Durham E-Theses

Re-visioning the ethics of care: femininity, cosmopolitanism and contemporary women's writings

MISRA, JAHNAVI

How to cite:

Use policy

Abstract

Carol Gilligan proposed the concept of an 'ethics of care' in her book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, published in 1982. Her argument was written in agonistic response to a revival of neo-Kantian ethical theorising in the seventies philosophical arguments that granted women a distinctly subordinate place to men as fully fledged ethical beings. In opposition to these theories-- particularly those of Lawrence Kohlberg-- which considered women to be too involved in personal relationships to be able to achieve the requisite levels of detachment to morally gauge ethically demanding situations, Gilligan argued for an ethical code that privileges relationships of involvement and care over abstract principles of a categorical imperative type. She argued that women who felt the need to prioritise such relationships are not deficient in their ethical sensibility but function according to a different but most certainly fully viable value system.

Gilligan's thesis came under fire from later feminists and ethical theorists as the concept of difference took a new turn in feminist theory-- especially post-structuralist-inflected theory of the later eighties and nineties. It is my contention in this thesis that her ideas are still crucially important. And as ethical theory comes to recognise the important role of affect in moral and ethical judgement, her ideas can be revisited in relation to contemporary preoccupation with these issues about knowing and judging. Although revolutionary in its proposition that different people may have different ways of responding to ethically significant situations, Gilligan's theory of care does not question the traditionally imposed binary between man and women as being rational and emotional respectively. My argument, substantiated by my analysis of current fiction by women (and two men), centres around the proposition, that although these responses

do not necessarily and directly correspond with either sex, the responses themselves have a lot of merit.

It is revealed in my examination of contemporary novels from different parts of the world that rational/emotional responses relate, instead, to the particular situation of individuals-- advantaged/disadvantaged-- in different social and political structures. I have termed these responses masculine and feminine in my thesis, but have attempted to define masculinity and femininity as related to these socio-political situations, instead of being biologically determined. The definition of femininity in my thesis encompasses particular kinds of responses to various ideas such as cosmopolitan interactions between cultures and even beauty and shame. The novels that I look at in my thesis are: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*. My argument is that by coming to a more or less general understanding of what I am regarding as the variously inflected feminine/disadvantaged position, it is possible to arrive at a coherent ethical value system that is directed to the margins of various social and political structures.

Re-visioning the ethics of care: femininity, cosmopolitanism and contemporary women's writings

Jahnavi Misra

PhD in English Studies

University of Durham

2012

Table of Contents:

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The novel, for the interrogation of ideas

Fiction, unlike philosophical discourse or literary theory, presents an area where abstract concepts attain a depth which only imagination and *feeling*-- a combination of thought and emotion, as Michael Bell argues-- can provide; the novelistic genre affords a kind of three dimensional quality to ideas and concepts.[1] In offering a picture through words of life as it is, or might be lived, novels can be seen as thought experiments, viewing a world through a particular set of ideas or theoretical concepts. In addition, the artificiality of fictional scenarios provides the reader with enough distance to be able to examine ideas within novels from a perspective external to that world. Novels therefore offer an experience of immersion in and distance from a fictional world, which might produce an ironic effect or the strengthening of a particular perspective as it is examined in relation to others.

This three-dimensional effect of the novelistic genre entails that every idea that is presented is to some extent, challenged and problematised by a contrary and competing or obliquely related view point. As a result, even an idea that a narrative appears to endorse at one moment may be challenged by another perspective within that narrative. Also, because fiction is of course a contrived artifice where the reader remains ultimately outside, it is opened up to challenges posed from outside of the narrative, by each individual reader. The process of reading fiction, therefore, is an intense and constantly challenging one, which in distancing the reader

---

[1] 'Each side speaks, with abstract consistency, from its ideological bunker. But fiction could dramatize the same questions more holistically by exploring the liminal area between these categories.' Michael Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling* (New York: Palgrave, 2000) 57.

from her moorings, encourages her to examine her own assumptions. Fiction engenders a need, not only for the examination of preconceived notions and beliefs, but also for self-introspection; as Bell argues-- '(...) the act of reading fiction is an exercise of "real life" emotional discrimination in that the discrimination is real (...)',[2] it is after all a combination of imagination and feeling that makes for an 'examined life'. It is for these reasons that I consider novels to be the best place to test the validity of an argument, because they bring into the picture an element of spontaneous feeling and response, as opposed to over-rationalised preconceptions.

However, although novels, by their very form, invite rigorous examinations of ideas from various perspectives within and without, and can therefore be considered convenient platforms for philosophical deliberations, to look at literature as merely a vehicle for furthering philosophical discussion would also be a fallacy. It would be more accurate to view it as opening up questions and deepening knowledge and understanding in its own right; in other words to appreciate '(...) literature as a substantive mode of understanding, rather than as merely reflecting philosophical conception (...)'.[3] Therefore, instead of simply mapping theoretical concepts on to the literary texts, I have found it more fruitful in this project to let the reading of the examined texts themselves lead me to certain questions, which I have then tried to understand through more straightforwardly presented philosophical speculations.

The texts that I analyse in my thesis are: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2006; Toni Morrison's *Paradise* 1997; Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, 2005; Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, 1983; Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, 1983; Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, 2005; Kamila

---

[2] Bell 206

[3] Bell 4

Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, 2009; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun,* 2006; and Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*, 1988, and *Ben, in the World*, 2000. I have chosen these texts because they deal with issues that help to advance and substantiate my arguments within the thesis. The publication dates for the novels range from 1983—a year after Gilligan proposed the ethics of care—to 2009; this helps me to bring into my examination and the gamut of this thesis, attitudes from the time when these ideas were just emergent to very recent responses to these issues. As the thesis progressed I wanted to examine briefly the relevance of my argument and themes regardless of the sex of the author, and this is my reason for including an exploration of Rushdie and Ishiguro's texts in the middle of the thesis which mainly studies contemporary women writers. This is also my reason for choosing writers from different backgrounds—to show how my argument spans, more or less, cultural, economic and racial boundaries.

I have grouped two complementary texts together in each chapter. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* make the first chapter. Both these texts take my argument in opposite directions—*The Inheritance of Loss*, spanning various temporal and spatial zones, is more global in scope, whereas *Paradise* is situated within a very local and insular community—which helps to examine how my argument benefits and loses out by being looked at from these two different vantage points.

In the second chapter, I bring together Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*. These texts revolve around two different kinds of families, one from the urban United States and the other from rural Turkey. Quite like the previous chapter, this chapter also helps to examine my argument from two very different perspectives. *On Beauty* is representative, so to speak, of Western ways of organising social relationships, while *Dear Shameless Death*

involves a very different but similarly patriarchal society in an Eastern part of the world. The next chapter, dealing with Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, likewise, provides an opportunity to test my theoretical framework in two different social and political setups.

The fourth chapter analyses Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. These narratives are set in environments of war and other kinds of political conflicts. They help to examine all that is revealed regarding my hypothesis in situations of stress and crisis. Doris Lessing's *Ben, in the World* and *The Fifth Child* form the fifth chapter and help both to sum up my argument and to throw up some new and important questions that relate to the premise of my thesis.

Cosmopolitanism and the ethics of care

There are two issues that I found most contemporary women writers to be addressing, either directly or indirectly. The first revolves around questions concerning cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, issues that are unavoidable for contemporary male or female modern-day writers in English. Debates around these concepts are notoriously fraught and agnostic: a theorist like Kwame Appiah, for example views cosmopolitanism as progressive, whilst Graham Huggan warns against insidious forces such as capitalism or neo-corporatism that might be the drivers of a particular globalised mindset.[4] And although novelists like Ishiguro and Rushdie both believe

---

[4] Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* and Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* are important texts as regards debates on the issue of cosmopolitanism. Both these text also offer more or less contradictory view points on that issue. I will be engaging with this debate more fully as the thesis progresses.

that contemporary writers cannot escape from some form or other of 'internationalism', both express in diverse ways the conflict and contradictions inherent in that position.[5]

Social theorists like David Harvey have shown how the issue of cosmopolitanism goes back to Kant. Harvey argues that one way of interpreting Kant's otherwise conservative formulations-- regarding geography and anthropology specifically-- is to discern within them rudiments of a more open minded notion of cosmopolitanism. However, he also argues that Kant's cosmopolitanism gives impetus to everything that is problematic with US foreign policy.[6] According to Harvey,

> One suspects that it is precisely the attraction of Kant's cosmopolitanism that it can somehow sustain a veneer of attachment to some theory of universal goodness while allowing, even justifying, innumerable concessions to prejudicial exclusions (...). This is, as many have recognised, a fundamental and unresolved difficulty in Kant's whole approach to knowledge.[7]

Harvey here warns against the idea of a universal/cosmopolitan ethical interaction, which in reality leaves all authority in the hands of the most influential within power structures, who then determine inclusions and exclusions.

---

[5] 'It may be that writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.' Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1992) 10.

[6] '(…) Kant has widespread ramifications for politics. Popular geographical and anthropological knowledges in the public domain (in the United States in particular) are (…) of a similar prejudicial quality to that which Kant portrayed. Stereotypes about geographical others abound, and prejudicial commentary can be heard daily in casual conversations even in elite circles (...).' David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 34.

[7] Harvey 34.

