, as quoted by Georgina Taylor, an anonymous reviewer editorializes on her novel *Hedylus,* actually intending to deal a blow to her ability to write prose: "the colors and shapes are so closely confounded that one gets the impression of splintered mosaic" (121).

In light of this, it is not surprising that H.D.'s early poetry seems to be preferred to her prose work for many decades. Whereas her epic poetry seems to receive some attention and even taught or studied, her prose works remain unpublished ("Who Buried" 801). However, it is not until the early 1980s that her "splintered mosaic"

writing, which has for so many decades paled in comparison to her poetry, perhaps because her male 'mentors' have decided so, begins to attract attention. Thanks to the excavatory and revelatory work of certain feminist critics, H.D.'s *oeuvre* finally gains recognition. More specifically, Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman explore H.D.'s "strategies for making a place for the female writer within a modernism that was coded masculine" (Buck 3). They succeed in digging out H.D.'s artistry and present it not as merely being galvanized into its present form by the masculine tradition represented by Pound and Aldington; on the contrary, "her texts seem to also be inspired by women-oriented relationships" (Galtung 10). With the help of these two critics, "a vast amount of scholarship is compiled, practically dedicated to the presentation of this 'other' H.D., previously unknown to the public" (10).

Not yet dissociated from the kind of artistic framework in which Pound and Aldington attempt to 'incarcerate' her name, H.D. ceases to be regarded as exclusively "H.D.- *Imagiste*" since she gradually applies herself to writing both epic poetry and prose, with tokens of her 'renewed' work not yet regarded as equal to her imagist poetry but actually attesting to her eagerness to write something different which releases her from a label that has been imposed on her as the default mode of her artistic expression. In everyone's mind, she begins to be capable of a differential mode of expression, of epic poetry and prose, too. Later, her epic poetry as well as her prose works are spoken of as being synonymous with feminism, especially works of such untapped and unexplored content as those of *Asphodel, Her*mione*, Notes on Thought and Vision, Tribute to Freud, Helen in Egypt,* and her *Trilogy*. They become flagship feminist literary works since they share an emancipatory content that is believed to aim at raising awareness of the objectification of women through gendered relations -- thus attempting to become instrumental in securing female sexual liberation, cancelling out relations of domination, ending sex discrimination, fighting for women's rights and interests and, lastly, as socially and politically constituted works, engendering 'democracy'.

From the vast critical output relating to H.D.'s prose work, the novels printed after her death seem to be permeated with such themes as female exclusion, liminality, and undermining social etiquette. They are basically contextualized within the ideological preferences of her editors and critics who, keen to direct public attention to how H.D.'s voice contests the masculine definitions of modernism, turn H.D. into an advocate of feminism (Galtung 10). As a matter of fact, with H.D.'s prose works being exclusively 'usurped' by those who want to render them a '*manifesto*' of feminist correctedness,

with no regard, however, for the "subtle poetics and politics of these works [which] to a large degree remain unexamined," as DuPlessis says (*H.D.* 69), this semi-arbitrary 'usurpation' practically results from the fact that H.D. is "trapped in the position of canonical figure for a poetics of political correctedness," as Rainey says (qtd. in Spoo 204). Simply put, it results from the confinement of her written work within a matrix of feminist correctedness that precludes the possibility of any additional investigation of her *oeuvre*. Nevertheless, to somehow "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," we should seek to look into the dialectic between both poles of authority, the 'conclave' of H.D.'s male peers in her imagist *milieu* and the circle of feminist critics, in order to be able to justify the use of "semi-arbitrary" above. But firstly, we should be asking why H.D.'s works, namely epic poems and novels, are 'swept under' the historically constituted 'rug' of the male canon for so long. Friedman claims that H.D.'s work remains out of the so-called modernist canon due to the fact they are creations of "a woman 'poet' in a world in which the word 'poet' actually means male poet and the word 'mankind' too often includes only men" ("Who Buried" 803). On the other hand, her prose works are claimed to have been 'saluted' by the then feminist discourse of political correctedness for serving as a kind of '*manifesto*', as mentioned above, and as such they have remained 'usurped', or, rather, trapped within sphere of a "canonical figure for a poetics of political correctedness" (Spoo 204). As far as this dissertation is concerned, however, recovering H.D.'s later works, especially her prose texts, does not mean that being used by feminist criticism as emblematic of the hardships confronting the female writer and of the need to dispose of the 'stigma effect' of lesbianism for not being conducive to procreation is akin to being 'usurped' on behalf of feminist criticism to serve their own purposes regardless of whatever else it has to offer; on the contrary, being appropriated by the feminist discourse of the time constitutes a historical necessity that runs parallel with the turbulent times of a feminist movement that in the 1960s and 1970s seeks equal rights and opportunities for women and by extension greater personal freedom. Nor does it mean, as Spoo remarks, that by taking her prose works out of its strictly political context, we could put her work at risk "of being [over-] prosed" (217). Her prose works are used as part of the foundation upon which stands all the fiction, nonfiction as well as poetry, which supports the goals of defining and defending equal civil, political, economic, and social rights for women; and, moreover, they identify women's roles as unequal to those of men by generally examining the ideological workings of patriarchy

that gives rise to them, and also by portraying the impact on women and on society in general.

3.3 H.D.'s Authoring Herself through Hermione's Narrative

As stated above, H.D.'s work has received enough favorable critical attention both as work produced within the Imagist canon and as work kept in the dark until published by editors who elevated it to such levels of importance that it was rendered emblematic of feminism and served as a '*manifesto*' of political correctness within the feminist canon. Although in both cases her work did receive recognition, for different reasons, though, in neither case was her work examined in depth regarding what Galtung calls its "subtle poetics and politics" (11). Strangely enough, even her initials have not been expanded yet, with H.D. still bearing the initial doubt that her initial experimentations with writing caused her male peers to experience. Their doubt was powerful enough to provoke her male artistic *milieu* into transubstantiating her name into the genderless initials -- so characteristic of her -- for fear that she might be provocative to the *status quo* because of her decision to engage in writing. Mention should also be made of the fact that such blatant interference with her right to use her full name and 'portray' herself through it in a way that did not carry belittling associations with a defeminized pseudonym that was, most possibly, associated with a male artist, testified to the need on behalf of her male peers to manipulate her work in order for it to "'pass' as male writing -- that is, not draw attention to itself as having been written by a woman" (Benstock 333).

Under this signature, H.D. adopts and initially plays "the role of the modernist poet, the person who," according to Elliot and Wallace, "get[s] the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind," proceeding to say, "for [her] the real struggle lies with the precise craftsmanship of language and the subject doesn't matter" (qtd. in Galtung 5). Besides, Pound's invention of H.D.'s signature shows how the male patronage system manipulates female individuals by 'transforming' them into subjects by the very precise operation of interpellation.[3] Through this process, as has been analyzed in previous chapters, 'real', 'tangible' individuals are interpellated into 'real', 'tangible' subjects with the aid of the pre-existing category of the subject, which, in H.D.'s case, is the female subject that complies with male standards. As interpellation consistently catalyzes individuals into subjects, it controls them by recognizing them as 'subjects-objects', subjects with reference to objects, or, more precisely, with reference to potential object-directed practices. By signing H.D.'s poem "H.D. –

Imagiste," Pound actually ties her genderless initials to the movement of which he seems to have adopted the role of the custodian-guardian. Although H.D. later dismisses "*Imagiste*" from her signature, this 'hail', as a self-defining label, is as enduring as her unabbreviated name itself; it still remains inextricably linked with her name even though H.D. considers the bulk of her work, and more specifically, her prose output, "as 'not-H.D.' and 'not-imagist'" (DuPlessis 8).

It should be noted here that while H.D. takes pride in her success within the male-regulated field of poetry, she is only too willing to escape from the 'clutches' of the strictly limiting and controlling tenets of Imagism: "Yes, the poems are satisfactory, but unlike most poets of my acquaintance (I have known many) I am no longer interested in a poem once it is written, projected, or materialized. There is a feeling that there is only a part of myself there" (*Tribute* 149). This is better illustrated by the fact that after 1920 she turns to writing poems about a female heroine and to writing prose, both of which do not receive enough public attention by her male peers.[4] To this effect, for those who explore and enjoy H.D.'s *oeuvre*, her prose texts seem strangely unfinished and imperfect, reflecting her low self-image, the result of the 'hey, you there' effect on her. This is best illustrated by the way in which H.D.'s writing is described by Friedman who admits that "there are stylistic oddities – elisions and abruptness [in her writing]… and occasionally carelessness… and chaotic and repetitive welter of the interior monologue," adding that this style of writing could use "more stiffening – more of the direct narrative… and less of the obsessed round-and-round of the heroine's mind, which… goes beyond the limits… of the aesthetically endurable" (*Psyche Reborn* 28).

Despite claims in the direction of H.D.'s writing being the result of her low self-image, it is, this dissertation supports, the result of the need for a more subversive language that redefines female authorship by undermining the hegemonic patriarchal voice that many of her female peers have incorporated into their writing inevitably echoing "the perception that literature, and the act of writing in particular, is …masculine" (Maclure 2). To put things into context, although H.D.'s *oeuvre* seems to remain under her male patrons' control in the early seventies, and as such expected to have appropriated the stricture and rigidity of male writing, it has not. When it finally gains recognition, it gains the attention it should have had not because it is "chaotic" and "fragmentary," as described above, but because it "flounders" in this direction with a view to subverting the rigid patriarchal writing protocol, unearthing from under its

'loosened' structure an "insanity," as H.D says in *Her*, that resists linear narratives. She deliberately employs such a style to portray her life and generally that of women in a way that is visceral and, at times, transparent. It affects the way the readers interpret *Her*, revealing H.D.'s heroine's inner thoughts to the reader. Her narrator, Hermione, interpolates "abruptness" as well as "elisions" throughout her narrative in an attempt to 'break' canon, placing herself as woman at the core of resistance against and through the explicit patriarchy-induced assumptions for her and for her putative "certifiable" madness (*Her* 6). In this way, the narrator clearly 'debunks' a term shrouded in taboo and stigma by actually pointing the finger at the male ethic of mental health which is admittedly based on the invisibilization of the 'normal' woman whose 'normality' is considered to be the outcome of her being 'sane' enough to "be more submissive, less independent, less competitive, more emotional and even more easily influenced" (Boverman et al., 1-7); any characteristics other than those mentioned above might be suspected of neurosis or madness in women.[5]

Belonging to the Madrigal cycle novels, *Her* compares to H.D.'s failure at Bryn Mawr College in 1912 as well as to its consequent experiences. Mainly concerned about a main character, Hermione, the story depicts a budding writer who, through exertion of great effort, manages to define herself, despite being in two minds between her traditional family's expectations of her, her betrothal to George Lowndes (Ezra Pound) and her desire for and sexual attraction to Fayne Rabb (Frances Josepha Gregg) which, however, ends in betrayal since she discovers that George is having a relationship with her, too. However, *Her* should not be read as H.D.'s written account of her early adult life. Through her fictional heroine, the author practically seems to try to voice her opposition to the male modernist strategies that place her writing in a peripheral position within a kind of proprietary modernism that is coded masculine. Through her, H.D. also promotes her prose text as a work of inner psychic art inspired by women-oriented relationships.

Moreover, as a writer, H.D. fights against patriarchal strictures and strives to raise the female to a position as important as that of her male counterparts. H.D.'s interest in 'feminism' is actually kindled by the spark of her passion for and friction with such influential male figures as Freud and, of course, Pound. Her struggle with what they represent: hegemonic discourse, circumscribed by a 'scientific-patriarchal rigidity', is reflected upon her words in her *roman à clef*, where she characteristically writes that "a lady will be set back in the sky. It will be no longer Arcturus and Vega… it will be

myth; mythopoeic mind (mine) will disprove science and biological-mathematical definition" (*Her* 76). It is Hermione, by means of whom H.D.'s writing becomes a mirror through which the reader not only sees inside the author's psyche but is also encouraged to attempt a feminist interpretation since the novel constitutes what Friedman calls "a successful attempt of overturning the masculine paradigm that hems her in as a subject and a writer" (*Penelope's Web* 118-9).

A "prisoner inside the family," as Catherine Clement claims of the female 'insane' in "The Guilty One," H.D. actually 'zooms in on' her fictional family since the family realm within which Hermione's mother and father belong corresponds to the opposing elements that entrap her within the common boundary shared by her mother and father. In her first sequel of the Madrigal cycle, H.D. tries to 'lift the lid' on her stereotypical family through Hermione who is portrayed as basically attempting to disrupt the patriarchal paradigm through challenging her mother. "Hermione this will kill me," says Eugenia, whenever the former assumes the voice of the resistor "tearing fiber and flesh out with" Eugenia's 'rightness' (*Her* 95, 24). Eugenia's 'rightness', though, suggestive of "violent rehabilitation," resounds in Hermione's ears with her clangorous peal of admonition: "Be careful of the hall floor," much more magnified by Minnie's plaintively insinuating remark: "I know you never liked me" (24). Both echo the same identity of the one who inspires "guilt, phobia" about what Hermione is reaching out for, her own 'self-cure', which means transgressing the 'forbidden', which, at the same time, signifies the necessity of breaking her mother's hold on her as Her Gart – not as Hermione. Her Gart has internalized the 'law' that "prohibits, ordains limits on attaining *jouissance*" (Curtis 178), and, therefore, demands that the heroine comply. Unless so, she will remain on the 'outskirts' of the system and, as already stated, she will be 'castrated'. She has internalized the 'Gart-sign' through Eugenia, her mother, and what this implies when, for example, Hermione says, "Minnie is my sister," which has been "enjoined on her by Eugenia" (*Her* 10). Imposed on her by Eugenia, who acts as 'patriarchy's proxy', Minnie is an agent of 'normative womanhood'. She has been 'approved' by Eugenia, and as a result, she is a Gart rule, with which she must comply since bearing the family surname entitles her to being kin and, as a result, on account of her marriage to Hermione's brother, to becoming Hermione's sister. As the heroine narrates: "By a rule that had roots moss-grown in Pennsylvania, Minnie [Gart] became by some illogical reasoning 'my sister'" (10). Consequently, Minnie is her sister under

'symbolic law', since she chooses to become a 'prisoner' inside the Gart-family without protest.