The issue of cosmopolitanism is very significant for my project in this thesis, as I am examining, under one flexible rubric, fiction emerging from different parts of the world, and also examining-- as *authentic* and legitimate cultural commentaries-- novels written in English by *non-Western* writers. It would be as simplistic, to my mind, to dismiss these works and writers as wholly Western-centric as it would be to view them as somehow 'representative' of the 'third world'. I will be looking at cosmopolitanism as an inevitable outcome of a world which is constantly in conversation, whether through communication, a result of trade, invasions, immigrations, or more recently as a consequence of capitalism and technology. As Graham Huggan states, 'Cosmopolitanism, for those who defend it, is a synonym for cultural tolerance and for the 'reciprocal interconnectedness' that signifies an open, liberal-pluralist worldview.'[8] However, where I have sought to examine this process as potentially constructive, I have simultaneously acknowledged its limitations inasmuch as cosmopolitanism is a multiple concept including versions which promote a condescending curiosity about cultures and people considered as 'other'.

Be that as it may, the issue that my thesis foregrounds concerns the question of gender in contemporary women's fiction. Kant's formulations are important in this regard as well, inasmuch as his ethical concepts inspired Lawrence Kohlberg's 'stages of moral development'-- which was exclusive of women's experiences-- in opposition to which Carol Gilligan presents her theory of an ethics of care, with which I will be engaging as the theoretical basis for my overall enquiry.[9] I find the debate between Kohlberg and Gilligan significant because-- as I will

---

[8] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001)11.
[9] According to Gilligan, 'Against the background of the psychological descriptions of identity and moral development which I had read and taught for a number of years, the women's voices sounded distinct. It was then that I began to notice the recurrent problems in interpreting women's development and to connect these problems to

demonstrate in the thesis later-- there has been a return in many ways to the distinctions between 'masculine' and 'feminine' sensibilities in contemporary novels and to the question of ethical styles in a new globalised world of competing value systems.

Both the ethics of care and the novel-- as discussed earlier-- deal with the issue of 'affective reason'. The novel has been looked on as a 'sentimental' genre since the eighteenth century, not sentimental in the sense of being maudlin, but in terms of its engagement of the reader's sentiments as an aspect of thought rather than conceiving of thinking as a purely abstract, analytical process. The ethics of care, in the same way, looks to combine an emotional response as part of a reasoned response. As opposed to a Kantian ethics and morality, based on an idea of pure reason and objectivity, where feeling is regarded as necessarily in opposition with and subversive of reason, the ethics of care allows for a more complete involvement. Like the novel itself, the ethics of care seeks to engage the entire spectrum of human 'sentiment'. It is fitting then that the care orientation should be examined through novelistic scenarios and the novels, in turn, be analysed through the ethics of care.

The writers I examine in my thesis present a conflict between two kinds of world view; in all these texts, a distinction emerges, sometimes clear and sometimes more blurred, between what I term and what are seen historically as 'masculine' and 'feminine' standpoints with respect to the world. The feminine sensibility, according to this interpretation, is governed by affect and is more accepting, as opposed to the more unyielding and 'rational' masculine temperament. These distinctions, between masculine and feminine, are not biological, but signify ways in

---

the repeated exclusion of women from the critical theory-building studies of psychological research.' Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982) 1.

which the masculine and feminine positions have been constructed historically through dominant discourses.[10]

Gilligan's ethics of care corresponds directly with this view, the only difference being that where Gilligan theorised on the distinction between the ethical stances of men and women-- which can be viewed as an essentialist perspective-- I propose that the categories of masculine and feminine be redefined to include the socio-politically advantaged and the socio-politically disadvantaged instead.[11] The novels I analyse in this thesis endorse the latter interpretation in that these narratives do not draw a distinction between men and women so much as a distinction between those that are privileged within a particular social system, possessing a strong sense of identity, with a 'rational' and calculating approach to people and ideas, and those that are not privileged and have a more fluid and relational sense of themselves and those around them.[12]

Gilligan's theory is situated in the early 1980s when feminists were still debating the idea of the difference between men and women-- the idea that women and men have developed

---

[10] According to Patricia Waugh, 'The subjective centre of socially dominant discourses (…) in terms of power, agency, autonomy has been a "universal" subject which has established its identity through the invisible marginalization or exclusion of what it has also defined as "femininity" (whether this is the non-rational, the body, the emotions, or the pre-symbolic). The "feminine" thus becomes that which cannot be expressed because it exists outside the realm of symbolic signification. Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989) 8.

[11] It is very important to note here that although Gilligan theorised on the relationship of women to available ethical perspectives, she does make clear in some instances that the association she draws between women and these attitudes is not categorical, 'The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex.' (Gilligan 2)

[12] According to Waugh, '(…) women's writing, whether feminist or not, has largely existed in a highly contradictory relationship to (…) the dominant liberal conception of subjectivity and writing (…). Much women's writing can, in fact, be seen to discover a collective concept of subjectivity which foregrounds the construction of identity *in relationship*. (…) this concept grows out of women's particular history and out of the collective politics of the women's movement.' (Waugh 10)

through generations a particular way of responding to situations. Feminist criticism at this time celebrated the sphere of affect as an exclusively female domain.[13] However, this binary opposition between man/woman as constituting rational/emotional was of course revealed to be limiting, and even regressive in its clubbing of various kinds of women of different cultures, ethnicities, classes, sexuality and so on, under the unitary idea of 'woman'. It is interesting, then, that the contemporary writers that I will be examining in this thesis, still deal with responses that fit the binary positions of overly rational/calculating and the more emotional/ 'irrational'. The reason for this, to my mind, is that these are very real responses that do typify particular mind sets that are born out of specific locations in societies and novels are particularly able to examine and reflect on these pressures.

My argument in this thesis will be based on the recognition of the revolutionary and still pertinent features of Gilligan's formulations; at the same time, I will try to negotiate the problems within them. The assertion here is that, although these responses are still very relevant-- evidenced in contemporary fiction-- in trying to understand the way societies work, most of which are based on masculinist ideals to a greater or lesser degree, it would be a fallacy to limit these responses to man and woman. Therefore, 'masculine' and 'feminine' are, in my thesis, not so much markers of the two sexes, but markers of the other kind of discrepancy, that of the mainstream/normative and the marginal/sidelined.

---

[13] Patricia Waugh's *Feminine Fictions* is very helpful in tracing the history of Feminism through the twentieth century. She quotes Jessica Benjamin, among others, to show how feminists in the 1980s were looking to establish differences between men and women as 'rational,' 'autonomous' and 'involved,' 'connected' respectively. According to Waugh, '(…) 'otherness' analysed by feminists from de Beauvoir onwards (…) becomes (from the male point of view) the necessary condition of women, so that separation and objectivity rather than relationship and connection become the markers of identity.' (Waugh 21)

The question of whether there can be a different, and as effective, way of approaching relationships and life in general from the masculine standpoint is, as mentioned earlier, best addressed by returning to the ethical debates sparked by Carol Gilligan's response to Lawrence Kohlberg's 'stages of moral development' in the early 1980s. Gilligan's ethics of care outlined a kind of ethics most suited for white, western women; my attempt will be to try and understand a more inclusive and variegated feminine sensibility. According to David Harvey, '(...) relational dialectics (...) has made headway in feminist theory (...) permitted feminists to move beyond confines of (...) simple binaries (...). Within a relational framework (...) there are no essences or absolutes.[14] In other words, essentialising these responses in terms of sex threatens to throw the feminist debate back to traditionally dictated distinctions. My argument, taking its cue from the novels I will be examining, is that if these categories are reconstructed according to different principles, then this distinction could provide a way to examine attitudes of the politically advantaged and the politically disadvantaged, and open a window for the articulation of an ethics based on that difference.

Nussbaum and Butler

To revisit the Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler debate at this point provides a fruitful means to articulate how the term 'feminine' is being used in this project. According to Butler, femininity is a socially constituted perfomance and is in no way intrinsically connected to being a woman at all.[15] This deconstructionist argument, important as it is in understanding that a lot of

---

[14] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 7.

[15] 'But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be

these feminine/masculine distinctions are in fact socially conditioned behavioural differences, also, for this very reason, renders arbitrary any political action or any revolutionary gesture made as a woman. Nussbaum's humanist approach on the other hand, is more proactive; she recognises the advantages of sticking to categories which clarify political action and therefore make it much more feasible. Her stance brings to mind Spivak's concept of a 'strategic essentialism'. According to Nussbaum, it is vital to be able to form solidarities for coherent political action. To talk about women as a more or less universal category helps to form international alliances.

Nussbaum criticises Butler in her article 'The Professor of Parody': '(...) Butler (...) is adamantly opposed to normative notions such as human dignity (...). Universal normative notions, she says, "colonise under the sign of the same."'[16] Nussbaum's ironic tone here hints at her view of the fruitlessness and even potentially regressive impact of Butler's position. Butler's argument falls short inasmuch as it seeks only to bulldoze structures, instead of building more empowering ones; nonetheless, Butler's questioning of structures that are already in place is an invaluable step towards realising that new structures can in fact be built at all.

My argument combines both approaches in many ways, acknowledging the relevance of classifications-- feminine/masculine-- for any coherent theory to emerge, and at the same time to resist and deconstruct traditionally accepted notions with respect to these categories, opening up the idea of the feminine to include all those that fall out of line with the masculine mainstream. As it is, women have, for generations, been clubbed together with other marginalised groups as liabilities; for instance, Aristotle concluded that women and slaves should be kept out of political

---

discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation.' Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 2.
[16] Martha Nussbaum, 'The Professor of Parody,' *The New Republic Online*.

life because they are underdeveloped human beings.[17] It makes sense then to arrive at an ethical theory that acknowledges the similarities in the experiences and attitudes of subjugated or marginalised peoples regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on.

Ethical responses articulated through an ethics of care examined in the novels in this thesis are associated with a more accepting and personal intersubjectivity, that recognises, respects and is based on an awareness of the difference between one situation and another. Furthermore, although it is an ethical position based on particularity rather than universality, the experience of having been sidelined gives rise to a common sensibility-- as will be demonstrated through the analysis of the novels-- which keeps the ethic from being rendered fragmentary. Because of its respect for differences across various situations, the ethics of care avoids homogenising needs and positions.

In addition, because of being sidelined within the culture of their origin, people with a feminine sensibility are open to and accepting of other experiences. I will argue that the feminine therefore provides a model for and compatibility with a more positive version of cosmopolitanism—examples of which will be seen in the novels examined.

Cosmopolitanism

Although there is always a sadness associated with the loss of traditional moorings of what is considered one's own or 'mother' culture, there is no denying the fact that cultures have always been fluid, and an exchange of customs and traditions by way of trade and/or invasions, is an ongoing process.

---

[17] Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 39.

I argue that masculine and feminine reactions to this loss of tradition are revealed to be different. And it has to be added here that although these categories are understood as constituted by the socio-politically advantaged and the socio-politically disadvantaged in my argument, women are in fact frequently seen to be in a disadvantaged position in many cultures. A masculine/privileged reaction to this loss in these fictions is seen to be much more defensive. The feminine on the other hand, who endure at the margins of cultures, can find this letting go of traditions celebratory. In the larger political picture of unequal relations between nations, people from a richer and socio-politically more dominant country generally find it less important to be internationally aware and accepting than those from a less powerful country; this corroborates my argument that those without power in a particular situation will for that reason be more inclined to look beyond that position. The feminine thereby will be more cosmopolitan; this assertion will be tested through the novels that I analyse.

My argument is that the feminine/marginal relate to their surroundings differently from their masculine/privileged counterparts. And being sidelined in their 'own' environments, it is seen to be easier, and even preferable, for the feminine to be accepting of other ways of life, beyond the boundaries of their particular situations. The feminine/marginal, therefore, are able to step beyond political, cultural or religious boundaries and forge positive, cosmopolitan relationships. The other side of the cosmopolitan argument, however, is that the idea of a global mindset is accommodated and exploited by capitalistic/neo-imperialistic and Western-centric discourses. However, it is interesting to see how this version of a 'global' worldview that is born out of capitalistic interactions, also partakes in altering power relations in world politics. Graham Huggan cites Arjun Appadurai's argument in his book *The Post-colonial Exotic* and says, '(…) global processes of commodification may engender new social relations that operate in *anti-*

imperialist interests, empowering the previously dispossessed.'[18] The same could also be argued for the artistic work and scholarship emerging out of this 'cosmopolitan' market, which can open up questions about the very system that supports it. And, as argued earlier, there is no better place for testing this than novels, because by their very nature they raise questions about what they otherwise may even seem to endorse.

The other important issue regarding cosmopolitanism is the kinds of cultural exchange it makes possible. Because of international power-structures, a simple *exchange* of cultures and ideas is rendered difficult. What creates apprehension about cosmopolitanism and what actually does happen in many instances is the usurpation of one cultural knowledge by another more economically and politically dominant cultural knowledge. Therefore, one form of resistance against the more economically and socio-politically dominant-- Western-- culture would obviously be to avoid having it as the basic point of reference, even when writing in English; Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* is a cosmopolitan novel examined in the thesis which manages to achieve just that.

It will be seen on examination in my thesis that many ideas that I associate with the feminine experience and with the cosmopolitan ideal are exploited and incorporated by dominant economic and political systems in such a way that they lose their power of subversion. Huggan's interpretation of Spivak's position is interesting:

---

[18] Huggan 12

Spivak sees marginality as an *advantageous* subject-position (…). At the same time, she is anxious that the uncritical endorsement of marginality might play right into the hands of a 'neo-colonial education system' wishing to assimilate it for its own interests.[19]

My thesis examines novels that provide poignant insights into the process of insidious appropriation by the mainstream: for instance, the incorporation of Hip-hop by an elite American University, or the impersonalisation of beauty by the rigid and masculine academia in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*; as also the appropriation of the very idea of care by the exploitative regime in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.

Yet, the answer to this kind of manipulation of a globalised understanding of the world by capitalistic discourses is not to silence and reject all discussions-- creative or scholarly-- that attempt to voice very real experiences of mixed or historically fractured backgrounds. These narratives need to be understood as not necessarily presenting either Western or Eastern perspectives, but as narratives of fluidity and adaptability. Through the analyses of certain novels, like Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, I hope to show that a novel written in English is not, necessarily and unproblematically, governed by Western-centric principles. Shamsie's novel, for one, provides a most stringent critique of the United States and its brand of controlling and capitalistic internationalism, and Desai's novel reveals how the discourse of globalisation actually translates into a ready availability of cheap labour.

It should be made clear at this stage that I am not conflating cosmopolitanism with globalisation. However, both ideas do share the vision of a world in constant dialogue, and because of the way this world view has been abused by profit making discourses, any attempt at

---

[19] Huggan 23

cross-cultural understanding is readily dismissed. My argument in the thesis is that such a dismissal is too hasty because it not only ignores the reality of that experience but also the space for criticism that can be created within such 'inauthentic' narratives.

The dialogic mode of the novel allows a writer to present ideas from a range of perspectives, and the novel, with its anti-Cartesian ability to dwell in contradiction and offer an argument that is embodied and shaped by a historical and cultural embeddedness, is an appropriate genre for exploring questions around the idea of cosmopolitanism, which is the truth of most of our lives today. According to Appiah, 'Conversations across boundaries of identity-- whether national, religious or something else-- begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie (…) that speaks from some place other than your own.'[20] Therefore, fiction from around the world written in English, not only helps to examine cosmopolitanism, it also reflects, and thereby promotes, this kind of enriching transnationalistic approach.

The other reason for cosmopolitanism to be seen as an important issue when thinking of a feminine ethical orientation is that, according to my interpretation and Gilligan's ethics of care, the feminine is more likely to understand the nuances and particularity of a situation, and this acknowledgement of difference is the basic premise for the kind of cosmopolitanism under discussion in this project. Different cultures, political systems, ethnicities, classes and so on have their distinct, historically developed ethical perceptions, and these differences need to be taken into account before arriving at any understanding of a common ethical standpoint. As Appiah argues, '(…), when it comes to morality, there is no singular truth. In that case, there is no one

---

[20] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) 85.

shattered mirror; there are lots of mirrors, lots of moral truths, and we can at best agree to differ.'[21]

However, the very basis of my thesis is the realisation that there needs to be a position beyond complete relativism, especially when the issue is that of human ethical behaviour. Appiah again cites a telling example, 'A tormentor who wanted everyone to cause innocent people pain, we might say, takes the infliction of pointless suffering to be a value. We'd (…) want to say that he was wrong.'[22] That is the reason why social scientists try to arrive at a set of fundamental values to measure the lowest common denominator of human rights, as suggested, for instance, in Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach.

> (…) we see (…) people who think of themselves as progressive and feminist and antiracist, people who correctly argue that the concept of development is an evaluative concept requiring normative argument-- effectively eschewing normative argument (…). Under the banner of their fashionable opposition to universalism march ancient religious taboos, the luxury of the pampered husband, educational deprivation, unequal health care, and premature death.[23]

It is for these reasons that I go on to examine in this thesis, how the arguments for an ethics of care may enter into dialogue with ethical universalism. To me, as an Indian person writing in English, a narrow discussion of ethics that does not even vaguely span cultural and political boundaries is a very limited endeavour.

Moreover, as technology and capitalist enterprise reach into the furthest spaces of the world, and as many of the problems facing the world-- economic, environmental and social--

---

[21] Appiah 11
[22] Appiah 22
[23] Nussbaum 36

require pan-global discussion and consideration, there needs to be something like an ideal of a universally relatable ethics. The problem with Kant's categorical imperative is that it operated at a purely formal level; an ethics of care engages with the minute and substantial details of a situation. A viable cosmopolitan ethics must involve a response to the local that in a dialectical relationship might move towards an ideal of broader principles and values.

For these reasons the cosmopolitan ideal is extremely interesting for this project, Appiah argues: 'If we are to encourage cosmopolitan engagement, moral conversation between people *across* societies, we must expect (…) disagreements: after all they occur within societies.'[24] My attempt is to look at various ethical sensibilities from different parts of the world through contemporary women's writings. These sensibilities are reined in by a set of basic attitudes which I term masculine and feminine. These responses, however, have not been thought up arbitrarily to suit a particular theory; instead, as will be seen, various fictional texts themselves appear to lend themselves to and thus in some sense validate this attempt.

Cosmopolitanism and the ethics of care then, come together in this thesis in very significant and productive ways. A cosmopolitan attitude, which can embrace the dissimilarities of disparate cultures, is a prerequisite for an ethics that is based on the idea of difference. It seems reasonable to me then to open up this discussion of the ethics of care to various cultures and marginal experiences through an examination of fiction emerging from diverse parts of the world. Salman Rushdie says of any non-resident Indian writer, '(...) he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost. (...) The broken mirror

---

[24] Appiah 46

may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed.'[25] Accordingly, cosmopolitanism or an attempt to talk across cultures generally arises in literary texts out of the need to express the difficulty of displacement and dislocation, and the expression of this difficulty is productive as it provides the view of an outsider.