The imposition of Eugenia's 'edict' on Hermione is unavoidably internalized, integrating Eugenia's 'musts' into her psychic reservoir of conscious or subconscious socially-dictated guiding principles, and ultimately becoming a self-generated act. More normatively speaking, Hermione is subjected to the impact that the internalized 'Gart-sign' and patriarchy's politics of the 'parsing' of resistors into 'good' resistors and 'bad' resistors have on her. Although Minnie seems to willingly remain attached to the 'Gart-sign', she exhibits symptoms of hysteria. Despite the revolutionary potential latent in 'madness', as stated earlier, Minnie's 'madness' is 'good madness' since it does not evolve into a capacity to 'castrate' the ambient 'symbolic' scheme but remains captive in the family sign (her 'madness' seems to be confirmed by her endless solitude, sorrow and suffering). In contrast, Hermione's "certifiable" insanity is temporary. Her 'illness' is necessary for the repressed subject ("Her Gart") to lay claim to a 'renewed' relation to self and the ambient world: "Obeying their orders. Whose orders? I have been almost faithful. In order to be faithful, I will forego faith, I will creep back into the shell in order to emerge full-fledged, a bird, a phoenix. I will creep back now in order to creep out later" (*Her* 221).

Hermione shows that she is a 'bad' resistor, a dissident, using her insanity as gestating her hidden ability to bring herself to the world anew. Her "dementia" is but a process of self-cleansing where the 'soil' must be tilled "ripe for a new sort of forestation" (*Her* 57). Moreover, if this "new sort of forestation" contains the aquatic element rather than the cone-shaped foliage of the pine tree canopy under which she finds herself "standing frozen on the wood path" (5), then Hermione can become a 'stone' dropped in the water. Through the water, she will cleanse herself of the impact "the world's division" has had on her, and, re-animated, she will seek and offset the binary arrangement of reality that separates nature from culture and self from 'other', as she most emotively recites while hinting at her love for Fayne: "O sister my sister O singing swallow, the world's division divideth us" (179).

Being a 'bad' resistor, she is a 'menace' to the system, totally unlike her sister-in-law who acquiesces to being the 'symbolic' sister Eugenia wants her to be. More importantly, through her relationship with Fayne, the results of Hermione's 'bad' resistance seem to threaten to overturn the 'edifice' of her selfhood, but she escapes from this bond, too, and now she is drawn towards script on the snow. As she says,

"Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a [snow-capped] forest" (*Her* 223), a script-like message reminiscent of the hieroglyphic "message [written] in forgotten meters" (220). As Enriko Bollobás mentions, "folding now, both in language and in her script on the snow, subject and object" (144), in an 'ecstatic' assertion of creative power, she begins to write her own text: "Now the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayon across the winter whiteness" (*Her* 223), writing words, a code that can be 'cracked' to reveal wisdom, as she says: "I know, I feel / the meaning that words hide; / they are anagrams, cryptograms, / little boxes, conditioned / to hatch butterflies" (*Trilogy* 53).

Although, as the story unfolds, writing seems to be construed as the be-all and end-all for Hermione, it could also be construed as a desire to reclaim her mastery over part of the "pine tree forest" and, as a result, recover from her fear of it. If seen this way, writing is a desire into which she has sublimated her partial rejection of the heterosexual narrative and her acceptance of lesbianism through her liaison with Fayne. Albeit materially diminished in the process of the narrative, since Hermione seems to combine both men-oriented and women-oriented relationships while, at the same time, embarking on writing, she seems to finally interact with herself (auto) erotically. As a matter of fact, concluding her story, she announces that she has decided to marry herself, using her *trousseau* money left by her grandmother for it to be used for her wedding as her self-marriage-specific dowry to be used to this end. As she characteristically says, "this will be my marriage" (*Her* 234). Through her self-marriage, as a form of 'alternative' sexuality, her initial act of dissidence is called into question: her resistance is not so much avoided as it is 'skirted' indirectly, bringing to the fore a 'politics' of 'either/or-ism' with a disciplining and divisive effect on the writer, reader, and the women's movement in general, which is what hegemony does, namely appropriating the resistor's discourse into a sublimated modification of her initial resistance. Practically, Hermione is but a 'symptom' of a system where hegemony binds 'strategic resistors -- 'bad resistors' -- to the regime.

For insofar as Hermione's dissident '*prattein*' is unleashed into the 'symbolic', there is a binding force that ties Hermione's love for the mother, her unarticulated love for the 'other', and writing together. However, her love for the 'other', in the 'semiotic' sense of the word, passes through the channel of severing herself from Eugenia as 'patriarchy's proxy' before she experiences the same 'bursting' of love for the 'other', differentiated from the self, as that felt by the pregnant mother for the 'other', the fetus,

carried within her uterus for nine months. This is then experienced as love for what symbolizes that 'other', which is the same as that symbolized by the 'other' in the child carried within the pregnant mother. The same holds true for the target of that 'bursting' of love since she will experience the same 'eruption' of emotion for the source of the initial 'bursting' of love directed toward her. Inasmuch as that unarticulated love, on behalf of both parties, invades the 'symbolic', then it is invested with sound and meaning, lending itself to the poetic and as such subverting from within the 'symbolic' as is the case with the narrator in *Her*. Residing on the farthest reaches of hegemonic discourse, such love makes inroads into it to subvert and make itself heard. Hermione's need for the expression of such love is suggestive of her resistance to a subjectivity as that described by Althusser where one becomes a subject through her subjection to ideology. However, Hermione's love for writing becomes love for her self-cure. It becomes her recovery from the underlying cause of her "insanity." This 'remedy', the 'writing cure', equals her coming to a selfhood unbounded by gender ideology. It is a selfhood that challenges ideological protocols that subject her to a procreative imperative; a selfhood that reduces her to the role of the male artist's 'amanuensis'. Yet this selfhood culminates with her 'incarceration' within a 'bell-jar' of transformation which continues to 'skirt' 'dementia' and which is finally channeled into a moderate form of 'good' opposition. Interestingly enough, the narrative becomes her psyche's mirror on which is reflected her quest for a subjectivity outside of the 'walls' of normativity that backlashes and co-opts her into the 'walls' from which she has tried to escape.

Since *Her* is a portrait of H.D.'s 'journey' to resistant subjectivity, to trace this 'journey' of hers, we should not fail to look into how her account is organized round the opposite ends of the axis of her parents, since achieving processual subject status presupposes being "born again." As she claims, "There are really two flecks of protoplasm and when we are 'born again' we begin not as a child but as the very first germs that grow into a child" (*Notes* 50). In *Her,* the creation of the artist and, more importantly, that of the female subject is thus grounded in the heroine's relation to her nuclear family.

3.4 A 'Race' through the Apparition of a 'Maybe'

As a novel that probes the depths of the author's psyche, *Her* also serves as her own confession under the mantle of fiction, as mentioned at the very beginning of the chapter. Her father, a professor of astronomy at Lehigh University, encourages her to

read and to excel in science. H.D.'s relationship with her mother, Helen Wolle Doolittle, is rather ambiguous (*Psyche Reborn* 171). Helen, who teaches music at her father's Moravian seminary and who is an accomplished musician and painter, personifies artistic expression for H.D. However, Helen abandons teaching music when her daughter is eight years old and never pursues an artistic career to support her husband's career and raise their children (171). H.D. feels frustrated toward this "morbidly self-effacing" woman who abandons her potential to create great art to fulfill a 'normal' feminine destiny (171). At the same time, Helen overtly favors H.D.'s brother Gilbert, and denies the possibility that her young daughter is talented enough to achieve artistic greatness (141). Despite seeing her budding talent nullified by her mother, H.D. idealizes her as her artistic predecessor. In *Tribute to Freud*, she writes that "this is my inheritance," thus attributing to her mother her "imaginative faculties" (121). She wants to look to her mother as a source of artistic inspiration but is also enraged by her willingness to suppress her artistic desires in order to fulfill a culturally mandated feminine role (*Psyche Reborn* 171).

More importantly, as a young woman, H.D. undergoes a tumultuous phase in her erotic life, experiencing, as she does, several traumatic incidents. She enters a heterosexual marriage that ends in divorce, and then turns to a homosexual relationship. She therefore cannot but be doubtful about her sex. She loves Pound, marries Aldington but is also attracted to Bryher (her fictional Fayne in *Her*). However, she takes advantage of those experiences, reaching out for the 'silver lining' in the 'cloud' of her traumatic incidents. Confronting her male-decoded representations of women as a necessary part of her personal story, she also includes in it her father, Pound, Aldington, and her lesbian experience. Despite its conflictual dynamics, it is through her narration of her life that her ambivalence about her divided identity dissipates. It is through her fictional self that she can attempt to unify the divisions she experiences throughout her writing, from within which emerges her resisting self in bold relief against her internalized compliant one. It is finally through writing about her life that "Hilda establishes an autobiographical discourse in which the split subject moves from the story of alienation to an enactment of self-creation through the agency of the word" (Heilbrun 86). *Her* seems to become a self-revelatory 'tool' with which to probe the depths of the female psyche and as a result the 'mirror' for all those expressing dissent from and acting against gender ideology.

To this effect, H.D.'s *roman á clef* is more than an aggregate of diary entries; and it is certainly far more than a confession. In all reality, it is a prose text that offers an insight into the workings of a young woman's psyche and exposes covert maternal prohibitions under whose mantle lie accepted notions of femininity. At the same time, it brings to light the writer's fictionalized self that revolts against those prohibitions to separate from her mother and distinguish herself as a speaking subject. She wishes to preclude herself from falling into the same trap that Eugenia has fallen into, or, more exactly, from becoming entangled in the "law of Gart" as, for instance, her mother is, who, before marriage, is described by Hermione as a rebellious young woman, "[wearing] a dart across her fluffed out Hellenistic hair" (*Her* 147). In contrast to what she appears to have been in the past, Eugenia has already suspended her artistic affinities so that she can support her husband's academic and professional ambitions fueled by his "Gart-formula." She is also committed to sustaining the 'formula' of conjugal normativity, which is what Hermione dreads the most for herself: metamorphosing into an ordinary motherly role model, self-sacrificing, giving, and in conformity with the rules of feminine decorum -- just like Eugenia. This becomes obvious through Hermione's disappointment-filled question: "Why are you *always* knitting?" quickly adding that "Only old ladies knit and knit like you do," which is made even more scandalous for Hermione when, as an after-thought, her mother adds: "I am an old lady. *I can knit in the dark. I can't sew in the dark. Your father likes the light concentrated in a corner. He can work better if I'm sitting in the dark*" (79).

However, that there is more to Eugenia than meets the eye is curiously visible to Hermione. She knows that underneath her mother's docility and prohibitions lies an artistic dissident's latent potential 'buried' under her "mossed over" and "rooted fibers" (*Her* 9). If it is put into motion, then "Pennsylvania itself would ache like a jaw from which has been extracted a somewhat cumbrous molar" (*Her* 9). This is what Hermione wants to leave unburied in her psyche: this 'legacy', her mother's potential, which at the same time leaves her disappointed to the extent that Eugenia has decided to suspend this potential in an effort to become wholeheartedly devoted to Carl and, inevitably, to her ontological imperative, namely her self-affirmation only through her involvement in a heterosexual family with the *pater familias* irradiating 'life' to the family members who cannot 'survive' without him.

Whereas Eugenia does everything in her power to support her husband and set an example for her daughter, Hermione's father, who is the inventor of the mathematical

"Gart-formula," is the one who determines "the closed ideological system of Pennsylvania" (Galtung 22). This becomes more obvious when Hermione herself shows the extent to which Gart and his formula are pillars of the Pennsylvanian hegemonic culture. "Gart and the formula seem in their minds to be responsible for everything," says the narrator, proceeding to refer to her fellow-Pennsylvanians who compound the gravity of Gart's influence by attributing to her father supernatural powers: "Professor Gart and the eclipse or Gart formula and the tidal wave or [when] Professor Gart says the north pole has moved a bit to the south or the north pole is tilting toward the north," which is as axiomatic as the Ten Commandments given to the people of Israel by Moses (*Her* 116). Under the circumstances, Hermione's inability to pass her math exam at Bryn Mawr College seems equal to her failure to master the "law of Gart," namely her inability to master the 'language' of the 'symbolic'. On this account, she is considered a 'failure', unable to become conversant with the 'scientific-patriarchal' discourse employed by the *pater familias*. As such, she is seen as incapable of being considered different from her submissive mother. At the same time, she has been unable to be a college graduate expected of her by her immediate social setting, for which being a college graduate equates you with being a successful individual whereas a lack of such a qualification means failure in a broader sense. Under the circumstances, she is not qualified enough to participate in the realm of professional work life, her only chance of contributing to her income being cataloguing and piling her father's incomprehensible scientific papers, which makes her feel pessimistic about the future: "[S]he would never get away from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania whirled round her in cones of concentric color, cones … concentric … conic sections was the final test she failed in. Conic sections would whirl forever round her …Science … failed her … and she was good for nothing" (*Her* 5-6).

Since she cannot acquire her father's language, she must remain at the 'borders' of the 'law' until she decides to fulfil her gender-specific purpose which is none other than having a family. As such, she is allowed to remain in abeyance: she is not expelled from the ideological system which requires that she follow an 'either/or' path; and so, since she has failed to meet the first 'either' requirement of the binary, her 'or' requirement is a last resort. She knows that she now must willingly enter the "test tube" of conjugal normativity. Otherwise, she will be expelled even from the 'borders' of the 'law'. Nevertheless, she knows that the 'law' does not guarantee 'freedom'; nor does it mean autonomy. On the contrary, it means not resisting being appropriated into the closed

Pennsylvanian ideological system, which at least means that she will no longer be in abeyance. Consenting to such a schema will consolidate her relationship with her family despite the obvious "barriers" as an inevitable corollary to such a decision: "now she knew that failing at the end meant fresh barriers, fresh chains, a mesh here," which, in her words, is like 'incarceration' (*Her* 12). With the "Gart-formula" representing the force that "masters the workings of the world," she is proleptically restricted by the mere knowledge "it is a social order which is pressing things down in test tubes" (*Her* 112). Even if she has had this traumatic experience with her math result and therefore with whatever is associated with it, she understands only those who master the 'law of the Gart', those with the power of definition who are entitled to any freedom of movement: "God, some sort of Uncle Sam, Carl-Bertrand-Gart God shut us up in a box [like a test tube]" (*Her* 96). Hers will be a form of 'supervised freedom', which is what she can finally claim in return for compliance.