The other kind of cosmopolitanism that gets reflected in literature is the kind that results from processes that have brought about a mixing and exchange of cultures through generations, for instance, the growing body of English literature emerging from South Asia; and these unavoidable historical processes, that have brought disparate cultures together, render the study of cosmopolitanism not only important, but inevitable. Cosmopolitanism is especially relevant in these times, when various good and bad forces, for instance, the free market and capitalism, are increasingly pushing towards more global interactions. According to Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes,

> Ishiguro makes a feature of his eclectic, cosmopolitan heritage, even to the extent of offering a wry apology for the fact that 'you have to set a novel somewhere' (…) on the grounds that *any* location may have the effect of introducing incidental local issues and meanings to a story that might distract the reader from the significance of human existence in any place at a given point in time.[26]

Ishiguro here is seen as recognising the importance and unavoidability of an international approach in creative writing. This again reveals how important the study of cosmopolitanism really is, not just in relation to the world political scenario, but also for an appreciation of artistic work being produced today. Ishiguro also seems to be hinting, in the above quote, at the

---

[25] Rushdie 10-11

[26] Sean Matthew and Sebstian Groes ed., *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2009)2.

universality of human experience. As diverse as various cultures may be, some human experiences and reactions are more or less universal, and it is this kind of universality that provides a platform for conversations and dialogues between cultures and nations.

The idea of a 'universal ethic' harks back to the liberal thought that evolved in the Enlightenment era of the eighteenth century which, in theory, was about striving towards equal rights for all people, transcending boundaries such as culture and nationality.[27] However, in reality it meant being blind to the cultures and traditions of those perceived as 'other' to the established centre. Therefore, not taking into consideration and ignoring specific locations and cultures of the people in question leads to the kind of oppressive universality that the Enlightenment era is criticised for; however, a similar problem is encountered when placing too much stress on specific nationalities, as David Harvey points out in his criticism of Burke's formulations, '(...) Burke's favouring of entailed inheritance (...) over universal rights provided, as Arendt for one points out-- "the ideological basis from which English nationalism derived its curious touch of race feeling"'.[28]

An inordinate emphasis on belonging and inheritance results in the kind of insularity that makes any cosmopolitan interaction impossible; it not only gives rise to parochialism and xenophobia, but is also the impetus behind ethnic cleansings and racism. In some patriarchal cultures which emphasise inheritance, those with 'deviant' sexuality are especially oppressed, particularly women of course, since they are the bearers of the future generations. These issues within insular, ultra masculinist communities have been demonstrated and addressed through

---

[27] 'Focussing on national contexts is assuredly the wrong approach to (…) the Radical Enlightenment. The movement (…) was an international network bent on far-reaching reform philosophically, socially, ethically, in matters of gender and sexuality, and also politically (…).' Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 22.
[28] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 43

Morrison's *Paradise* and Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*. And again, the result of this exercise of restraint by parochial societies, gives rise to the opposite-- a cosmopolitan attitude-- within those that are marginalised in these societies.

Cosmopolitans do not always succeed in symbiotically bringing together universality and particularity. David Harvey summarises this dilemma effectively, but also warns against a hasty dismissal.

> (...) Chronic failures on the part of the new cosmopolitans to ground their theories in spaces and places in effective ways or, when they naively attempt to do so, not to go much beyond conventional neoliberal wisdoms make it tempting to dismiss their whole line of argument as yet another moral or legalistic mask for the continuance of elite class and imperialistic power. I think such a dismissal is premature.[29]

In examining texts from diverse backgrounds and trying to arrive at some common understanding of human nature, my attempt in this thesis is to find some sort of a middle ground between the chauvinistically local and the unthinkingly universal standpoints. The ethics of care is an ideal conception for this attempt at locating a solidarity within diverse needs and interests. It is an ethical formulation that can stand up to the collapse of overbearing, homogenising discourses of nation-states and even religion, as will be demonstrated in my thesis. The ethics of care, as it is interpreted in the thesis, emerges as an ethic for the marginal; and it is the perspective of the marginal, according to David Harvey among others, that is missing in present day discussions regarding cosmopolitanism. He quotes De Sonsa Santos in his argument:

---

[29] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 94

The excluded populations of the world need (...) "a subaltern cosmopolitanism" expressive of their needs and reflective of their condition. "Whoever is a victim of local intolerance (...) needs cross-border (...) support. (...) the large majority of the world's population, excluded from top-down cosmopolitanism project, needs a different kind of cosmopolitanism."[30]

There are many versions of cosmopolitanism, as discussed earlier, for example, the United States foreign policy which can be traced back to Kant. Although Kant conceived of it as a conception which does away with any privileged location for the sake of more equality, the ideology has, time and again, proved to be illusory in practice, simply because all the ethical formulations in this system arise from one particular standpoint which is considered the best.[31]

This Enlightenment notion of cosmopolitan justice was part of the ideology that supported European imperialism-- when the right to self governance by people from different parts of the world was denied them by their European counterparts, who judged them too uncivilised to shoulder such responsibility. As Harvey argues, '(...) Kant's cosmopolitanism (...) can somehow sustain a veneer of attachment to some theory of universal goodness while (...) justifying, innumerable concessions to prejudicial exclusions (...).'[32] Contrary to not privileging one particular location over another, this ethic, in reality, disregards all other positions in favour of one. This version of cosmopolitanism homogenises the needs of those perceived to be 'other', and for its impersonalising and homogenising tendencies, I will call it the masculine version of cosmopolitanism, as opposed to the feminine one which is involved, and respectful of difference.

---

[30] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 95

[31] '(…) Kant proposed to relate local truths and laws (…) to the universals of reason (…). (…) how do we apply a universal ethic to a world in which some people are considered immature or inferior and others are though indolent, smelly, or just plain untrustworthy? (…) universal principles operate across different geographical conditions as an intensely discriminatory code masquerading as the universal good.' (Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 33)

[32] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 34

The other kind of cosmopolitanism is the kind that evokes Burke, who stressed the importance of geographical location and boundaries to condemn imperialism. Many theorists of cosmopolitanism, for instance, Uday Singh Mehta, believe this stress on spatial location (nation states) to be the only way forward for a truly egalitarian cosmopolitan interaction; a cosmopolitanism which will never lose sight of the notions of 'rootedness' and 'belonging'. 'Again and again in his impassioned attacks upon the British imperial presence in India, Burke invoked the facts of geography (...). From this perspective Burke constructs what Mehta calls a 'cosmopolitanism of sentiments'.[33] The problem with this kind of cosmopolitanism is not only that it places too much stress on inheritance, which gives rise to all kinds of purist ideas regarding race and ethnicity, but also that because it is overly parochial and divisive, it renders all arguments fragmentary.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach revolves around trying to find some universal criterion for the well being of all human beings from different parts of the world. She does not attempt to ignore differences altogether but tries to understand them in order to draw up a list of similarities to arrive at the basic requirements of all people, for example, the right to education, the right to self governance and so on. This is a step forward for cosmopolitan theory and it provides many useful and genuinely progressive insights.[34] However, many theorists have found Nussbaum's formulations problematic, according to Harvey: 'Some (...) "counter-cosmopolitanisms" were formulated in reaction to Nussbaum's claims. She was accused, for example, of merely articulating an appropriate ideology for the "global village" of the neoliberal international

---

[33] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 42

[34] 'My proposal is frankly universalist and "essentialist". That is, it asks us to focus on what is common to all, rather than on differences (although, as we shall see, it does not neglect these), and to see some capabilities and functions as more central, more at the core of human life, than others.' Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings,' Martha C. Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, ed. *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1995) 63.

managerial/capitalist class.'[35] Her theory has been charged with ignoring many other kinds of experiences in favour of a universal vision and a universal set of 'human needs'.

Harvey suggests another problem with her theory: although she talks of cosmopolitanism, she relapses, like most such theorists, into an inordinate reliance on the idea of nation-states, since according to her it is the state which is basically responsible for the wellbeing of its people.[36] Nonetheless, Nussbaum's theory, to my mind, is a very significant move towards finding a cosmopolitan ethic which looks for basic human similarities among people from disparate cultures, without which there could never be any cross-cultural dialogue. Nussbaum is a pioneer of sorts in discussions of an anchored cosmopolitanism.

The one thing that becomes clear through these debates is that any effective cosmopolitan theory also needs to have an understanding of the local. And this is my objective for examining the ethics of care through fictional scenarios that deal with particular situations. My thesis is situated within debates that attempt to articulate a cosmopolitan ideal that would be most suited to the experience of ever increasing global intercourse, which is seen to go hand in hand with the exploitation and socio-political domination by the richer and more powerful over those that are less powerful. The attempt is to arrive at an ethic which will be focussed on the less powerful as De Sonsa Santos recommends, not just at the level of nation-states, but also at the level of other smaller social organisations like tribes and communities: a decentred cosmopolitanism, so to speak, which would be coherent despite the lack of a rigid centre. In this thesis I look at fictional experiences from different parts of the world, and a lot of these novels deal with various

---

[35] Harvey , *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 79

[36] 'There is a deep tension between Nussbaum's fierce commitment to antinationalism and her positioning of the nation-state as the primary institution through which capabilities will be realized.' Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* 93

cosmopolitan experiences, where individuals and groups from one culture interact with and inform another.