The fact that 'surveilled freedom', rather than abeyance, beyond the divisions tormenting her psyche, seems to be a challenging option is at times obvious through H.D.'s fictional heroine's inner struggle. Belonging neither to the masculine *logos* nor to a stereotypically feminine paradigm, Hermione portrays her subjectivity as one 'on trial'. In *Her,* there is a constant struggle between man and woman, or father and mother. She experiences the implosive impact inside of her psyche, because of these two antithetical forces, the beast / beauty antinomy that wrenches her apart, the Platonic poison / medicine binary referred to by Sakelliou who claims that "for women their own ['beast'] myth can function as a fairy tale (παραμύθι) to deceive but also as a comfort (παραμυθία) [--namely, their 'beauty' myth--] to heal and to exorcize the wounds with which they have learned to live together" ("Δούκα-Καμπίτογλου" 68). Referring to Roland Barthes, Sakelliou claims that since "every culture nurtures thousands of mythologies," it should be expected that "their truth is considered self-evident, and the messages that these mythologies hide are not simple or harmless especially for women who are the main victims *par excellence* of such prejudices of patriarchal culture (68). Essentially, this act of exorcising the wounds that the wrenching apart has caused her to experience within her seems to find expression in Fayne's and her common undertaking to rewrite the Pygmalion myth. Their reworking of the myth is appropriated into the "paternal realm," with Galatea's role being rejected by both, and with the role of the masculine sculptor being claimed by the two lovers as if in an agonic tug-of-war contest in which they struggle to pull against each other only

to finally conform to the 'symbolic' and become, what Oliver calls, "virile women" (*Reading* 108). Actually, both lovers' attempt at refusing the patriarchally imposed ready-made 'beast' myth does not give birth to a new myth, with its curative powers transforming the 'beast' inside into a 'beauty' that is not the "schizophrenic" 'beauty' of the "romantic patriarchal imaginings of woman's victimization" but that of a 'beauty' of a "beneficent female power -- personal and political – [which serves as] a transforming energy that impregnates the development of a female aesthetics based on her own experience as a woman and … [a writer]" ("Δούκα-Καμπίτογλου" 70). Practically, their efforts fall flat on their face since, in the end, with both using love "as a contract of ownership and while arguing whether George belongs to Fayne or Hermione" (Galtung 52), Hermione states: "'Well then, speaking *man to man*, Fayne, why don't you take him?'" (*Her* 219).

This experiencing of the wrenching apart within also echoes the constant juxtaposition between the heroine's expressed sexual sympathies with women and her attraction to men, and brings to the fore the insurmountable divisions in her psyche. Through her heroine, Hermione's creator seems to grapple with these divisions throughout the narrative, through the 'cracks' of which Freudian bias seems to be seeping into the heroine's perception already torn over which path to follow. H.D.'s prose text shows the influence of psychoanalysis, since, during the twenties, H.D. attends Freud's lectures on psychoanalysis in Berlin, and enters analysis herself, too (*Penelope's Web* 17). In 1933 and 1934 she works directly with Freud, whom she describes as "midwife to the soul" and "guardian of all 'beginnings'" (*Penelope's Web* 17). However, as *Her* portrays the 'multivalence' of a psyche that refuses to remain entrenched in passivity, it detours around the Freudian self and instead builds a self who is rather comparable to Kristeva's "subject-in-process/on-trial." At the same time, the narrative 'zeroes in on' Hermione's resistance to a subjectivity which should be construed as the corollary to her identification with names and the ideological power these have on her: "Names are in people; people are in names. Sylvania. I was born here. People ought to think before they call a place Sylvania. Pennsylvania. I am part of Sylvania" (*Her* 5). Resisting the ideological stereotypes that discipline and imprison her, regardless of the result, Hermione is confronted with hegemony itself and its practices. In this light, the novel invites a good number of theoretical insights into the developing subjectivity of its heroine, which this subchapter aims to further elucidate

with a view to gaining an insight into the construction of the female resistant subject that H.D. portrays in the novel.

At the end of the novel, H.D. tells of a subject who has turned herself into the equivalent of an ancient Greek ultra-long-distance runner carrying "a message … in forgotten meters" (*Her* 220). The message contains a 'truth' locked inside, destined to be conveyed through Hermione's unarticulated love for the 'other' to a receiver who is that 'other' and who will catalyze their bond into poetic language, which Hermione verifies by suggesting "Love is writing" (149). With love and artistic practice becoming inextricably intertwined, Hermione's carried 'script' with that 'truth' inside becomes susceptible of a multitude of interpretations, since she moves toward an identity model beyond that which she is expected to conquer through her struggle with the 'Gart-sign', traversing the "tortuous pathways" of her experimentation on woman-oriented love (Benstock 335), and striving toward a career as a writer (*Penelope's Web* 117). Since "the truth [of the interpretation] is in the race" (Calle-Gruber 216), Hermione's creator's prophetic dream to be "re-born" is later glorified in "The Walls Do Not Fall," which may have been written long after *Her* but, as stated in Introduction, describes and is inspired by an event punctuating the course of her 'running' experience, in her capacity as a message bearer, *hemerodromos*, who is on the look-out for a receiving end of "the truth," and who is already aware that "no race is in itself integral, but that each has its fibers elsewhere" (*Her* 9-10). Like Pheidippides, a *hemerodromos*, one of the men in the Greek military known as day-long runners, who was sent off from the battlefield to Athens to deliver the news of Greek victory after the outnumbered Greeks managed to repulse the incursive army of Persians who had been fighting to conquer the coastal plain of Marathon, Hermione sets out on a "race" to run towards her future to announce the 'glad tidings' of what she has long fought within: the dichotomizing binaries that make her who she is. This aspect of the "race," which is "integral," becomes clearer if we look at her narrative tradition as what it is: contextualized within a continuum, with her initial writing efforts establishing her as a poet in the first decades of the 20th century and continuing to 'fuel' her need to express herself through it for many decades later. But being a 'runner', H.D. always looks back beyond where she is now at the departure point and beyond. She always tries to cast back to "the thing that mattered," looking out for repetitions along the way to bring to life that "deferred" experience from within the 'race' of her life "already behind… as something to be recovered, yet still before us as something to be [re-]produced" (Culler 82). With the 'race' still going on, even in

the crescendo of fear and desperation she experiences in London in 1942, she still looks out for healing and redemption within as well as without. According to Sakelliou, in "The Walls do not Fall," H.D. seems to be discussing other forms of survival which are even more emotionally charged for her (*Εισαγωγή* 49).[6] H.D. seems to think that they should both come from an act of demolishing the binary of father/signifier of power and mother/signifier of lack that dichotomizes her and the world, too, as is so articulately expressed in her "the world divisions divideth us" (*Her* 179). In her long 'race', she seeks out signs of this 'truth' in this act of demolition, which, from within its debris, will give rise to a union, namely that of mother and father united in a single figure, the new re-narrated 'beauty' myth described earlier. This is her 'truth', or at least her long-standing hope for "rebirth" buried within such verses as "take me home, Father: … /let your teeth devour me, /let me be warm in your belly, / … the re-born Sun" ("The Walls" 31), as was years earlier at the start of the 'race' when she and Fayne, through their fictional travails, vainly tried to rework the Pygmalion myth only to end up fighting over who would claim George (*Her* 219).

Her 'rebirth' is but feasible through the appropriation of the legacy of a male god's attributes. H.D. allows herself to be co-opted into the 'symbolic' universe of a traditional narrative, part of which is her fictional 'Gart-sign', too, with her dissent being compromised since she manages to experience internalization within the god, departing, thus, from her wish to "escape Gart …phobia, rehabilitation,"[7] overtly announcing, fifteen years later, her wish to be "re-born" through being appropriated by the male god Ram. And, since it was claimed at the beginning of this subchapter that *Her*, as a novel, "probes the depths of the author's psyche… [and] serves as her own confession under the mantle of fiction,"[8] then her writing-as -a-woman and her life-as-a-woman in a male-defined context act upon each other throughout her personal 'race' as described in *Her* and continues to unfold throughout her *oeuvre*. To better understand this interaction, we should see how her resistant subjectivity unfolds in her struggle to demythicize her beast/beauty binary that wrenches her apart.

3.5 A Subjectivity in Process

Among the theorists whose views are important for understanding H.D.'s text is Kristeva, especially her views, in "Stabat Mater," in connection with how Kristeva sees the female body "take a chance with meaning" (mostly with writing, in Hermione's case): "Let a body venture at last out of its shelter, take a chance with meaning under a veil of words. WORD FLESH" (235).

Where *Her* is concerned, Kristeva's views find expression in Hermione's relationship to her mother. Her mother should be seen as the instigator of Hermione's 'gestating discursive capacity' (her 'writing'), 'born' out of her body, out of the division of the same flesh, most perceptively allegorized by Eugenia's confession to Hermione, with both mother and daughter "flung now into profound intimacy," as if in symbiotic unity: "It was all over in a few hours … I had you in the morning," and then, in a most disillusioning address to her daughter, Eugenia's unparalleled "Your father was *afraid* … that the doctor wouldn't help us" (*Her* 88-89). While listening to Eugenia's account of that memorable but scary experience, Hermione feels as if she is being born again, brought forth by her mother's story relating to her their unity and separation, re-gestated in and born through language: "Unless you are born of water … unless you are born of water … they were born of water, reincarnated" (89). It seems that Hermione's incipient capacity to enter the 'symbolic' seems to be analogous to the 'weaning' of the child, or, as Oliver says, "the mother must wean the child," initiating the cessation of the symbiotic relationship between mother and child in order that her daughter enter the 'symbolic' and become 'autonomous' (68). The narrator's words "Unless you are born of water *…"* are reminiscent of Jesus' words (68), namely that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (The Bible 117). Also, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (117). If "the kingdom of God" is construed as the unreachable 'other', only through the act of submitting to the authority of the Word can that "which is flesh" attain unity with the spirit. So, as Eugenia narrates to her daughter her nativity story, her words re-gestate their relationship binding mother and daughter together and, as a result, body and spirit unite, with the "body [finally] …venturing … out of its shelter" ("Stabat Mater" 235).

As "water" appears to be of paramount importance in the above analogy, Hermione's yearning for the sea is given prominent position in the same way Eugenia is. With sea and mother being presented as an autologous site where unity disappears and, in its stead, schism appears, the heroine's longing for the sea becomes even more intense. It seems to be escalating because of Hermione's recollection of a painting in which its creator, later understood to be Eugenia, has painted "green on green, one slice in a corner that made a triangle out of another dimension," and where "the stream that started high up on the hill ran away into the gold frame" (*Her* 6, 148). As Hermione finds herself "standing frozen on the wood-path" (5-6), she cannot access the "other

dimension," represented by her mother's picture, since the most conspicuous constituent parts of the painting, the trees and water, do not yet seem to interact so that they will become one, an organic entirety. Whereas the trees representing Carl's "biological-mathematical definition of the universe" threaten with suffocation, water is symbolic of 'madness' through the implied risk of drowning in it (76). However unclear this is, about whether subjectivity can be found in either sphere, there is a proleptical image with a "crane shadow passing across a wild cherry half in blossom" that anticipates Hermione's unity with the sea /mother (13). So, to the extent that the "wild cherry" grows outside of tilled soil, the process of its growth points to Hermione's evolving artistry. It is true that her writing experience evolves in the same way the "wild cherry" does, passing through certain phases of growth: her resistance to and confrontation with the 'law of the father' (the 'symbolic'), and, as a result, the breach of the heterosexual paradigm that leads to her erotic and sexual bond with Fayne, through whom she will foretaste part of the 'truth', poetic language, which she is pursuing. With love becoming a synonym for poetic language, verified by Hermione suggesting "Love is writing," love and artistic practice become inextricably intertwined (149). Love thus becomes the motive force behind and the outcome of writing. Hermione's subjectivity starts to flower. Despite having formerly been in danger of suffering disintegration, she reaps the fruit of her experimentation with the risks she has taken -- or so she thinks she does.

Through poetic language, Hermione calls forth the 'semiotic' elements of the maternal, showing love for and identification with the mother. 'Walled in' by the 'symbolic', the 'Gart-sign', she is not allowed to move forward on her path through the forest, "planted by the rivers of water" (70), on course for self-knowledge. It is what there is beyond the pine trees that she is in search of. It is what could extract her from the world of fixity and rigidity and lead her to self-knowledge. Such self-knowledge is like the running water of the flowing river, itself suggestive of the 'semiotic pulsations' analogous to those experienced by the maternal pregnant body. It is through this 'semiotic explosion' that Kristeva believes "the nature/culture binary" can be subverted ("Stabat Mater" 182). Although Kristeva conceptualizes the subversion of the binary as commensurate with the pregnant body levering the maternal out of patriarchy's logic of symmetry, the disrupting momentum with which the pregnant body destabilizes masculine discourse, *patriarchic logos*, is also temporally constrained. If nature bestows the 'gift' of pregnancy as a unique unrepeatable experience upon woman, this unique 'gift' is available for a limited period, which is for as long as the period of

pregnancy lasts. Although, during this period, the maternal body seems to disturb "the symbolic [male-regulated] inscription of the body as 'mine' and separate from the others" (Ziarek 99), this experience of the non-rigid, 'unscientific' merging with the 'other', as child, carrying it in herself, is too short-lived to bring about a long-standing change in gender ideology, though. For by breaking down the binary distinction between subject and 'other', the pregnant body becomes an excellent example of what Kristeva describes as "subjectivity-in-process," namely that the self is always heterogeneous and unstable, in a state of fluidity rather than fixity and rigidity. By carrying the 'other' in herself, which means that the gestating maternal body could be seen as "reaching out to the other, the ethical," there comes into being "mother's love for the 'other', which gives birth to a feminine ethics" (Kristeva 185), which does not only bring mother and child together but also paves the way for a new and anti-patriarchal representation of motherhood, a maternal discourse through which the mother is not spoken about as the radical 'other', but as carrying the 'other' in herself. This new maternal discourse succeeds in diffusing rigid definitions of identity and otherness and expatriates itself from its cultural 'prison-house' of male-defined identity.