A feminine ethics of care

The Cartesian man, striving toward fullness and autonomy, might be seen as the ideal member of a world in which the norms of judgment are contained within the parameters of simple, monolithic ideas of right and wrong. This notion of the subject as lacking psychological embodiment underpins Kantian models of justice, and his concept of the detached subject informs the view point of modernity. An alternative view more often associated with postmodernism, however, sees the subject as embedded, embodied and socially constructed and the notion of the ideal subject comes to seem unsustainable.

Kant posits a hierarchy between two kinds of obligations. He places the kind of obligation that entails no conflict in the subject, 'Thou shalt not…' higher than that which requires positive action and makes conflict inevitable-- requiring the subject to get involved in particular situations.[37] This Kantian axiom is challenged with the emergence of postmodern theories that make the position of the subject more precarious. Thereby, in a postmodern world-- when 'thought of as a 'mood' arising out of a sense of collapse of all those foundations of modern thought which seemed to guarantee a reasonably stable sense of Truth, Knowledge, Self and Value'[38]-- of more heterogeneous ways of thinking, the diversity and the situation of those under ethical scrutiny is of principal importance. And therefore the second kind of obligation that requires positive action and deals with conflict, is recognized for what it can make available in

---

[37] *The Blackwell Guide to Kant's Ethics* is very informative regarding Kant's views on ethical duties. Thomas E. Hill, Jr., ed., The *Blackwell Guide to Kant's Ethics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[38] Philip Rice, Patricia Waugh, ed., *Modern Literary Theory, 4th ed* (New York: Hodder Arnold, 2001) 345.

terms of understanding people as embedded in their particular social, political and economic situations.

This shift in the conception of the human subject provides women, as all other marginal groups, with an accepting environment in which to articulate their sense of what it means to be an ethical being. Where, earlier, the only way to articulate the woman question was by asking it in terms that would be understandable to man, the need now is for a new language; a different code of ethical conduct that might begin to articulate the space within which those that are marginal find themselves. This search for a new language has, in some textual instances, produced a discourse so far removed from Enlightenment norms of clarity that it has resulted in near incomprehensibility-- a reflection perhaps of the difficulty of looking for a new epistemological position.

In what follows, my aim is the exploration of such new territories, but when I bring up the idea of a new language, I am not intending by this a linguistic exercise that might render more mysterious, rather than clarify, the realm of the 'feminine'. I am interested in exploring the extent to which this special space-- of the marginal-- has been opened up in contemporary fiction by women; to see whether a new language is in fact in the process of being forged, in literature being written by contemporary women writers around the world.

An important further question is the extent to which fiction itself-- as moral philosophers like Nussbaum and MacIntyre suggest-- can contribute to this by widening moral vocabularies and providing new narratives. As Gertrud Nunner-Winkler suggests with reference to Micheal Walzer's argument, 'He emphasizes the role of language in morality, arguing that growing up in

a moral community means learning a moral language'[39]: a language that does not restrict with apolitical dreams of 'alterity', but one that might express more clearly realms that have hitherto been sidelined. One way of doing this is by examining the parallel system of ethics propounded by feminist philosophers like Carol Gilligan, and working out how the ethical system is justified or problematized in recent works of fiction by women. Literature, unlike polemic, is about life as it is really lived, and, as I have argued earlier, provides the ideal canvas for the investigation of these otherwise abstract ideas.

Carol Gilligan writes, in opposition to Lawrence Kohlberg's morality ethics, of an ethics of care. Where Kohlberg talks of the universalisability of morality, Gilligan, in keeping with the present day problematisation of the idea of the subject, questions this universalisation and theorizes about a kind of ethics that might prove effective for women and their experiences. My argument is that potentially the theory can be seen to be relevant not only for women but for various marginalised groups, inasmuch as there is, in this system of ethics, capacity for the recognition of *difference*. I am, likewise, not proposing here a system to express *the* marginal voice in any essential sense, but drawing attention to a school of thought that might help articulate the similarities in the position of various marginal voices as being at an angle with masculinist systems of thought.

However, any serious engagement with this system of ethics would require first an engagement with the various forms of marginalisation in different parts of the world. It is also important to ascertain the kind of care that is being talked of here, and whether care is always for the best. As Owen Flanagan and Kathryn Jackson argue, '(…) we still lack a clear (…) taxonomy

---

[39] Mary Jeanne Larrabee, ed., *An Ethic of Care: Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 47.

of the various dispositions (...) that constitute the care orientation (…)'[40]. Examining contemporary fiction written by women from different parts of the world, will, to my mind, provide an opportunity to stand back and observe how the ethics of care translates into practical situations.

Carol Gilligan in her work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, argues, 'Women's moral weakness, manifest in an apparent diffusion and confusion of judgment, is thus inseparable from women's moral strength, an overriding concern with relationships and responsibilities.'[41] The diffusion of rigid judgment and the inability to appreciate binary positions is the inevitable result of marginalisation-- with regard to gender, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality and so on-- inasmuch as the marginalised would not identify with dominant discourses. Where this failure may preclude the powerless or the marginalised from taking part in the sphere of the mainstream political life of any society, it would also render the marginalised malleable enough to negotiate and survive were such societies to collapse.

Excluded from the world of large and abstract narratives, the marginalised or the feminised deal with the smaller or the more immediate realm of life, namely, interpersonal relationships. They weave, as it were, a network of parallel life where ideas of justice and guilt depend on one person's relationship with the other and are, therefore, immediate and particular instead of overarching; this parallel system of redemption is thereby based on care instead of rational principles. Carol Gilligan taps into this parallel system of values to articulate a feminine model of justice, the ethics of care. And because of the articulation of this personal-- instead of

---

[40] Larrabee 74

[41] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982) 17.

an impersonalised-- ethical voice, Gilligan's ideas might also be seen as crucial for the process of forging a coherent political voice.[42]

Although the ethics of care seeks to provide women with a distinct and systematic voice, because its argument is based on notions of care and nurturance, ideas that have always been imposed upon women and have been the cause of much suffering and self-denial, the liberating aspects of the theory seem limited. The reason for this is that the parameters of the masculine and the feminine or the mainstream and the marginal, are socially drawn and can thereby be changeable; therefore, the idea that a particular kind of people must necessarily behave in a particular way-- such as women have to be caring-- seems untenable. Therefore, in my argument I deconstruct femininity and separate it from a strictly female experience.

Another important question regarding the care orientation is whether there can be any coherence within a system that is based on the idea of difference. My argument is that coherence may be found in the very flexibility that seems to be its weakness. A masculinist and tenet bound ethical code might seem effective because of its unambiguous system of reward and punishment; however, it is this very rigidity that makes it vulnerable. Because it does not change according to changing situations it will not survive in a world where hierarchies of privilege collapse or are even disturbed—as will be seen in almost all of the texts that I examine. The care orientation, on the other hand, with its jettisoning of overarching tenets and its recognition of difference, attempts to articulate a system which is responsive to various situations. If some basic commonality may be found within the values of particularity that it stresses, the ethics of care

---

[42] As Susan J. Hekman in *Moral Voices, Moral Selves* argues, 'The ability to make moral distinctions (...) constitutes *the* criterion of full legal and political personhood in our society.' Susan J. Hekman, *Moral Voices, Moral selves: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) 127.

will not be rendered fragmentary; in fact its flexibility will work to its advantage in a world where narratives that had earlier conferred stability to societies, like the nation-state and religion, are increasingly opened up for scrutiny.

By attempting to arrive at a shared set of values, I seek to demonstrate that an ethic of particularity is not necessarily one that is ineffectual when looking to answer larger ethical questions beyond those that immediately concern the self. In fact, my effort at exploring these issues through fiction is an attempt to stand back and examine particular situations within a larger framework. Moreover, the ethics of care should also not be seen as a mere alternative to masculinist ethical formulations. This point can be clarified by a reference to Morrison's *Paradise* that I examine in the thesis. In Morrison's text, the ethical code of the main patriarchal community is challenged by the Convent just outside its limits. The Convent in the text is the space where a carnival of subversion takes place.[43] However, as is the dilemma with any carnival, it seems to almost to sustain the normative village community which it seeks to oppose. *Paradise* helps to articulate the critical issue of an alternative sustaining the norm.

The other controversial topic is that of the mother-child relationship, which is important to Gilligan's ethics of care, influenced as Gilligan's theory is by Nancy Chodorow's object relations theory of child development-- according to which the girl child is conditioned to be less independent of relationships and more adept at caring for others and building connections than

---

[43] Talking of Bakhtin's carnivalesque, Ronald Knowles states, 'Carnival opposes all that is Stalinist: the dialogical voice of unofficial culture in the people resisted the theological monologism of the Catholic Church (and tyrannical communism); the grotesque body was celebrated, not condemned as sinful (or sanitized by canons of Soviet realism); collective laughter in broad daylight defeats eschatological terror (and laughter as sinful in Russia); vitalist primitivism replaces the ascetic and life-denying culture of celibate prelacy. The utopian freedom of permanent becoming transcends the prison house of dogma and Gulag of dissent.' Ronald Knowles, ed., *Shakespeare and Carnival After Bakhtin* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998) 4.

the male child.[44] This is a dangerous view point as it pushes the debate back to the idea of there being an inherent binary opposition between men and women. The criticism levelled against the ethics of care by Daryl Koehn rings true here. According to Koehn, 'our relations are not transparent (…) if what we mean by being a mother is debatable (…) then we are not entitled to treat the mother-child relation as if it were an uncontroversial, ethically exemplary relation.'[45]

Both the above issues, care orientation as being somehow essentialist and limiting by upholding idealistic notions of motherhood, as well as it providing a mere alternative, might be resolved somewhat by arriving at an idea of subjectivity that does away with the male and female binary position. My argument is not about a female ethical paradigm that could be an alternative for the male paradigm; it is instead, an attempt to move beyond either. Gilligan's ethics of care is important for my argument not because it helps to create an essentially female perspective, to be seen in opposition to the male system of rigid abstractions but because, by privileging difference, it helps my argument to deconstruct masculinity and femininity in more productive and less essentialist ways.

Traditional ethical paradigms, by presuming to propound a universally applicable theory of justice, create and perpetuate a system of hegemony and domination, where one group is privileged over the other. In opposition, the ethics of care—based on the idea of difference itself-- stresses a contextual understanding of people, and brings into focus different ways of living and interacting. For any theory or system of thought to have any relevance in the present world of

---

[44] The theory that provides the groundwork for a (…) radically anti-Cartesian concept of the subject (…) comes from (…) object-relations theory. (…) Object-relations seeks to describe a self that has no separate (…) core but, (…) becomes a "self" through relations with others. (…) That the separate, autonomous self that is the corner stone of the modernist self, is itself a product of relational forces. This point was central to Gilligan's deconstruction of the separate self. (Hekman 73)

[45] Daryl Koehn, *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust and Empathy* (London: Routledge, 1998) 13.

ever increasing awareness of and resentment towards hegemonic structures, it is essential to be able to recognize cultural and historical differences.

Conversely, important as it might be to understand the relativity of all positions, it should not be such that any attempt at cohesive resistance is rendered futile and all arguments are rendered fragmentary and incoherent, so that the status quo is maintained by default. It would be more productive to view universalism and relativism in a dialectical relationship with each other and thereby arrive at a position beyond both, as Susan J Hekman argue: '(…) continuing to examine human moral practices in terms of this dichotomy is futile (...) we need to move to another epistemological dimension.'[46] Hekman believes that Gilligan's ethical system can provide just such an opportunity for an epistemological shift by articulating an ethical framework for those that are marginalised in different cultures; because, according to her, identifying the 'hegemonic forces' of diverse traditions is as far as most alternative theorists have hitherto ventured.[47] By examining various ethical responses in women's fiction emerging from different parts of the world, I intend to examine, as Nussbaum puts it, '(…) fruitful ways in which an abstract value can be instantiated in a concrete situation, through rich local knowledge.'[48]

My argument negates the male and female binary because both reflect each other and form the standard and alternative in the same spectrum. As Martha Nussbaum argues:

> We have, on the one hand, males who are autonomous (…) brought up not to develop strong emotions of love and feelings of deep need (…). For this reason they are not well equipped to care for the needs of their family members (…). On the other hand, we have females such as

---

[46] Hekman 39
[47] Hekman 39
[48] Nussbaum 48

Rousseau's Sophie, brought up to lack autonomy (…) and good at caring for others. Is either of these viable as a complete life for a human being? (…) The internal tensions in Rousseau's account are a good place to begin. (…) the capabilities that have traditionally marked the separate male and female spheres are not separate from one another without a grave functional loss. Society cannot strive for completeness by simply adding one sphere to the other. It must strive to develop in each and every person the full range of human capabilities'.[49]

The need, therefore, is to move beyond the binary opposition between these ethical perspectives. Accordingly, my attempt is not to see autonomy versus connectedness as inherent sensibilities so much as attitudes arising out of particular locations in society.

All the texts in the thesis help to open up many important questions regarding various kinds of ethical response. Some of these texts validate my argument while others challenge many ideas endorsed in my thesis. These challenges are invaluable as they help me to examine my stance better and to put forward my argument cautiously.

I use the masculine/feminine schema in my argument to facilitate the identification of human attitudes that might help to better understand complex ethical responses. The ethics of care is a revolutionary way of thinking about human nature because it recognises that human beings are heterogeneous, and that every one is deeply situated within her own social and political network.

---

[49] Nussbaum 53

Chapter 1: The Global and the Local

The first text analysed in this chapter is Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. The global scope of *The Inheritance of Loss* helps to effectively introduce the general/overarching ideas of the thesis. Desai's novel is a good point to start discussing my extensive project as many countries and cultures-- various classes and communities of India, England, the United States-- interact with one another within the text, politically, as well as through mental and emotional pressures on individual people,. Accordingly, through the analysis of this text, I will introduce ideas and concepts that will be taken up at various points in the thesis. Among other things, Desai's text will help me to begin discussing questions of cosmopolitanism and femininity, both of which are important to the thesis.

An analysis of Toni Morrison's *Paradise* forms the latter half of this chapter and compliments it. A discussion of *Paradise* will complete this chapter as it will help to demonstrate the relevance of my ideas in a more local and particular scenario-- an all black town of the 1950s Oklahoma. Whereas the larger canvas of *The Inheritance of Loss* will introduce the general project of the thesis, the more local setting of Toni Morrison's *Paradise* will show how these ideas are also applicable in a small and self-contained community. Both texts, through their global and local settings will help to substantiate and problematise the ideas proposed in the thesis.

Kiran Desai; Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison is an African American novelist whose writing career has spanned over forty years and has won her widespread critical acclaim, while Kiran Desai is a writer of Indian descent and has recently received international recognition for *The Inheritance of Loss*, which is her second novel. Both writers reside in the United States, and one of the reasons that I have grouped Morrison's *Paradise* (1997) and Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) together, although they are ten years apart, is that both novels deal with groups that fall on the fringes of American society. However, if they critique American mainstream society in their novels, theirs is not a sentimental portraiture of the marginalised either.

Morrison represents a black community in Oklahoma, which is shown as having built a self-reliant town away from the rest of society which has rejected them. Desai's engagement with the margins of the United States is by way of the character of Biju, who migrates to America in hope for a better and more prosperous future.[1] Both narratives lay bare the problems with American society and at the same time expose the problems with those that are marginalised within that society; this provides the reader with a more holistic understanding of the situation. The black community in *Paradise* is represented negatively, as venting their anger through a policy of exclusion and xenophobia.[2] And Biju in *The*

---

[1] '(…) While technology and the imperatives of global co-operation have made the world in every sense a borderless one, there is also another shadowy world of border crossings-- sustained ultimately by the desperation of migrants and the greed of an unscrupulous few. In her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai's parallel story follows the struggles of Biju, the son of the Gorkha cook, who ekes out the life of an illegal immigrant in New York. He lacks a permanent job, moves from one poorly equipped basement to another and lives in dread of the emigration official's visit.' 'Illegal Border crossings,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 42.18 (May 2007): 1583-1584.

[2] As Rebecca Ferguson argues, 'In *Paradise* (...) Morrison confronts the strength, the vulnerability, and the illusiveness of "race" as a criterion of community; the failure of the town of Ruby exposes both the weakness of the prosperous black middle class and the fragile basis of any implicit faith in an "essential," biologically-defined black identity. What I have termed (...) the shifting foundations of racial identity is an issue that remains (...) of central importance to her writing (...)' Rebecca Hope Ferguson, *Rewriting Black Identities: Transition*

Inheritance of Loss is shown to be too inflexible to be able to survive in a different and changing environment.

The other reason that the two texts work together is that they take the thesis from interactions at a global level in the *The Inheritance of Loss* to a more localised community life in *Paradise*. This helps to determine the ways in which my arguments play out in drastically different scenarios.

Toni Morrison published *Paradise* in 1997, after *Jazz* in 1992. She conceived of *Paradise* as forming the last part of a trilogy that started with *Beloved* (1987). Although Morrison's narrative is set in a small community, it opens up, through these provincial characters, debates about much larger issues. As Gurleen Grewal argues, 'In the novels, the place of the individual is de-isolated, the boundaries of the self shown to be permeated by the collective struggle of historical agents who live the long sentence of history by succumbing to (repeating), contesting, and remaking it.'[3]

Kiran Desai published *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006, after *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, 1998. Desai's novel has a more global scope as it deals with the lives of a group of Indian characters who live across various cultures, from England to India to the United States. However, although moving across several continents, Desai's novel also outlines the lives of a small group of characters. As Tom Wilhelmus states, 'In the wake of 9/11, it is an attempt to grapple with the human dimension of our current dilemmas by doing what novels have always done best, delineate the lives of a small cast of characters in reaction to the historical

---

and Exchange in the Novels of Toni Morrison (Brussells: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2007) 18. Similarly, Jill Matus argues that *Paradise* 'like its predecessors is concerned with remembering Black history, but it also explores how too zealous a remembrance of the past can hold a community in its grip. The community of the all-black town, once called Haven, later Ruby, has memorialised its history in a way that threatens its capacity to adapt and respond to the present.' Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) 154.

[3] Gurleen Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1998) 14.

forces around them. Moving swiftly between New York, Europe and India during the Indian-Nepali insurgency of twenty years ago (...).'[4]

The texts, to my mind, work well together because they take my analysis from a global to a more local scenario. Where Kiran Desai's novel helps to commence the thesis through a representation of a more international breakdown of masculine narratives, Toni Morrison's narrative illustrates more local reactions to a similar breakdown. In these ways, the novels provide entry points for various debates that relate directly to the argument in my thesis, and will help to take my examination further.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*: A global disintegration

There is an intriguing pattern that emerges in the reading of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2006; and this is not limited to this one text, but permeates fictional writings by contemporary women writers, as will be seen in my thesis. The pattern that is clearly discernible in all of these fictional scenarios is the pitting against one another of two kinds of attitudes: an adaptable and marginalised sensibility on the one hand, and a rigidly defined and privileged sensibility on the other. The drama in all these novels results from the ways in which these two groups interact with one another and the world around them. I call these two groups feminine and masculine, and go on to examine how Carol Gilligan's ethics of care has the potential to arrive at an understanding of, and formulate an ethical system based on, the feminine experience.