The fact of the matter is that Kristeva's perspective regarding maternity is right to a certain extent. Where *Her* is concerned, it is a 'lens' through which to explore the birth of Hermione's resistant subjectivity. This becomes unfolded throughout Hermione's lesbian relationship with Fayne, with their relationship being reminiscent to Hermione of maternal melody echoing in Fayne's speech. Her relationship re-immerses her into the 'semiotic pulsations' of the forest's "stream" as a place where the 'conic' rationality inherent in the pine trees is 'harnessed' by the running waters, a place that becomes a "semiotic chora" disrupting the 'symbolic' inscription of the female subject as successful insofar as it remains a "frozen," inarticulate subject unable to master speech. It is a place where culture and nature do not cancel each other but become connected, albeit temporarily. For that reason, it turns out that a full-scale rejection of *patriarchic logos* seems to be out of the question since Kisteva's conceptualization of the interface of culture and nature does not refuse the 'symbolic' but makes use of it. Inside of it, the interface of culture and nature seeks to subvert the 'symbolic'. In Kristevan terms, therefore, Hermione is encapsulated by patriarchy while writing in verse or prose against it within it. The "water" and "pine trees" symbols

seem to fuse together superficially, making for a 'synergic' entirety within which the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic' seem to be interacting.

On the face of it, this 'synergy', fruitful though it is promised to be, is, however, self-undermined because its problematic character is allegorically reflected upon Lillian's -- George Lowndes' mother -- euphemistic address to Hermione as "Undine," "the mermaid from Hans Christian Andersen" who seems to be in a quandary as to whether to sacrifice her "voice" for "feet" (*Her* 112). It is obvious that the name is most presumably suggestive of Lillian's wish for Hermione to sacrifice her agency by exercising her writing talent through George who will have the ultimate say. Through her betrothal to George Lowndes, Hermione, as "Undine," connotes her entrapment "in the position of statue" (Galtung 57). She is portrayed as snapping out of her 'quandary', sacrificing "her voice for her feet, [selling] her 'sea-inheritance' to be on solid ground, to be with a man," to be able to facilitate the smooth merger "between the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic'" (57). As she desperately struggles to wrestle loose from the dilemma, she thinks to herself that "Undine (or the Little Mermaid) couldn't speak after she sold her glory" and immediately decided not "to sell… [her] glory" (120).

In Hermione's narrative, water comes to symbolize the 'semiotic' insertion of Hermione's love for Fayne into the 'symbolic' represented by the forest trees. It becomes obvious that the forest could not exclusively consist of pine trees alone as this would result in a despotic society in which the 'desired' subject is a frozen rather than a speaking subject functioning as a closed sign. At the same time, Hermione's felt 'pull' towards a "long sea-shelf", as an unknown territory, undermines the *stasis* of the symbolic trees: "Another country called her, the only thing that would heal, that would blot out this concentric gelatinous substance that was her perception of trees grown closer" (*Her* 7). This vague sensation of this other "country," the "long" aquatic "shelf," could be interpreted, according to Kristeva, "as the emergence of unconscious elements of the maternal that maintain the 'pre-symbolic' unity with the mother inside of the 'symbolic'" ("The Subject" 134). They are the "semiotic pulsations" felt like an upsetting and wandering "force that charges the process of signification," in Galtung's words, by throwing into confusion the permanency and consciousness that the 'symbolic' represents (21-22). In the text the disruption they cause is, as stated above, symbolized by water, by the "long sea-shelf" (*Her* 7). As Hermione narrates, "She felt herself go out, out into this water substance. Water was transparent, not translucent like this celluloid tree-stuff. She wanted to see through reaches of sea-wall, push on through

transparencies… Trees, no matter how elusive, in the end, walled one in," adding in a matter-of-fact manner, "trees were suffocation" (7-8).

The symbolism, therefore, of removal of the self from under the canopy of cone-shaped "tree-stuff," and its insertion into the "transparencies" of the running water, which will travel her to that other "country," reenacts her unity with the repressed elements of the maternal inside the 'symbolic' -- although that other "country" is not literally her mother, Eugenia. Eugenia may carry within her the explosiveness of her 'semiotic' past that is now checked by the "Gart-formula." As Hermione cannot let herself become encapsulated by it, she experiences this fusion with the 'semiotic' drive charges through the sensation of being loved by and loving her ideal sister, Fayne. So, Hermione's engagement in conversation with Fayne helps her to search beyond her true self, for the innovative potential of that self: "Her words now were a gambler's heritage, heady things, they would win for her, they would lose for her" (*Her* 61- 62). Their interaction represents "a twinkling of an eye into another forest," that of her mother's painting with its "streams" of running water (62). Only through letting her 'semiotic' explosion of her love for Fayne, which will later become poetic expression, merge into the Gart discursive modality can she subvert, in Kristevan terms, the opposing terms of the nature/culture binary and let her voice be heard in their 'in-betweenness', thus making herself into a speaking subject. However, the extent to which her being encapsulated by the 'symbolic', while at the same time fighting it, through her subversion and rejection of *patriarchic* logos, does justice to Kristeva's conceptualization of a harmonious co-existence of the two is ambiguous since an agency's subversion and rejection of a system within which she resides does not result in any 'synergy' whatsoever between the subversive agency and the system itself but leads either to co-optation or marginalization and ultimately extinction.

3.6 Within the *Panopticon* Prison-Culture

In the previous chapter, mention was made of how *The Bell Jar* lends itself to a Foucauldian analysis of how society, and, more importantly, women enter into the machinery of power that looks into [the body], separates it into its constituent parts, and finally pieces them back together anew. Additionally, in the first chapter, in the A*ntigone,* through both Ismene and the chorus, mention was also made of how women 'embrace' their domination by men within the *polis* perception because of the family performing ideological functions. By the same token, in this chapter, the clash in Hermione should be seen as being enacted within the parameters of a political

rationality that constructs subjectivities in connection with the internalization of performance norms within a general regime of inspection that revives and at the same time modernizes the old Benthamite dream of 'panopticism'. Hermione, as a subject, should thus be seen as being shaped by the political rationality in question.[9]

In *Her*, 'controlled' by her mother's gaze, itself embodying the male gaze of her father's and Bertrand's, Hermione projects on Fayne's mother, Mrs Rabb, a similar role as that of her mother's, subliminally placing her within the same continuum of maternal gaze embodying that of her father's and brother's. She thus feels her inner self degenerating into a disembodied equivalent of a 'dummy' perceived by Mrs Rabbs as being "crouched [maybe knitting, too] in the corner of the slippery horsehair sofa Her would have been taken for a disjointed, broken, utterly useless doll now if Mrs. Rabb had seen her" (*Her* 156). Her mother's and, by extension, Fayne's mother's gaze embody the male gaze, which, in turn, is interiorized and as such performs self-policing. This results in Hermione feeling her female physicality is derogated; and also, her sexuality that may be straying from its reproductive 'purpose' is derogated, too; lastly, her spirituality is also denied her. This occurs because (a) Hermione's subjectivity is seen to be evolving within the patriarchal culture of the scrutinizing male gaze; (b) the body is taken to be the crude container of the mind, and mind and reason are superior to the emotions and senses, and divorced from one another, with man being associated with mind and woman with body; and, finally, (c) mind/culture/man must harness and control the potentially unruly body/nature/woman terms through the application of knowledge and willpower. Now polarized in the gender ideology that favors the analogy of the mind/body terms to those of the man/woman binary is the social order that actually fabricates subjectivities in it with gendering being acknowledged as a 'technology' of woman's subjectivity intertwined with her physicality and her sexuality. The internalized gaze that watches over the female subject's every move attests to how women 'embrace' their own domination by men and how the old Benthamite dream of 'panopticism' finds expression in the subject's voluntary self-transformation to an 'inmate' in a *panopticon* prison.

As every 'prisoner' believes that there is always an inspecting eye having a hold on her, in all reality it is not the warden but the prisoner that has a hold on herself most of the time. As stated in a previous chapter, "discipline is internalized, while the inspector himself becomes superfluous" (Bozovic 17). Once the 'hammer of justice' has struck down a prisoner following a transgression, the presence of a warden is

unnecessary, with the latter being able to leave the establishment while at the same time allowing it to continue to run on its own. Where *Her* is concerned, Her Gart feels that the hammer of the 'law' of the Gart realm has been brought down on her, firstly, following her birth referred to as having been "odd," and also having occurred at "a funny time," as Eugenia relates to her the story of her birth (89), and, secondly, following her failure at college. Feeling trapped, Hermione exclaims: "I'm too strong and I'm nothing and I'm frightened" (176). The 'spying eye' inside of her contains the interiorized gaze of her male peers. It watches over her and her every move. Such is George's gaze that caries within it the 'monological format' of the male subject that refuses to listen and sees in her his own masculine self-reflection. His gaze looks down on her. He acts autonomously. He comes across as being sovereign, a sovereign subject, with an identity constructed by him. It is an identity which, to all intents and purposes, is *not* 'dialogical'. It carries within it the "law of Gart," the 'language' of the 'symbolic', embedded within which lies an identity of him as sovereign subject that binds him to Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvanian forest with the cone-shaped foliage of the pine trees. Although he may be challenging his identity, he does practically nothing to transform it. Hermione's words, "George was neither beast nor man" (85), indirectly express her thought that one cannot tell whether he is complicated or simple -- suggesting he is neither: "If [George] had simply bared teeth, torn away garments with bared fangs, she would have understood, would have put narrow arms around great shoulders, would have yielded to him" (85).

Although Hermione longs to make herself heard by acquiring her father's language of the 'symbolic' while at the same time demanding subjectivity, she is 'loyal' to "the music of the mother," which may resist articulation but affords access to language and self: "Mad, wild against her brain like innumerable white swallows, went beat of sea surf, the heavy growl and thunder of the surf and the out-growl growling of the sea surf" (*Her* 125). However, her mother, as expected, is also enmeshed in the 'law of the Gart', doing everything in her power to perpetuate it. Speaking to her daughter about Carl, Eugenia says: "He can work better if I'm sitting in the dark" (79). Despite her remarks about a life lived in Carl's shadow, Hermione carries within her Eugenia as a dormant rebel, a heritage that she has appropriated for herself. What she cannot identify with is self-effacing Eugenia "knitting in the dark," which Hermione can imagine Mrs Rabbs compares her to when she looks at her. Yet this is what will guide her through her self-exploration. She cannot identify with a woman who seems to unreservedly

accept her role as the subservient helpmeet to her husband. She cannot identify with a woman who transfuses her self-erasure into words of admonition towards Hermione, especially with regard to George Lowndes: "[he]*is* teaching you, actually teaching you words, telling you what to say" (95). Unsurprisingly, this image of the 'statue-identity' that her mother has established for her daughter is part of a long-standing tradition of 'woman-statue' hybrids to which the text explicitly refers. Whether or not she is allowed to express her artistic talent is of no consequence to her since she is expected to let herself be objectified by George's desire which has effectively paralyzed Hermione's passion and free will, turning her into a cold statue. This is what Hermione is constantly internalizing since Eugenia, too, has turned herself into a cold 'woman-statue' despite her artistic potential.

The image of passivity that Eugenia conjures when she says that George will be "teaching [Hermione] …words, telling [her] what to say" attributes to him the requisite agency that sustains his hegemonic discourse and at the same time elevates him to Hermione's prospective 'sculptor' that would use her as the raw material to be molded into the type of 'woman-statue' he wants her to be as a spouse. Like her namesake, in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale,* Hermione becomes the creation similar to that in the *Pygmalion* myth. In the novel's women-oriented love plot, one of Hermione's early encounters with Fayne takes place while Fayne is costumed as Pygmalion for a play. In addition to Fayne's gender-bending dramatic role as the sculptor, Pygmalion, both women figure themselves as statues, with one of them saying: "I'll make you breathe, my breathless statue," and with the other replying: "Statue? You -- *you* are the statue" (*Her* 163). Regarding Hermione's relationship with Fayne, Friedman claims: "[Hermione] rescripts the traditional myth in which the desire of Pygmalion, the male artist, brings to life Galatea, the object of his gaze. Like Fayne, Hermione is both an artist and a statue . . . In the mutuality that characterizes their ideal moments, both women are statues that come to life; both women are subjects in the story of desire" (*Penelope's Web* 123).

Because both women seem to be in relatively equal positions, their relationship provides an alternative to the paralyzing relationship inside which Hermione is dominated by George's 'sculpting' gaze. So, as both women seem to perceive themselves in both the role of statue and that of artist, and to freely and fluidly traverse the interface between the two roles, their equal traversal suggests that the boundaries between their roles of subject and object in their lesbian relationship could actually be

as fluid as the 'semiotic' sensation of the "semiotic chora" that disrupts the 'symbolic' inscription of the maternal subject in the same way that a circumscribed Foucauldian subject is inspected as a particular target of disciplinary power. Remarkably, it is this 'fluidity' of the 'in-betweenness' of their erotic union that abolishes the gaze of a culture that reduces Hermione to what she resists becoming: a "useless doll" (*Her* 156). She witnesses the same sense of 'reification' in Fayne when Mrs. Rabb calls Fayne "Pauline," thus reducing her to a complicit creature uttering in a 'raspy' tone, bleating out "Mama" as if she were "some wild thing, like some goat on a hill-crest" (155).

Like Mrs. Rabb, Eugenia Gart is Hermione's 'warden' in their own 'Gart-prison'. She reduces her to a 'clay model' to be given shape by her *fiancé*. Even though Eugenia's influence on Hermione could be expected to be emancipatory, given her latent potential which, if put into motion, could make "Pennsylvania itself ache" (*Her* 9), she, too, is part of the *panopticon* prison culture of her time. Within her eyes is reflected what she sees in herself and by extension in her daughter: that both are under Carl Gart's (in his capacity as both a husband and a father) 'umbrella'. By being Carl Gart's wife, Eugenia seems to be believing that she is lucky to have earned the right to serve as an 'appendage' to Carl: "Your father […] can work better if I'm sitting in the dark" (79), she keeps saying. By upholding the "law of Gart," Eugenia also becomes the watchful guardian of "the name of the father," a name etymologically close to '*garth*', a piece of enclosed ground, that resembles the Pennsylvanian forest inside which Hermione is enclosed. Her absent father, who is always locked away studying, is replaced by her mother. As watchfully as possible, Eugenia assists Hermione in learning to uphold the "Gart formula," which, nevertheless, subjects her to the confinement of a social order in which either "God," or "some sort of Uncle Sam," and, most certainly, "Carl-Bertrand-Gart God [intends to] shut … [them] up in" (*Her* 96). Carl seems to define the 'symbolic order' at a micro-level -- he personifies the 'Genesis' force that "masters the workings of the world" (112), a fact corroborated by what her fellow Pennsylvanians attribute to him: the power of definition. At the same time, within the family 'Canaan', he replaces the Old Testament God, treating the women of the Gart *oikos* as 'matter' -- not as 'form': "[Carl Gart] called her daughter like a Middle West farmer, like someone out of the Old Testament, like God saying daughter I say unto you arise," breathing 'life' into her (100). Like God the Word, he can call out to all the women in his *oikos* to assume the roles of wives, daughters, and mothers, which leaves Hermione with no choice but to depart from "the room … defeated" (100). By

calling out to Hermione, Carl's use of language is animating and organizing, adding cohesion to reality, which in turn organizes and adds cohesion to the structures of the language used by her as well as by the rest of the paternal language-animated female 'matter' of his *oikos*. Carl's wife does employ such a language, especially when she urges Hermione to 'stand' like a statue under the 'sculpting' eye of George Lowndes. Unsurprisingly, Eugenia's eyes are reflected upon her painting with that "other dimension" that Hermione cannot access. Their commanding gaze on her is suggestive of power which is 'borrowed' from Carl and which 'freezes' her into someone who can also authenticate her existence within the economy of the 'symbolic order'.