---

[4] Tom Wilhelmus. 'Ah England' rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss*, by Kiran Desai, *The Hudson Review* 59.2 (Summer 2006): 345-351.

Femininity and masculinity are of course problematic and essentialising categories if understood simplistically in terms of attitudes attributed to women and men respectively. However, these categories if deconstructed, and reconstructed according to different principles-- those of positions of marginality and privilege-- are seen to correspond directly to the above mentioned standpoints represented in these texts. I have called these positions feminine and masculine in this thesis because although traditionally associated with women and men specifically, these categories have, nonetheless, been built on the binary opposition of marginality and privilege.[5]

Although I define femininity as socio-political marginality regardless of the sex of individuals, it is frequently seen within these texts that a lot of women-- due to their history of marginalisation-- quite readily fall into the feminine category. For instance, most women characters in Desai's text have what can be identified as feminine sensibilities. They inhabit an in-between sphere; not having ever been part of the mainstream, they are represented as being more fluid and adaptable than the male characters.

For those inhabiting the masculine world of rigid identities in *The Inheritance of Loss*, the more amorphous feminine characters become the safest targets for the projection of their deepest fears and even regrets. For example, the judge, Jemubhai Patel, is represented as an old man attempting to seek atonement, for his cruelty towards his wife and daughter, through his granddaughter. Moreover, he showers his pet, Mutt-- a female dog, who is quite explicitly aligned to the principle of femininity as defined in my argument-- with all the affection and attention previously denied to his wife. All individual men and women are victims of larger

---

[5] Martha Nussbaum points out that philosophers and thinkers as early as Aristotle thought in terms of the binary opposition between the powerful and the powerless. They saw 'women and slaves', in other words, the marginalised-- or the feminine, as understood in this thesis-- as politically and socially useless and clubbed them in one category. According to her, Aristotle 'held that women and slaves were not fully fledged human beings.' Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 39.

social and political power structures. However, where the masculine are awarded more central positions within these structures and sub structures, the feminine are sidelined within these socio-political hierarchies. Accordingly, as seen in *The Inheritance of Loss*, the masculine and the feminine respond in different ways when these structures threaten to give way.

The feminine-- in this novel represented more often than not by women-- are shown to be important for their masculine counterparts only in that they, by way of their passivity, end up signifying the particular social and cultural systems within which they are embedded. They are looked upon as agency deprived symbols that can be cherished or destroyed, as the occasion may demand. However, perhaps to compensate for this lack of explicit agency, the feminine women and men in the text are shown to be more resourcefully flexible, and seem somehow programmed to compromise and adjust to their surroundings. They prove either to be the survivors in the disintegrating environment of the novel or are victimized by their more inflexible counterparts who take advantage of their unformulated natures.

The Inheritance of Loss is set in Kalimpong, India, in the 1980s. Kalimpong is a small hill station in the state of West Bengal, with the Gorkha community forming a large part of its population. It is an area rife with tension between the Gorkha rebels who demand a separate Gorkhaland and the Indian government. The narrative focuses on the inner lives of the characters to expose to its audience the world of the novel, and in so doing it uses the modern revelation plot to tell the story.[6] There is no chain of events that might give the plot a sense of progression; instead the narrative draws attention to the chaotic emotions of the characters which gives the novel a sense of stasis. By using this style of story telling, the text illustrates,

---

[6] Toolan's book *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* proved helpful for the understanding of the narrative techniques employed in the texts examined in the thesis. Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1988).

at the level of technique, what is also shown in the interpersonal relationships of the characters: the idea of circularity and stagnation.

This stagnation, to my mind, is equally a result of the novel exploring moments of transition, where one set of values clash with the other, thus producing a sense of impasse. One of the transitions that the novel explores is the movement from a world of certainties to a world where nothing remains certain anymore; this latter world is, as mentioned earlier, the world of the feminine. Here, the the discourse of colonialism and even that of nation-states is no longer relevant. [7] The feminine characers, in all of the texts examined in the thesis cannot, or do not, see themselves through the mainstream discourses that help define their masculine counterparts, because those narratives themselves, either political or ethical, are masculinist in nature. Desai's text explores the moment of struggle between forces that are breaking down these narratives and feeble masculine attempts to reinforce and hold on to discourses of divisive identity formation.[8] The text explores the moment where the old world view and the new world view, or indeed the masculine and feminine, have locked horns as it were, and it is this that produces a sense of stasis in the novel.[9]

---

[7] According to Alfred J. López and Robert P. Marzec, 'Those acting in a truly global capacity have embraced liberal multiculturalism and negotiate their interests in the arena of universal consensus. Postpolitics "emphasizes the need to leave old ideological divisions behind and confront new issues, armed with the necessary expert knowledge and free deliberation that takes people's concrete needs and demands into account" (Žižek 198). The postpolitical call to a liberal transnationality, in other words, is the enlightened answer to the former colonial impulse to constitute human communities in terms of national and warring sovereignties.' Alfred J. López and Robert P. Marzec, 'Postcolonial Studies at the Twenty-five Year Mark,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 56.4 (Winter 2010): 677-688.

[8] Amartya Sen's *Identity and Violence* is a sensitive and informative study of the ways in which Identity as a concept can be extremely disruptive to peaceful co-existence. He argues that '(...) identity can (...) kill-- and kill with abandon. A strong-- and exclusive-- sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups. Within-group solidarity can help to feed between-group discord.' Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Destiny of Illusion* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006) 1-2.

[9] Part of this transition-- from old to new or masculine to feminine-- is the movement from various kinds of imperialistic impulses, British colonialism, American neo-imperialism, or the attempt by the Indian government

Among the masculine characters, Jemubhai Patel heads the plot. He is a conflicted man, and stands for the older, crumbling world view. He is not a uni-dimensional character, however; his conflicts are laid bare in the text, and they make him seem vulnerable and a victim of his circumstances. The judge, who might, ironically, have been judged very harshly by the reader, is represented in such a way-- revealing the character's past and present relationships and conflicts-- that he comes across as more human than would have been the case if his acts of cruelty had been viewed in isolation. And this attempt at trying to understand deeply a person's particular and unique position, so that the contradictions inherent in every personality are revealed, is akin to the project of the ethics of care, and also, illustrates its effectiveness. The ethics of care privileges a contextual understanding of people, instead of viewing them objectively and impartially.

Jemubhai is a product of two hundred years of explicit colonial enterprise by the British in India. He is a man broken by constant struggle between two distinct ways of living, and an inferiority complex that eats him up from inside. 'He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with a passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both.'[10]

The judge's cook Nandu and his son, Biju, are on the other hand victims of another, more implicit form of colonialism. Nandu sends Biju to the US, hoping that their financial situation would thereby improve. However, Biju's experience of the US is not what simplistic celebrations of globalisation would have one believe.[11] Both Biju and the cook represent the

---

to keep various territories under its control, to a postcolonial attempt within the novel, of looking beyond these controlling structures. And much of the tension within the novel is produced from this struggle.

[10] Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006) 119.

[11] In his study, 'The Challenges of Globalisation and International Law', Ved. P. Nanda argues, 'As a multidimensional phenomenon, globalisation has facilitated and indeed accelerated the free flow of ideas (...), opponents contend that globalisation has failed to produce benefits for poor people, created social tensions and

'third world' in the ever tightening clutches of the 'first world'. If Jemubhai and Biju are two ends of a straight line, from British imperialism to American neo-imperialism, Gyan could be said to complete the triangle. Embroiled in the political confusion that besets India after independence, he is fighting from within the subcontinent, but his oppressors do not come from 'outside'.[12] As a part of the Gorkha community-- which has been combating generations of neglect in that area-- he is fighting against the colonialism that the Indian government itself exercises in a bid to hold the country together.

The feminine sensibility, instead, is shown to fall 'between the contradictions'.[13] It is neither firmly this nor firmly that, and it does not admit any extreme and unproblematised stances that stand in complete opposition to each other. The text uses this attitude to explore the middle path as it were, because it can look beyond the either/or dichotomy. Those that are feminine in the text either suffer because of their nebulous natures which make it easy for the masculine to project their own fears on to them, or they emerge victorious in an ever changing world because of their adaptability. Sai, Jemubhai's grand-daughter, and Bela/Nimi Patel, Jemubhai's wife and Sai's grandmother, span three generations. They belong to the category of women who suffer, and they stand at either ends of the novel.

---

minimised the importance of native cultures, overwhelming, diluting or replacing them with a world culture of consumerism often associated with the United States.' Shawkat Alam, et al., *Globalisation and the Quest for Social and Environmental Justice: The Relevance of International Law in an Evolving World Order* (London: Routledge 2011) 255.

12 According to Laura Albritton, 'Desai explores, in intimate, minutely detailed situations, the ramifications of Indian independence, sectarian conflict, South Asian statehood, the reverberations of British imperialism, and the devastating lure of the American dream-- or in this case, American nightmare.' Laura Albritton rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, Harvard Review, 32 (2007): 169-171.