This condition of constant subjection to the regulating gaze and control of authority, guarantees, as Foucault claims, "the automatic functioning of power" (*The Birth of Prison* 201). Constantly surveyed by the "panoptical male *connoisseur*," or its equivalent, the 'spying' eye of the mother that seems to embody the power of patriarchy, grants woman an outside perspective and allows her to "live . . . as seen by another" (*The Birth of Prison* 72). In other words, as explained earlier in the chapter, she internalizes the gaze and proceeds to enter upon the surveilling and controlling of herself even without any onlookers being present. This is a mental process, the inner workings of which are certainly reminiscent of the old Benthamite 'prison-house' of the interiorized 'mind's eye' carrying out its 'watchdog' duties. Being both an inspector and inspected at the same time, she becomes what Bollobás calls "a self-policing subject who treats herself as a spectacle, as an object" (102). Her surveyed self becomes a 'map' of "the degree of investment of the subject" in the self-spied self, thus serving as "the site of self-policing for women who internalize the image of themselves," created by the policing eye of women as objects, and who can "put themselves into the subject position" only when experiencing the surveying of themselves or of other women as objects (102). This state of constant self-policing, involving themselves as both 'surrogate' subjects and objects, inevitably leads to self-reproduction. As such, the gaze serves as a discriminating technique keeping women apart from men and placing men in subject position that looks and sizes up women. It also places women in object position that are inspected and used as exhibits before they are appraised by men. Thus, the gaze encourages and perpetuates the dominance-submission binary of our culture, and, by extension, encourages the coming into being of the interdependence between desire and power. Moreover, it "carries with it the power of action and of possession" (Kaplan 311), or, as Donna Haraway puts it, it "mythically inscribes all the marked

bodies, [and] makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" (283).

3.7 Within the 'Clutches' of Ideological Conditioning

Whereas the gaze as a gender marker is premised upon who does the seeing, namely the subject or 'surrogate' subject', versus whom the seeing is done to, or else the object, interpellation, during which the dominance-submission patterns of our culture occur, does not only say but also makes the saying in question come true. Hermione laconically expresses the ideological power her identification with names has on her: *"Names are in people; people are in names. Sylvania. I was born here. People ought to think before they call a place Sylvania. Pennsylvania. I am part of Sylvania" (Her 3); or elsewhere, "I am Hermione Gart precisely" (3); or even "I am the word AUM" (32). Using "precisely" indicates her unwavering knowledge of her subjection to the pre-existing category of the female subject which connects her to the practices of ideological recognition. She is recognized as such and such, invested with all gender-specific attributes reproducing her as a subordinated object – as Althusser says about how ideology reproduces the same loyal subjects (Althusser 160, 182). 'Incarcerated' in the 'Gart nomenclature', she is turned into a subjected victim since her identification with naming obviously constitutes her as a target -- a subjected victim. She is becoming ideologically conditioned to want and not to want to participate in a process of which she is not the maker. Her grandfather, father, brother and her mother, as a Gart 'proxy', not to mention Minnie, make sure that she is not. They let her get carried away on flights of self-deluding fancy "that history was made for [her and] them" (Callinicos 70). Her participation, even if fought against, is in fact inevitable since it is the result made possible through conventional behavior rituals, which, according to Althusser, form, transform, and equip us to respond to our conditions of existence. In other words, her participation seems inevitable.

Practically, conventional behavior rituals help us (and her) to socialize through a system of ideas, beliefs, and values by which we experience our world as a coherent whole and find our place within it as subjects. This occurs through ideology that always manifests itself through actions, which are "inserted into practices," which is in fact what ideology is all about: "the imaginary relationship of individuals" to the real world via the medium of language, since it is our reliance on language that causes us to be within the 'clutches' of social ideology (Althusser 114, 109). It is our performance of what we think of as our relation to others and to social institutions that continually

instantiates us as subjects. Since this occurs via language, then a subject is a 'function' of the language. This is better illustrated through Althusser's example borrowed from Pascal's formula for belief: "Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe'" (114). Despite the vividness of the example cited where language alone is concerned, it is neither given prominence nor is it sovereign as such since there also other modalities affecting the individual's "kneel[ing] down, mov[ing] …lips in prayer, and… believ[ing]" as Althusser suggests. For example, the act "of going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture of the sign of the cross, or of the *mea culpa,* of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an 'internal' verbal discourse consciousness" could and do affect an individual's "kneel[ing] down, mov[ing] …lips in prayer, and… believ[ing]" (169). In this light, the "kneel down" 'command' seems to put in motion the oppressive aspect of language expressed as imperative and prediction and is actually corroborated by the famous "hey, you there" example posited by Althusser who alleges that "we [become] indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" through "rituals of ideological recognition," through "interpellation" that turns us into subjects (which are always ideological) (117). However, language is one of the modalities of materiality that creates ideology; but language alone cannot. His example involving the police officer calling out to the unsuspecting individual who will do an abrupt 'about-face' on hearing the policeman does point in the direction of that individual becoming a subject the moment he is hailed by the law-enforcer. The very fact that she does not recognize this interaction as ideological is suggestive of the effects of ideology, of the fact that what thus transpires in the street in reality seems to transpire within ideology. That is why "those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology" (118). One of the effects of ideology is "the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, "'I am ideological'" (118).

Where *Her* is concerned, "hailing" or "interpellation" occurs at the beginning of Hermione's narration where she repeats the name granted her through the male-regulated nomenclature of the family three generations ago -- including her grandfather who is responsible for 'Hermione'. While considering her origins, she is both gazing and re-naming herself, "I am Hermione Gart" (*Her* 3), or, more emphatically, "I am the word AUM" (32). Like a spectator, she watches herself become denuded of subjectivity and invested with borrowed identity through her names. Their perlocutionary effect on

her is such that reduces her to "AUM". She feels and sees herself as a meaningless word. She assumes meaning the moment she assumes subject position as Gart. As such, she can imagine as much as she thinks is possible for her. When Hermione lets her imagination relate her to a 'reality' she thinks is possible, she adopts a resistant stance, understanding the fields and forests to be "virginal for one purpose, for one Creator," pointing toward a possible shift to a feminine paradigm, based on assuming the position of Gart, of God (223). She thus comes to misrecognize that the "law of Gart," which she perceives as a Creator, could be reestablished. Her misrecognition is such that it is automatically clarified through her lesbian relationship with Fayne when it is made evident that her wish for a reigning feminine paradigm is but an expression of a most powerful maternal figure through which the 'Gart-sign' system would be overturned. Although she is a subject-in-process/on-trial -- in Kristevan terms, she very easily slides back into the object of the trial since unnaming and renaming herself does not make the 'law' go away; it betokens the impracticality "of a feminine world-order" (Galtung 74).

If naming, besides communicating an idea, also enacts the message it communicates, as Butler claims, then 'naming' as part of the ideological process of the making of subjects is both representation and enactment (*Excitable* 72). Assisted by Althusser's concept of interpellation, as explained above, Butler's emphasis on 'naming' as both representation and enactment could better explain how patriarchic hegemony creates subordinated objects. For example, sexist labels and stereotypes convey the message of how gender-specific attributes are perceived by the dominant group that contributes to the social subordination of that group. At the same time, naming, as explained earlier, becomes an act of intended harm, too, one that is performed by any oppressive agency to constitute their vulnerable targets as subjected victims. Thus, the production of the subordinated object is not merely a linguistic function but also the result of enactment -- the result of the 'synergy' of different modalities of materiality that generates ideology and subjects insofar as language together with gaze, handshake, or even gesture, and so on, suggestive of one's bodily comportment and performance, conducive to a psychic terrain of guilt, obedience, and submission to the oppressive agency, produce a similar result to that of the "kneel down" command. In other words, 'intended harm' is equal to generating subordinated objects through such modalities as the abovementioned ones. Such an act gains its power from iteration: "'I am Her', she said to herself; she repeated, 'Her, Her, Her'"; in an almost 'ritualistic' manner, she keeps repeating to herself that she is "Her Gart"

despite the fact she refuses to cling on to this 'certainty': "Clutching out toward some definition of herself, she found that 'I am Her Gart' didn't let her hold on" (*Her* 3-4). Hermione's self-awareness through an object pronoun, 'Her', is much more than just a word addressed to Hermione that metaphysically produces social remorse in her. It is the result of the ideology of hegemony that promotes male sovereignty at the expense of females. It is expressed through external discourse that leaves a lasting 'imprint' on the subordinated object's internal verbal discourse that keeps it alive and perpetuates it. Such a practice is ideological and born of the social classes at grips in the class struggle, and if patriarchy is but a variation of the same timeless oppressive system that thrives for the 'privileged' ones at the expense of the '*hoi polloi*', then the above premise is true. Only by resisting such harm can the power of the word be changed and used as a means of self-empowerment, making a real subject out of the formerly subjected victim.

Although Hermione wants to resist being defined by the 'Gart nomenclature', she knows that she is under its locutionary power, through which Carl Gart, like Yahweh, 'names' the world and, as such, he becomes *logos*, securing his power over the world. She knows that she will have to be 'Gart', as are her mother, brother, and her sister-in-law, who all carry the same name, otherwise she will be considered an anomaly. It is true that even Minnie is considered her sister under 'symbolic law'. Entitled to bearing the Gart name through her marriage to Hermione's brother, Minnie, like Hermione's mother and Hermione herself, has also become synopsized by a formula that Eugenia and Hermione resist interfering with. Her family does not let her escape from being defined by them. Althusser states the family, in addition to the church and the school, is a cultural structure that makes 'naming' iterable and as such reproducible through its members (Althusser 118). For Althusser, it is primarily these structures that reproduce the values of ideology which "interpellate" or "hail" the individual with the power of force similar to that of the police, and it is this 'hailing' by which the interpellated person becomes a socially constituted subject (118).

It is true that Hermione's family interpellates her into a grammatical object through calling her 'Her'. Eugenia in turn forces her to be interpellated into becoming Hermione Lowndes, George's wife-to-be, who in turn interpellates her into "Narcissa." Actually, by calling her "Narcissa," he, like the Gart paternal male ancestry, assumes the power of a 'minor Old Testament God', thus partaking of the Gart *Logos*, too. In that capacity, he manipulates 'Her' into convincing herself of the futility of reacting to his intention to marry her. But her reaction is rooted in her intention to preempt a potential falling

into total eclipse which infuriates her: "I am *Hermione Gart* and *will be Hermione Lowndes* … it wasn't right" (*Her* 112). After all, George aims at making her see that there is no other alternative and that even a mere reaction to the thought of being called Hermione Lowndes inevitably leads to her being considered narcissistic -- hence "Narcissa" (*Her* 170). Through the perlocutionary force of the 'naming' ritual, through which she understands what she thinks she is, George re-assigns her to a name that attributes to her what she does not want to be and would like to free herself from, to which she automatically responds: "I can't be called Lowndes" (112). Unsuspecting of what George is ready to say, she goes on to declare that "People are in things, things are in people," rejecting, thus, interpellation and self-assuredly feeling that she is asserting her own power. It is then that George renames her "Narcissa" (170). Realizing what has happened to her, as if under a spell, Hermione, not feeling self-assured any longer, desperately asks: "What am I? *What am I?*" (174), telling George "I did want to be rescued -- I do, I do" (191), pleading with him to assist her in finding a name that will cancel out "Narcissa." But then again it will be the family, or a potential member of the family, which subjects her to naming and by extension to ideological conditioning.

3.8 Against the 'Gart-Sign': Hermione's (Resisting?) Resistance

Hermione is aware that she is trapped. She is aware that naming objectifies her. Yet she dares to resist the ideological 'bars' of being gazed and being named such and such all throughout a lifetime, uttering "it wasn't right" that she be named Lowndes (*Her* 112). She herself dares to do the gazing of herself not in a self-policing mood but as an individual who feels she cannot merely make herself available as a blank slate waiting to be filled with a man's impressions, which is what her mother has done for her father, Carl. She really feels it is debasing to merely follow in her mother's normative footsteps. She thus pushes herself to 'liminality', being and feeling at risk while experimenting with a subjectivity that does the gazing itself. On realizing that she does not belong to the heteronormative narrative, in which she has been trained to act out her role, she identifies with those who already do not belong, as, for instance, Fayne, and at whose cost the heterosexual narrative of belonging is constructed. In doing so, Hermione sees herself as potentially differentiating herself from the Gart female members of her world and temporarily stops being the object of gazing by others. Her stark refusal to concede to becoming Mrs. Lowndes, through her reflex-reply: "it wasn't right" (*Her* 112), marks the beginning of her 'journey' through dissidence.

Her disagreement to marry George and later her liaison with Fayne call the *status quo* into question, with the so-called 'symbolic' being at risk of being disrupted by both women's experiencing of the 'semiotic' sensation of a relationship that disrupts the 'symbolic' inscription of their femininity as a delimited Foucauldian homogeneous 'subjectivity' to be inspected as a particular target of disciplinary power. The 'fluidity' of the 'in-betweenness' of their erotic union cancels out the reductive gaze and the naming of a culture that make Hermione and Fayne 'places' to be colonized. Temporarily, they reactivate the elements of the maternal, experiencing a 'forbidden' sexual act analogous to the uninterrupted relation to the mother which the 'symbolic' represses through the prohibition of incest to generate the conventional society. They thus decolonize themselves from the homogeneity of the *panopticon* prison culture that treats them as replicated mirror images and, also, from the stability of a pre-defined role to which they have been subjected through 'hailing' -- "Her," "AUM," "Narcissa" or even "Undine" for Hermione and "Pauline" for Fayne.

The destabilizing force of Hermione's union with a 'forbidden' self that is so similar to but also so different from hers is proleptically hinted at in a letter sent by a college acquaintance of Hermione's, which seems to indirectly suggest an invasion of Fayne's 'otherness' to her 'supervised freedom' "[well-] press[ed] …down in test tubes" (*Her* 112). It throws into confusion her perception of self with a deregulating effect on her. As Hermione is invited to a tea party by Nellie Thorpe, a college acquaintance, who expresses her desire "to see a girl I want to see you [with]" (34), she hears Nellie comment: "I never know what to call you, you are *fey* with the only wildness that pertains to ultimate solution" (33) -- "*fey*" being strongly suggestive of her lover's name. Her letter becomes the anticipatory medium through which the arrival of Fayne is foreshadowed; and through the letter, Fayne's name "phonetically echoes Nellie's description of Hermione as 'fey'" or, in other words, "otherworldly"– hence socially unpredictable and as such unstable, "with the wildness of Mandy's cherries" (Galtung 35).

The sense of unrest and inconvenience that the abovementioned letter causes in Hermione casts doubt on the unchangeability of "test tubes" symbolic of the "Gart-formula" and, by extension, Pennsylvania's closed ideological system. It challenges the homogeneity of subjectivity not only through what appears to be linking Hermione Gart's libidinal re-organization to the 'forbidden' but also through the interplay of self and 'other', which they both carry in them, like Kristeva's "pregnant body," which,

carrying in it the 'other', becomes heterogeneous and unstable in a state of 'fluidity' rather than 'fixity'. As such, Hermione, as well as Fayne, each becomes a gestating maternal body for the other that "reach [es] out to the other, the ethical" ("Stabat Mater" 185). This leads to a 'maternal', or rather, a feminine discourse, through which the self is not spoken about as the radical 'other', but as carrying the 'other' in herself. This new feminine discourse succeeds in diffusing rigid definitions of identity and otherness. It also exiles itself from its cultural 'prison-house' of male-defined identity. With Fayne, it is the very act of communicating through language that proves to be meaningful and satisfying. Their exchange of words renders itself an exploration of language, a duologue of love.

Although discussing with Fayne does not seem to make any satisfying alternatives available, Hermione nonetheless feels as if she were recovering "from an anesthetic" when their conversation comes to an end (*Her* 61). Her liaison with Fayne carries within it part of the 'truth' she is pursuing. Fayne's semiotic 'inroads' in her psyche are like a "break [that] seemed to be prolonged, would be till it touched stars … It's like a violin string…like Fayne exactly" (225). This "break," with its seismic impact on her self-image, makes Hermione cease to regard herself as unchanging, as a fixed entity. Their very act of talking becomes Hermione's 'guide' into her true self as well as into its innovative potential, with "her words" becoming her "gambler's heritage," which could prove either successful or would suffer defeat (61- 62). They both create a new language that represents "a twinkling of an eye into another forest," one that seems to be copied from inside of her mother's painting (62). Hermione suggests that the "gambler's heritage" is what must have been bequeathed to her by Eugenia, or, in other words, the realization that the fusion of the self with the 'other' is likely only through communication with the 'other', through communication with the maternal 'semiotic' that disrupts the 'symbolic'. On the other hand, George is constantly 'smudging' over and obliterating 'Her', which is analogous to Eugenia's style of not seeing what she should be seeing. Instead of severing her from Eugenia, as 'patriarchy's proxy', George offers her a 'translated' script of a maternal relationship through the perpetuation of a role with which she is only too familiar. With him as a spouse, she will be censored or enjoined to remain silent. Characteristic of his censorious paternalism is his oft-repeated "Don't talk such rot Hermione" (137) -- coming alive at the first instance.

This realization helps her to dissociate herself from Eugenia who persists in goading her into the 'concession' to marry George and be like her. She disidentifies from

'patriarchy's proxy' and identifies with Fayne, her most 'semiotic other', or else the 'artistic other' abandoned by her mother. This change in her, therefore, opens up a 'crack' for exploring a new kind of life narrative which may be the key for what Butler calls "the persistence of disidentification" crucial to "facilitat[ing] a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern" (*Bodies* 4). However, even if understanding "which bodies matter" may seem simple, rebelling against the *status quo* is not so simple, since it involves abandoning the fictionality of a sense of self, which is both encouraged and erased by the power discourses. Insofar as the gaze is an extension of power relations, it is a form of social control. In the patriarchal society, where there appears to be a presupposing of the woman as 'naturally' occupying the object position, the gaze relegates the woman to object position. This is true inasmuch as both in literature and in film, woman is depicted as being objectified by the gaze both by male writers and directors and by women, too, who happen to portray themselves, as women, as policed 'bodies', through their internalized masculine gaze. Teresa de Lauretis alleges that "woman is primarily a position rather than a set of objective attributes" (10). This is mainly defined by "how the object position is necessarily described in terms of conventional markers of gender that forge the dominance-submission patterns of our culture" (Bollobás 105). Through them, the feminine and masculine archetypes, according to a contemporary of H.D.'s, Adrienne Rich, seem to be determined by the culture of "compulsory heterosexuality" since the "male carries with it the power of action and of possession" (Kaplan 311), and therefore woman, as possession, in object position, serves the procreative imperative that biologically sustains and perpetuates the male hegemonic agency. What is interesting here, though not unexpected, is that "compulsory heterosexuality" is at work on gender and not on biological sex. In this culture, it is gender that is assumed to act as the marker of heterosexuality. Woman as a heterosexual feminine entity serves her purpose, but when understood to be a 'masculine woman', she cannot be deciphered as a 'real' or 'natural' woman; she will be taken as a homosexual. A woman who is 'seen' to occupy the object position, which is thought to be 'natural' for her, is considered 'normal' because being seen presupposes the foregrounding of looking 'normal', practically of being considered heterosexually correct. She is surveyed and verified by the internalized gaze, both male and female. Being verified as 'correct' corroborates the dominant narrative of gendering that is

reinforced by sexual normalcy, according to which sex and gender are completely in accord.

It becomes obvious that only by being subjected to the norms of womanhood or manhood, or to those of heterosexuality or homosexuality, does one have culturally intelligible gender and sexuality. For the same reason, Hermione, subjected as she is to certain gender-specific and heterosexual norms, she suffers under the ideological 'yoke' of her object-woman's identity, presented as unchanging and undifferentiated -- with the performed social script being unchanging and undifferentiated, too. In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault claims that by subjecting yourself to the 'symbolic', or else to the 'law', you also submit your sexuality to the 'law', and at the same time your gender to it (128). In *Her*, as the story unfolds, Hermione struggles to throw off the ideological 'shackles'. She struggles to re-define herself by re-appropriating "speech, vision, action, and desire" from the 'clutches' of the 'law' (Bollobás 132), re-assigning her non-compliant discursive practice to each. As she is 'undoing' "the binary logic of patriarchy," she undermines "the normative scripts" of gender, which results in new forms of behavior (132).

Such gender arrangements, though, deviate from known gender arrangements to the extent that "they belong to the realm of fantasy" which, Butler describes, as the "constitutive outside" of the real (*Undoing Gender* 29). As fantasy is what helps us to create mental images of ourselves and others in a different way, it establishes the feasible beyond the real by pointing elsewhere, and "when it is embodied, it brings it home" (*Undoing Gender* 29). Such new codifications of gender are suggestive of "new ways of loving, of being gendered, of being a man or a woman, as well as being human" (Bollobás 132), and move in a direction parallel to the political formation and implementation of political goals of culturally marginalized groups "struggling *to be conceived as persons*" (*Undoing Gender* 32). In *Her,* Hermione, as subject, struggles to be conceived as someone beyond the grammatical object that her name, 'Her,' assigns her to. She struggles to be conceived beyond the 'roles' she is construed as having to act out while being subjected to imperatives always already pre-fabricated for her as well as for all ideologically subjected female beings stripped of all freedom. Nevertheless, to bear fruit, her struggle should occur within what Butler calls "the possibility of resignification opened up by discourse" ("Careful" 135). It portrays the female subject outside the matrix of the heterosexual as the antipode to the homosexual. Butler's "resignification," though, certainly requires radicalization of dissident

thinking, without which dissent from society's hegemonic patriarchic 'narrative' is limited to showing how power fashions subjects, with hegemony being a kind of power that individuals live with but can choose to openly confront, most probably without any results whatsoever. Also, because the 'double-mirror' technology of mutuality that ideology subjects the individual to binds her to how others see her, since her self-image is contingent on how others see her, which further gains substance from a common reference point, the subject, whether the latter is a God or an ethical narrative that exerts normative control on her and others, the old question 'what kind of social change remains possible when power becomes truly pervasive' becomes *the* question *Her* endeavors to answer through her experimentation with writing about 'sexualities' that until the very end keep haunting her so much so that she chooses compromise rather than radicalization.

When Hermione realizes that "love is writing" (*Her* 135), then she finds herself on the brink of re-signifying discourse by undoing the George-as-subject-and-herself-as-object binary and by "conceiv[ing] of what is unconceivable outside of language" (Brossard 98). By repeatedly recalling the line from Swinburne, "O sister my sister, O fleet sweet swallow, the world's division divideth us" (*Her* 179), she seems to be invoking recognition beyond the "things [that] were in people, [and the] people [that]were in things" (204). She seems to demand that her separateness be accepted. Despite that, at the same time, she confronts her desire for fusion so that the narrative of her 'dementia' reads like a conscious speech about what appears to have been the result of her being the unknowing victim of violence exerted on her by the ideological practices of a society as old as organized society itself. It is at this point that Hermione becomes aware that the lengthy process of being raised on and schooled in an ethic masked by the rhetoric of empirically proven age-old practice tells of one human being's 'conquest' of another enabled by a 'technology' which basically serves to regulate sexuality by bringing it under normative control. Moreover, by recalling speaking with Fayne, she realizes she said "People like you and me here in the *Etats Unis*" (218), thus accentuating the 'new awareness' of actually having forfeited a 'single' language, an imaginary place of roots, beyond the 'technology' of one's domination of another, preceding "the world's division" (179). It is also at that point that she casts further back to "the thing behind the thing that mattered" (198), imagining herself as a message-bearer, with a message from the past in hand. She is again on the brink; she is ready to radicalize her writing, or so we think as readers. With the message

in hand, she thinks she manages to 'see' for the first time; she believes she can 'gaze' beyond the policing gaze of Eugenia's and George's eyes. She analyzes the relationships that are "already behind" and knows that "it was to disguise himself that George would so disguise [her]" (219). She can also see Fayne's role in her life too: "run, run, run Hermione. For the message-bearer next in line has turned against you… dead or forgotten…You have a double burden...run, run Hermione, run for yourself and Fayne Rabb" (220).

While urging herself to "run" for herself and her lover, Fayne, she also seems to be on course for redefining herself regarding the cultural imperative concerning women's libidinal life. At the same time, she is also ready to rid herself of the 'burden' of the knowledge imposed on her that she is "certifiable insane" (*Her* 6), since she seems to come to terms with a sexuality that has been responsible for her inner conflicts, a sexuality she knows could easily be viewed as 'abnormality'. However, she makes it her responsibility to defend her love for a woman. To this end, she renders her potential future readership her invisible 'psychiatrist', to whom she confesses her responsibility of "running" for herself and for Fayne, which parallels the way she feels as a daughter who sees her mother's artistic creativity thwarted by her self-incarceration in domesticity. But while "running" is expected to signify running away from normative control with her "gambler's heritage… [that, this time] would win for her," (61- 62) such "running" turns itself into carefully taking steps on the barely frozen ice where past and future are conflated. As Hermione narrates, "she is part of next year, part of last year," with her making sure that she does not misstep for fear of breaking the ice (224). Nevertheless, she is satisfied in the knowledge that the river "never freezes properly" and that "there's always water running" (224). She is, indeed, satisfied in the knowledge that "water running" does not involve her 'running', too. In fact, she does not run the risk of making a misstep and 'cracking' the ice as she is very careful while standing on the frozen slab of ice. If she decides to advance, it will signal the 'cracking' of the ice, on the one hand; and yet, on the other, behind her, it is too high for her to return the way she came. It is a moment of ambivalence, but it is also a moment of knowledge then that if the inevitable is not kept at bay "things [could yet again come] unhinged," as she confesses (208). When she tells nurse Dennon, "I wasn't talking, I was only thinking … you see open doors" (224), her monologue breaks the barrier between thought and speech. The very idea of "the open door" serves as a medium through which there emerges "an open passage between the symbolic and the semiotic"

with Hermione looking ready to enter and rid herself of the "Gart-formula" (Galtung 66). "We broke everything having the screen-door mended" (*Her* 211), she soliloquizes, reassuring herself that she is finally free. During the final stage of illness, her speech is punctuated with "digressions and gaps" (Galtung 66). Simultaneously, "the partition between inside and outside, initially symbolized by the Garts' front door now disintegrates as Hermione's free-running monologue breaks the barrier between thought and speech" (Galtung 66), with the heroine telling nurse Dennon: "I wasn't talking, I was only thinking … you see open doors" (*Her* 211). Between the inside and the outside that the open door symbolizes, the open passage in between points toward the interface of the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic', with Hermione realizing that this interface leads to 'rebirth', or, potentially, to the "unlatching of the signifier" since while "Gart regards the word as a finite sign, Hermione's word is poetic" (Galtung 66). Her word is "multidetermined," as Kristeva says ("Word" 36). A further symbolism of the open door extends into the "gap" that the heroine starts "to mend between her two selves, to reestablish the bond between body and mind which the Gart formula has deprived her of" (Galtung 66). And by reestablishing the bond, she will not be afraid of making a 'misstep'. She will 'stray' in every possible way, to achieve self-determination. She seems to be *en route* to a new writing self, where a 'renewed' sexuality, not as that indirectly extolled by the passive 'beauty' myth, will not be shied away from but it will be frankly and unreservedly spoken about. She seems to be *en route* to a new writing self without letting her writing or her speech become absorbed into the dubious status of maid who is allowed to think 'dissident' and who is sponsored by her male peers to even write about it while at the same time being expected to 'mature' before settling down and adopting the role of the 'sovereign' in the household, and who is awarded points for trying hard but who is never credited with an independent existence even though she may think she is. The fact that she thinks she is on course for self-transformation is proleptically cancelled out by her admission that "there's always water running," which not only foreshadows her co-optation into the role of the 'sovereign' of household allowed to think she has managed to think and act independently and autonomously, but which also sounds like an alibi, like a good enough excuse for not making a misstep. As readers, we understand that she prefers to keep her dissent 'frozen', with her initial 'radicalness' becoming a mere memory of an always elsewhere 'maternal current' that would always be running.

At the conclusion of her narration, Hermione comes across as making the misstep. She comes across as acting 'dissident'. It is not that she tries to pretend she has. She sincerely thinks she has. She tries to make it clear that writing about her newly discovered sexuality has been the springboard to moving forward beyond heteronormative protocols. She thus transforms her earlier sexual experience with George into a 'radical' beginning that she can talk about, with her lesbian union revolutionizing her thinking since the experience with Fayne becomes knowledge and speech through which she tries to transform herself. In an Althusserian vein, "experience is opaque and can become knowledge only when worked on, transformed by and sited within a conceptual system" (Laplsley &Westlake 4). In the same way that Hermione's newly found speech transforms her earlier 'experience' of speechlessness, H.D., too, creates her history by writing it and by trying to re-signify her speech in order to make sense of her own experience. This experience will radicalize her struggle against a gender ideology which has placed her in a matrix of sexuality finally sublimated into philosophical dilemmas best described as "tortuous pathways of a sexual ambivalence that leads to psychic breakdown" (Benstock 335). However, at the close of *Her*, H.D.'s heroine's dilemmas assume the form of a fantasy, a dream of partaking of a 'race', of becoming a runner with her hieroglyphic script in hand. The script as such is susceptible of a multitude of interpretations, since she moves toward 'rebirth', toward an identity model beyond that which her heroine is expected to conquer through her struggle with the 'Gart-sign', traversing the "tortuous pathways" of her experimentation on women-oriented love (Benstock 335) and striving toward a career as a writer (*Penelope's Web* 117). Her prophetic dream to be "re-born" is later celebrated in H.D.'s "The Walls do not Fall" from her *Trilogy* -- as stated earlier in this chapter. By hoping to be united with the god Ram and emerge "re-born" like Hermes, she becomes the messenger of 'truth', accepting the male god Ram's offer and assuming the subordinate position of a child by clinging to him and referring to him as "father":

> Now my right hand,
>
> now my left hand
>
> clutch your fleece;
>
> *take me home*,
>
> …………………………

> *take me home, Father:*
>
> ………………………………
>
> let your teeth *devour* me,
>
> *let me be warm in your belly*,
>
> ………………………………
>
> the re-born Sun. (31)

Her 'rebirth' is but feasible through the appropriation of the legacy of a male god's attributes. H.D. allows herself to be co-opted into the 'symbolic' universe of a traditional narrative, part of which is her fictional 'Gart-sign', too, with her dissent being compromised since she manages to experience internalization within the god, departing, thus, from her wish to "escape Gart …phobia, *rehabilitation,*"[10] actually announcing fifteen years later her wish to be "re-born" as a distressingly familiar daughter or sister figure. As such, her status is strange enough to generate questions as to whether it is born of a certain unwillingness to disqualify female sexuality trapped within a 'surveilled' domesticity or the result of her sincere admission that her desire to turn herself into a messenger traversing between the 'law' and its transgression runs the risk of not only always being appropriated by the 'law' but also of letting herself be annihilated by it, which is so self-revealing in her supplication: "let your teeth devour me." However, is this not a symptom of a resisting subject who holds out against patriarchy but in the end is 'devoured' by her allegorical *polis* and is 'spat out' re-shaped in all her 'newness' but also 'secured' by dint of the fact that her formerly 'heretical' discourse may be 'playing' by the right avant-garde rules while, at the same time, being in complete sympathy with moderate forms of dissidence safe enough to be tolerated by the system? It certainly is, as this dissertation claims, inasmuch as H.D.'s fictional 'double' lives and acts in a way that is actually circumscribed by her allegorical *polis*' strategies that facilitate the maintenance of rule by means of 'flattening' any 'protrusions' of radicalness at the 'divide and rule' political 'grindstone' by way of including what is safe and excluding what cannot be made safe.

3.9 Critical Analysis

Regardless of how Hermione's initial resistance unfolds throughout the narrative as an everyday practice shaped and motivated by Her Gart's attempt to find her own 'cultural positioning' within the framework of patriarchic discourse, it also finds expression through her 'strategy' for survival within the 'symbolic' through a "certifiable insanity," which she disavows when 'corrected', to claim her right to marry

herself. What she does is actually internalize hegemony in order to escape becoming "unhinged." Thus, 'survival' becomes her 'alibi' that neutralizes her initial 'radicalness', the underlying cause of her inner conflict, and levels down her 'platform' of resistance to gender ideology with its normative control over women's sexuality and socially 'designed' paths for career expression. With this in mind, *Her* seems to actually conclude on a possibility, or rather probability, of having what it brings to the fore as dissident '*prattein*' co-opted into the 'sublime' apparition of a 'maybe'. She is portrayed as deciding to marry herself at the end of the novel, making use of the *trousseau* money her grandmother has left for her marriage, saying "this will be my marriage" (234). Through this auto-erotic role, she 'constructs' an alibi for escaping from a narrative of indeterminate gendering, within which she may be negotiating homosexuality within the confines of the 'Gart-sign' while overtly 'flirting' with heterosexuality. That she is ambivalent is also implied by her saying that she is "part of next year, part of last year" (224), the result becoming even more vague, with the heroine's resistance being commuted into 'vagueness'-- into a mere 'possibility'.

All in all, although H.D. attempts to express dissent and engraft it into a narrative of resistance to gender ideology through the 'tools' of her writing and sexuality, her 'undisciplined' femininity, disruptive language and differing models of sexuality are finally neutralized and co-opted into the narrative of hegemony mainly because hegemony is internalized by her, which reflects real life, too. Although she struggles, she cannot reconcile the two ends of the spectrum and "pursues," as Duplessis says, "a 'bisexual' love plot in place of the normative sexual pattern" (*Writing* 71). This seems to be reinforced by evidence in the end when the open-ended narrative leaves ample room for the love between the two women lovers to be continued, as the narrator admits: "Practical and at one with herself, with the world, with all outer circumstance, she barged straight into Mandy in the outer hallway. 'Oh, Miss. I have thought you was back long since. I done left Miss Fayne all alone upstairs in your little workroom'" (234); but, at the same time, it does not preclude heterosexual love either.

If we see *Her* as a prelude to *Asphodel*, the sequel to the novel-as-life-story of H.D.'s autobiographical character, *Her*'s last sentence is equal to a conundrum likely to be 'unlocked' in *Asphodel*, the sequel to *Her*. However, *Her* itself as an integral text leaves a lot of questions unanswered. So, albeit expected to dissipate the nebulous innuendos with regard to the closing scene of *Her*, *Asphodel's* beginning portrays the two lovers arriving in France, which somehow points in the direction of the

continuation of their relationship but which, moreover, suggests that the continuation of their relationship seems to 'proudly' claim its right to being rooted in their 'marginalized' resistant subjectivities which serve as a reminder of the exclusionary practices of patriarchy. More precisely, Hermione's "impossible unity," formerly referred to as her "plague" in *Her* (67), becomes an 'in-between' existence between heterosexuality and lesbianism, which is what she seems to insinuate in *Asphodel*: "We are here. We are *there*. We will go mad being here and there unless we give up simply, stay here and are lost, stay there and are dead. To be here and there at the same time; that is the triumph" (46). Her 'hybrid' existence is later confirmed through the intertextual continuum of her life's work -- in her *Trilogy*, as stated above, where she decides not to trust her "gambler's instinct," not to follow her "gambler's heritage" but to convulsively implore a masculine God, Ram, to "devour" her, which is a manifest symbolism of a 'gross' co-optation discourse articulated by Hermione also known as H.D. also known as Hermione whose significant resistance narrative is finally subsumed into the cultural 'pole' that she has been so eagerly fighting.

Notes

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[1] How *polis* metaphor is used is explained at the beginning of Introduction.

[2] See Introduction where the dissident's *polis* fantasy is equated with 'looping' forms of *jouissance* which, both in *Her* and in *The Bell Jar*, are expressed as transgression for both heroines, which is later displaced into a kind of auto-erotic role for Hermione and into motherhood for Esther. As for Hemione, as this work shows, her auto-erotic role, which she feels she can play by marrying herself, is Hermione's co-opted initial dissidence – her tempered dissidence, later expressed as indeterminate sexuality since she does not explicitly support lesbianism and to the extent that much later she turns to Ram, a symbol of masculinity, to draw power from (19).

[3] As repeated emphatically throughout this dissertation, interpellation or "hailing" can be imagined along the lines of the most platitudinous common police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!" (Althusser 174)

[4] As has been stated earlier in this dissertation, when Aldington finds out about Hilda's intention to apply herself to prose texts, he seems all too eager to manipulate her by guiding her through her career: "Prose? No! You have so precise, so wonderful an instrument – why abandon it to fashion another, perhaps less perfect?" (*Psyche Reborn* 33). To his manipulative remark, H.D. observes: "No one really much likes my prose, people don't think[it] worthy of H.D." (*Penelope's Web* 28), suggestive of the extent to which she has internalized her male contemporaries' view of her work.

[5] That the male ethic of mental health departmentalizes the characteristics of mentally healthy men vs. mentally healthy women according to the 'diminutive' classification of "less" with regard to 'sane' women's characteristic behavior echoes the professional bias of the male-dominated profession of psychiatry. According to Susan Rachel Seem, in a study designed to "replicate the work of the Brovermans and their colleagues to answer the specific question" with regard to gender stereotypes and biases ["Haven't these biases been eliminated or at least reduced?"] and also "to determine how current counselors-in-training perceive healthy adult women, healthy adult men, and healthy adults," she concludes that "as in the prior research, initial ratings of the social desirability of traditional gender role stereotypes… and the findings showed many

similarities to past research." Seem proceeds to explain that the investigation was "based on the original work of Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, I. Broverman, and D. M. Broverman (1968)," in which healthy adult women were found to be significantly different from healthy adult men as well as from healthy adults "by being more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more easily hurt, more emotional, more conceited about appearance, less objective, and less interested in math and science" (Boverman et al., 1-7).

[6] See Endnote 8 in Introduction.

[7] See the relevant quotation (*Her* 24) in Introduction (8)

[8] See beginning of 3.3 (141).

[9] As already analyzed and discussed in this dissertation, the *panopticon* institutional building is referred to as a system of control designed by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century.

[10] See the relevant quotation (*Her* 24) in Introduction (8).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined two of the most emblematic texts in Anglophone women's literature, *The Bell Jar* and *Her*. Having done so, it has drawn the conclusion that they become the 'motherland' that hosts Antigone's 'alternative femininity' distilled into timeless dissident '*prattein*' in one of the most important eponymous texts in classical literature, Sophocles' *Antigone.* The dissertation has also revealed that the vexed relation of gender ideology to the question of 'alternative' femininity is analogous to that of hegemony to resistant subjectivity; as the latter seems to be unfolding in the two *romans à clef*, the *Antigone* tragedy serves as a framework through which to accent the argument that as far apart as twenty-five centuries later the two heroines, Esther and Hermione, become the 'Antigone' of their time. More importantly, though, the *Antigone* also helps to reinforce and also 'seal' the conclusion that despite attempting to 'de-institute' the assumption that sexual and marital relations are most fitting only between people of the opposite sex, the heroines of *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, regardless of their revolutionary verve, do not seem to achieve any other sexuality that does not leave room for the heteronormative view that involves the alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles.

The overarching conclusion that this dissertation reaches is that to adequately explore the above analogy about how the latter occurs in *The Bell Jar* and *Her*, it adopts a post-structural Marxist feminist interpretative approach which helps to bring to the fore the paramount importance of social and cultural inscriptions on the body and subjectivity. To the extent that such an approach makes the gender ideology/ 'alternative' femininity and hegemony/resistant subjectivity binaries, in particular, visible, analyzable and revisable, and, in turn mapped on to other binaries such as the male/female and straight/lesbian binaries, our analysis of *The Bell Jar* and *Her* is more oriented toward the production mechanisms of power relations which are maintained by passing over naturalness, normalcy, reasonableness, and even soundness to the term that is dominant in any of the binaries. At the same time, it is also oriented toward how the term that is of less importance in the binaries is regarded as unnatural, as 'other', as irrational, and even as lacking. In this light, our analysis of the novels in question becomes significantly more focused on the ways the social inscribes itself on individuals, in our case, on Esther and Hermione as the fictionalized doubles of Plath and H.D., or, put otherwise, how it interpellates them, and so, by casting doubt upon

this process of interpellation, our theoretical 'tools' help us to show how it is that power does not merely shape Esther and Hermione, or us, as certain kinds of beings, but works in such a way as to render those ways of being desirable such that they adopt them as their own. Through this interaction, between power and the making of subjects as such, our analytic 'tools' also expose the missed opportunity that all three of them share: to project an alternative 'script' for a heroine who will 'seal' the end of their intertextual narrative of resistance, or, in other words, a 'script' in which the heroine, then and now, is not merely confronted with her phantasm of 'half-channeled' dissent but is involved in the next staged agon in which she transforms her ontological ambiguity into a site of affirmative locution for political confrontation beyond the co-opted 'apparition' of 'maybes'.

Although this dissertation's goal is not to investigate the possibility of such a 'script', since it enlightens the way in which the intertextual heroine, then and now, fails to project an alternative course of action to the co-optation practices of state ideology, it points in the direction of such an open-ended 'sequel'. Also, although this dissertation is invested in exploring the ideological motivations behind Plath's and H.D.'s autobiographical heroines' desire to disavow any identification with the idealized American female 'mold', it also brings to the fore the paradox of submission to hegemony being what 'normally' results from dissident '*prattein*'. Practically, the heroines' efforts as subjects to self-create the conditions necessary for their own existence unfold within a framework which demands that their acquiescence to a predetermined role be preceded by their challenge to their culture's ideology, which ultimately fails and thus paves the way for their self-appropriation into gender ideology.

The very process of interpellation in ideology, the supplanting of individual convictions with those born in ideology to constitute a subject loyal to other subjects' wants before her own, according to Althusser, exerts such a catalytic influence on the individual that even if Esther and Hermione construe their dissent as a result of individualism and personal stance, their dissent should be better understood as an abstraction with respect to the subject which they always are. To the extent that "the representation of the relationships of individuals to their real existence is already ideological, already an imaginary structure of the relations between subjects, then individuals in ideology are always already subjects" (Althusser 119). They are always interpellated into the so called 'real conditions' of existence (119). This proposition might seem paradoxical, but when one considers the heroines' desire to master their

real relation to men, which is itself an unusual blueprint for self-control through self-erasure, one can see how their desire dodges any chance for laying claim to individuality and achieving self-control by virtue of the fact that their desire to (perhaps in some way) circumvent the loss of their creative individuality by uniting with a male practically points in the direction of recognition of their ideology and is based on their contribution to and involvement in the material reproduction of patriarchy. Moreover, when one also considers their desire to master their relation to women, Joan or Fayne, their desire may initially seem to be rooted in an act of individualism but their challenge to the normative system that forecloses them finally results in their inclusion in this system since, as subjects committed to the subversion of gender roles, they are ultimately activated by an individualistic quest for cultural and physical survival, for a livable life, for societal recognition, and for full belonging to the human community, which, however, is patriarchal *per se.* As a matter of fact, this seems to be the case with the three 'tragic sisters' who, while fighting gender ideology, seem, at the same time, to self-deludingly internalize hegemony, too. Therefore, both Plath's and HD's desire and method to rebel in 'self-coveted' individuality is a product of their interpellation as subjects in patriarchal ideology.

To this end, the first chapter depicts Antigone's resisting voice as attempting to articulate an 'alternative' version of femininity that is finally silenced in a sepulcher. Although she somehow "de-institutes heterosexuality," as suggested by Butler, since she does not stay alive for Haemon, she "does not achieve another sexuality," either (76). This is her ultimate 'limit' of dissent, the last frontier of her dissident '*prattein*'. It is neutralized and appropriated into the narrative of hegemony as she is interpellated into a social identity of one whose resistance is 'buried' within a 'narrative' inside which she is charged with violating the law. She assumes the role of subject who, albeit subjected to Creon's accusatory *logos*, attempts to reason in a way compatible with the *polis' logos* and, as a result, is co-opted into the stance and idiom of the one she opposes, Creon, the hegemon, who seems to be the *polis' logos* incarnate. The hegemon condemns her to death, which seals her fate since she will be led to commit suicide before her death sentence is executed. She dies for not having a life to live. As Butler claims, "Antigone figures the limits of intelligibility exposed at the limits of kinship" (*Antigone's Claim* 23). She seems, until the very end, to be navigating a 'sea' of ambiguity concerning her incestuous attraction towards the dead brother, with her secret never being brought to the foreground and with the *status quo* remaining as it

was even after she decides to commit suicide. Her dissidence is turned into an expression of 'celebrating' self-inflicted death as its ultimate expression. Her incestuous desire for Polyneices is transformed into a vehicle which, precisely because of its taboo nature, implicitly works toward exposing the problematic aspects of an oppressive regime within which resistance is 'entombed' within the hegemonic discourse inside which it is seen to unfold, allowing for no re-articulation of the terms of the system that would make the life of all 'Antigones' livable or at least tolerable.

Equally, the second chapter depicts Esther as being unable to achieve any other sexuality than that prescribed by the social norms; and if 'any other sexuality' is taken to mean lesbianism, then lesbianism is *a priori* rejected. Albeit "fascinated" by Joan who is sexually attracted to her, Esther refuses to come face to face with this ideological 'demon'. As lesbianism is circumscribed by patriarchy's effort to expel it from those forms of sexuality that are not subject to the strict 'economy' of reproduction, a girl's initiation into heterosexuality is a *sine qua non* and is felt as such by the young woman. Esther is reading Joan's sexual preferences as catachrestic, thus rendering the socially constructed category of heterosexuality, even outside the boundaries of marriage, the farthermost 'frontier' of her transgressive sexuality. Although, unlike her contemporaries, Plath does not fantasize about marriage, the 'femininity protocol' that her *milieu* abides by exerts a most 'convincing' influence on her. As a result, she catches herself sometimes covetously watching other women perform femininity, a femininity prescribed by women's magazines or films, the 'town crier' of the time, and equaled by what the chorus in the *Antigone* represents, the *hoi polloi* of the time, and currently by the internet. As magazines and the internet are ideological state apparatuses that contain and condition individuals to embrace a 'narrative' in which they will participate as supporting characters, Esther, too, like women of her time, is ideologically conditioned to be a supporting character, a 'good girl' that seems to resign herself to being in 'domestic containment'. For the system to ensure that she remain a 'good girl', she is hospitalized and treated with ECT in order to be 'shaken off' any 'unfitting' ideas; she is thus returned to society as a 'normal' woman. At the end of *The Bell Jar*, Esther is "born twice -- patched, retreaded and approved for the road" to a motherhood which she despises but which, at the same time, lets her 'celebrate' her "re-birth" (233), as stated in the second chapter. She is a mother and not the "mean-faced" woman of the "fig-tree" dream (52-53); she has been subsumed into the same narrative which has been trying to define her as marginal, 'othered', mad – which, she calls "re-birth." The

ending is ambiguous; she may have recovered, but, as readers, we should ask ourselves at what cost she traded in her 'insanity' for 'normalcy'. It appears that Esther has finally been 'feminized', with the prophetic undertones of the "fig-tree" parable finding expression in real life since she becomes the "nun" with the "little bird," a mother who would "cut the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with," having had herself subsumed into full-time motherhood (3).

Finally, in the third chapter, Hermione, despite her anti-gender stance and her overtly declared homosexuality, is also depicted as being unable to transgress the lines of sexuality that vests culture with intelligibility, which could give rise to a reason-based rhetorical question: Why is her act thought to deal a fatal blow to 'heteronormativity' since she convincingly lets her partial rejection of the heterosexual narrative and her acceptance of lesbianism through her liaison with Fayne co-opt themselves into a sublimated modification of her initial resistance through her auto-erotic sexuality? As a matter of fact, through this 'alternative' sexuality, her initial resistance is 'skirted' indirectly, bringing to the fore a 'politics' of 'either/or-ism' with a disciplining and divisive effect on the writer, reader, and the women's movement in general, which is what hegemony does, namely assimilating the resistor's discourse into a sublimated modification of her initial resistance. Because despite Hermione's initial resistance that finds expression through the 'strategy' of "certifiable insanity," which she ultimately disavows when achieving "*rehabilitation*", she announces her right to 'marry herself', using her grandmother's money: "this will be my marriage," as she enthuses over her decision (234). What she does is choose to escape becoming "unhinged." Thus, 'survival' within hegemony, within the 'symbolic', becomes her 'alibi' that renders her initial 'radicalness' ineffective. With this in mind, *Her* seems to end with Hermione's 'embrace' of a role by means of which she is portrayed as fighting the two ends of the spectrum: heterosexual love versus her quest for subjectivity through lesbianism. But it is obviously easier and less self-tormenting to opt for a 'safe' way out, namely pursuing a 'bisexual' love plot in place of a women-oriented sexual pattern; and although lesbianism appears to be her chosen sexuality -- "Oh, Miss. I have thought you was back long since. I done left Miss Fayne all alone upstairs in your little workroom" (234), her 'hybridized' existence later lends itself to a more co-opted stance toward a pure patriarchic symbol of 'power', confirmed through the intertextual continuum of her life's work -- in her *Trilogy* as stated above, where she pleads with Ram to 'eat and digest' her, suggestive of H.D.'s co-optation discourse initially

expressed as a significant resistance narrative that is finally subsumed into a process of conversion, a process of 'hijacking' something that is not her own, understood as radical feminist ideas turned into 'hybrid' ends.

Ultimately, the contribution of the conclusion to the notion that *The Bell Jar* and *Her* become the 'motherland' that hosts Antigone's 'alternative femininity' distilled into timeless dissident '*prattein*' is that it points a way towards bringing to light the 'thread' that runs through the intertextuality of their common discourse within a *polis* metaphor that 'confiscates' their resistance and turns it into a rationality of reintegration into an acceptable role while at the same time allowing them to 'toy' with the self-reassuring and self-comforting idea that what they have chosen in their submission to symbolic authority is self-determination. As such, the three works then could be said to form, not a 'trilogy', but a 'tetralogy' of 'loss': the sense of absence left by unfulfilled dissent coupled with the element of suspended uncertainty, ubiquitous as a common attribute in the three works as an intertextual 'tragedy', becomes an opportunity for a new script to project a transitional heroine who acquires the political skills necessary to create the conditions of action and subjectification for the yet-to-be written script in which there is no patriarchal substitute left to occupy the policing-site of sovereignty, neither in the family nor in their *polis* metaphor. More crucially, this script is one in which the *polis* metaphor re-locates its solidarity to an 'illegitimate' heroine. It re-situates it to an anti-heroine, or, more precisely, to the defiant act of an 'anomalous' woman, who, by abandoning her 'comfort zone' of 'resisting' and 'protesting' while being co-opted into hegemony, makes leading the end-all and be-all of her existence. After all, as the feminist philosopher, Elizabeth Grosz, says "If feminists believe that their goal is to abandon power, then they have already lost the game from which they cannot withdraw" (19).

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Περίληψη

Η παρούσα Διδακτορική Διατριβή εξετάζει το μυθιστόρημα της Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* και εκείνο της Hilda Doolittle, *Her*, αντιπαραβάλλοντάς τα με την τραγωδία του Σοφοκλέους, *Αντιγόνη*. Όπως η ομώνυμη ηρωίδα του έργου, η οποία καταδικάζεται να πεθάνει θαπτόμενη, ενώ είναι ουσιαστικά εν ζωή, εκτός των τειχών της αρχαίας πόλης της Θήβας, λόγω της παράβασης της επισύρουσας ποινή θανάτου διαταγής του Κρέοντα, σύμφωνα με την οποία το νεκρό σώμα του Πολυνείκη πρέπει να μείνει άταφο, ως τιμωρία για την προδοσία του εναντίον της πατρίδας του, ομοίως και οι ηρωίδες, Esther και Hermione, «τιμωρούνται» εξ αιτίας της απόφασής τους να αψηφήσουν τον πατριαρχικό ηγεμονισμό στις αλληγορικές τους πόλεις.

Η «τιμωρία» τους, αφ' ενός, λαμβάνει την μορφή εγκληματικοποίησης της πράξης της, στην περίπτωση της Αντιγόνης, και, αφ' ετέρου, την μορφή της ιατρικοποίησης των πράξεων τους, στις περιπτώσεις της Esther και της Hermione. Όσον αφορά στην αντίσταση που προβάλλει η Esther Greenwood, αυτή ερμηνεύεται ως σωματικό σύμπτωμα, ως «τρέλα», ακριβώς επειδή η Esther, ως υποκείμενο, έχει εσωτερικεύσει τους ηγεμονικούς μηχανισμούς του πατριαρχικού συστήματος, ενώ ταυτοχρόνως μάχεται εναντίον τους. Επίσης, η στάση της Hermione εναντίον του κοινωνικού φύλου, ως κοινωνικής κατασκευής της ανδροκρατούμενης πατριαρχικής κοινωνίας η οποία υποσημασιοδοτεί τον ρόλο της γυναίκας, δομώντας αυτόν ως υποδεέστερο εντός αυτής της κοινωνίας, ερμηνεύεται ως σωματικό σύμπτωμα, «παράνοια», όπως το ονομάζει η ίδια η ηρωίδα στο μυθιστόρημα, ακριβώς επειδή και η Hermione, ως υποκείμενο, έχει εσωτερικεύσει τους ίδιους ηγεμονικούς μηχανισμούς του πατριαρχικού συστήματος, τους οποίους έχει εσωτερικεύσει και η Esther, ενώ ταυτοχρόνως, και αυτή, αντιτάσσεται εναντίον τους σθεναρά έως το τέλος του μυθιστορήματος.

Οι απόπειρές τους να εκφράσουν τη διαφωνία τους και να την εγχαράξουν στο «αφήγημα» αντίστασής τους στην ιδεολογία φύλου μέσω της συγγραφής, όπως επίσης και της σεξουαλικότητάς τους, μας παρέχει τα «εργαλεία» ώστε να ερευνήσουμε την αντιστασιακή δράση των γυναικείων αυτών υποκειμενικοτήτων στα δύο μυθιστορήματα σε συνάρτηση με τον τρόπο με τον οποίο η πραξιακή διάσταση της αντιφρονούσας σκέψης τους, δηλαδή το «πράττειν» ως αντιφρονούσες, εν τέλει

εξουδετερώνεται και ενσωματώνεται στο «αφήγημα» του πατριαρχικού ηγεμονισμού, λόγω των μηχανισμών του πατριαρχικού συστήματος που ωθούν το υποκείμενο αναντίρρητα να εσωτερικεύει, κάτι το οποίο, πέρα από το πώς αποτυπώνεται στα δύο αυτά λογοτεχνικά έργα, αντανακλά και την πραγματικότητα.

Οι δύο συγγραφείς ουσιαστικά εναγκαλίζονται τη διαφορετικότητα παλεύοντας να αποδομήσουν το διαλεκτικό συμπαγές στη δυαδικότητα του κοινωνικά υποδεέστερου «παρία»/ έμφυλης κατηγοριοποίησης του θηλυκού, διαμέσου της προσπάθειάς τους να μιλήσουν ως παρίες με αυτεπίγνωση και να δραπετεύσουν από την προκαθορισμένη έμφυλη ταυτότητά τους. Όμως, όπως μας διδάσκει η *Αντιγόνη*, κάθε απόπειρα να υπονομευθεί το ηγεμονικό «αφήγημα» φαίνεται αναποτελεσματική, αφού οποιαδήποτε πράξη αντίστασης υποβάλλει τους αντιστασιακούς σε «ετεροποίηση», με την αντίσταση της Esther και της Hermione να ιατρικοποιούνται ούτως ώστε να ενσωματωθούν στο ηγεμονικό «αφήγημα» της αλληγορικής τους πόλης και να καταστούν ακίνδυνες. Προς αυτήν την κατεύθυνση, η αλληγορική τους πόλη καθίσταται ο εννοιολογικός χώρος που παρέχεται στις δύο ηρωίδες, οι οποίες, όπως και πολλές άλλες καθημερινές ηρωίδες, στο παρόν και στο παρελθόν, δεν δύνανται να τον εργαλειοποιήσουν για να μεταβάλουν τον πατριαρχικό ηγεμονικό πολιτισμό παρά μόνο με την υιοθέτηση μιας πιο μαζικοποιημένης σθεναρής αντίστασης.