13 About Sai, leaving her convent to start her life in the judge's house, the narrative suggests, 'Any sense that Sai was taught had fallen between the contradictions, and the contradictions themselves had been absorbed.' This is how the feminine characters live their lives in the text. The same contradictions that create strife within their masculine counterparts are accepted with ease by the feminine. (Desai 30)

Each belongs to a different generation and each has been brought up under a different regime in contrasting milieus. Sai is a westernized Indian, and we have proof within the text of her being educated. Bela is brought up in an environment where a girl's education is sacrificed for the advancement of a boy. Bela has no awareness of western ways until she starts living with Jemubhai as his wife. But, despite the differences, we see Sai's life almost replicating her grandmother's. Bela, for the judge, stands for everything he wishes to leave behind but is at the same time defined by, for example his culture, his home and his family.

The judge's abandonment of all these social and familial structures is all the more scarring for him because of his entitled/masculine position within these structures. It is after the humiliation and the racism he encounters in England as a young student at the time of the British raj that he wishes to turn away from the Indian way of life out of shame and a sense of inferiority.

> On board the *Strathnaver* on his way back, the judge sipped beef tea and read *How to speak Hindustani*, since he had been posted to a part of India where he did not speak the language. He sat alone because he still felt ill at ease in the company of the English.[14]

Jemubhai, in his attempt to tone down his Indian-ness sips beef tea; beef tea stands for all that is Western here, and the judge's sipping it as an Indian Hindu hints at the profound difficulty of his situation.[15] At the same time he feels uneasy in English company, but due to his

---

[14] Desai 119

[15] To emphasise the extent of Jemubhai's dereliction in his sipping of beef tea, it is interesting to bring to attention the culturally resonant episode between Mahatma Gandhi and a doctor in Durban. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, being gravely sick was required by her doctor to drink beef tea, but she refuses, putting her spiritual/religious faith before her physical well-being. In *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi recalls, 'Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it.' 'You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that, so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish. If you don't like this, I must regretfully ask you to remove her. I can't see her die under my roof.' (...) I next spoke to Kasturbai herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter.

English education, he has not been able to gather enough knowledge about people from his own country and so has to read guide books on how to speak one of its major languages, like a colonial Englishman. This is the complexity faced by all colonial and postcolonial scholars and writers.[16] The feminine response to such a situation, as evidenced in my thesis, would be to live through these contradictions without having to forcibly erase them. The tragedy and violence of the judge's position, on the other hand, arises from his need to fight these contradictions.

The conflict within the judge when he returns to India from England is illustrated in the text through these lines:

> He sat up, fidgeted, looked at the winged dinosaur, purple beaked banana tree with the eye of one seeing it for the first time. He was a foreigner-- a foreigner-- every bit of him screamed. Only his digestion dissented and told him he was home (…).[17]

The judge could not have managed the dereliction of his family and culture without developing within himself an all consuming hatred for himself, and by extension everything that he is drawn to, like his wife Bela:

> He did not like his wife's face, searched for his hatred, found beauty, dismissed it. Once it had been a terrifying beckoning thing that had made his heart turn to water, but now it seemed beside the point. An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one.[18]

But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: 'I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations.' M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1996) 270.

[16] As Graham Huggan argues, 'The postcolonial is (…) constructed as an object of contestation between potentially incompatible ideologies, political factions and interest groups.' Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001) 29.

[17] Desai 167

As mentioned earlier, all abstract forces like tradition and history that in his eyes had so wronged the judge seem for him to have been concentrated in the unformed, feminine Bela. He had found beauty in her once, but like his parents' love, he had to debase it and make it vulgar in order to turn away from it.[19]

Although she comes to represent an entire social order for the judge, Bela remains unaware of how important she is in the internal narrative that he has constructed as a means of projecting outward the conflict of living across so many contradictions.

Bela then ends up signifying something that she, like her mother before her, has never really been a part of. She has been brought up to be married off; her father, Bomanbhai, incarcerated all the women of the household within the women's quarters so as to avoid having his daughters sullied by the outside world before marriage. The daughters have been brought up in cages, to be used as lifeless currency. Therefore it is ironic that Bela should remind Jemubhai of a society within which she has had no say, in which she has been a silenced victim. But, as mentioned earlier, being an object presented to him by that society, like a memento, perhaps nothing can signify that society better than she can.

As the narrative progresses, the baggage Bela carries becomes increasingly heavy, until it seems that she has become a dull, dead thing that gradually disappears altogether. Yet at the height of her misery, perhaps she does come to realize that she has become more than herself. She tacitly refuses to learn the English language that is imposed on her by Jemubhai;

---

[18] Desai 168

[19] Travelling from India to England for the first time, Jemubhai is embarrassed at his parents' traditional and effusive behaviour: ''Throw the coconut!' he shrieked. Jemubhai looked at his father, a barely educated man venturing where he should not be, and the love in Jemubhai's heart mingled with pity, the pity with shame. His father felt his own hand rise and cover his mouth: he had failed his son. (…). Jemu watched his father disappear. He didn't throw the coconut and he didn't cry. Never again would he know love for a human being that wasn't adulterated by another, contradictory emotion.' (Desai 37) As seen in this passage, his is not an adolescent embarrassment but one that runs deep instead, and produces profound conflicts within his personality.

'you have a swaraji right under your nose,' the frustrated English teacher tells him.[20] But in thus attaining such extraordinary proportions her own life loses all meaning: 'The sight of this scene, of history passing and continuing, touched Nimi in a desolate way. She had fallen out of life altogether.'[21] She vanishes entirely, not only for Jemubhai but also for herself: 'she peered out at the world but could not focus on it, never went to the mirror, because she couldn't see herself in it.'[22] Bela, living with her unsympathetic husband, can't see herself because she realises that her husband, the only person with whom she has any interaction, cannot 'see' her any longer. Jemubhai can only see in her the Indian way of life that he seeks to turn away from; as a result, not having anybody to reassure her of her existence, she loses belief in it herself.

Jemubhai, being as sure as he is about the nature of right and wrong, severs all relations with his daughter after she marries a man of whom he does not approve. Sai is brought to him after her parents' death, and from then on the process of the judge's own decline and atonement commences. He has effectively killed his wife and abandoned his daughter, but Sai's arrival makes him vulnerable and opens up the judge himself to both internal and external judgement.

Nonetheless, even more than Bela perhaps, Sai finds herself in a precarious position. She has been educated and brought up in a way that makes her a foreigner in her own country. Even before she meets the judge, her convent makes sure that she prefers 'cakes to ladoos' and 'English to Hindi'.[23] After attaining freedom from the convent she is taken to her

---

[20] Desai 172 The English teacher here accuses Bela of turning away from everything English in the spirit of Indian self-reliance, as part of the freedom movement.

[21] Desai 172

[22] Desai 173

[23] Desai 30

previously estranged grandfather, the judge, whence begins the second phase of her education: 'The judge ate even his chapattis, his puris and parathas with knife and fork. Insisted that Sai, in his presence, do the same.'[24]

In the judge's house in Kalimpong, Sai is isolated from those of her own age group and lives in a bubble with much older people who are either retired anglophiles or people who follow the new trend of worshipping America. As a result she loses touch with the reality of her surroundings completely: 'Sai, (…) had no idea how to properly make tea this way, the Indian way. She only knew the English way.'[25] She has no real knowledge of the Gorkha community which has been fighting for its rights in that part of the country, until she meets Gyan-- who is from that community-- and is confronted with the irony of her estranged situation.

Sai finds herself placed between the judge and Gyan. She is half and half of what they are. Although she is westernised like the judge, she, like Gyan, does not see it as necessarily a good thing; in the same way, although she is not parochial like Gyan, she does feel oppressed by the judge's snobbery. However, Sai too, like Bela, discovers that for the masculine men around her, she has been shaped by abstractions and narratives beyond her grasp, inasmuch as she is not in any way a key player within these narratives but is nevertheless a signifier of her supposed socio-political context.

---

[24] Desai 176. Food, in Desai's text is very important, and the characters in the text reveal a lot about themselves through their relationships with different kinds of cuisine. John Mullan in his article in *The Guardian* says, 'As the Nepalese independence movement grows in strength, and the ethnic fissures in Kalimpong become clear (...) Food focuses cultural unease. Eating makes you feel you belong, and makes you know when you do not.' John Mullan,'The importance of food,' rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, *Guardian Book Club* 1 Nov. 2009.

[25] Desai 6

The judge sees in her the consummation of the denial he had always wanted to achieve: 'Sai was more his kin than he had thought imaginable. There was something familiar about her; she had the same accent and manners. She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns (…).'[26] Gyan on the other hand is in love with her, but he also sees in her the betrayal he is fighting against. The regional Gorkhas are fighting against the irresponsibility displayed by the Indian government towards minority communities in the northeast of the country, including towards the Gorkha people. Gyan gets involved in the Gorkhaland movement and feels that he has to make a sacrifice of his love for the middle class and sheltered Sai to demonstrate a deeper involvement in the cause.

Gyan, like the judge in Bela's case, is both drawn to Sai and, at the same time, repelled by her. He sees in her the complacency of the Indian middle class, their turning away from problems at home by developing manners which would distinguish them from the masses. Hence Sai becomes to Gyan what Bela had been to the judge:

> Yes, he owed much to his rejection of Sai. …he could work against her, define the conflict in his life that he felt all along, but in a cotton-woolly way. In pushing her away, an energy was born, a purpose whittled.[27]

Sai, in the end, like Bela, loses herself because she has become something larger; something that cannot be defined for the masculine characters unless these women embody it. 'You hate me' she screams, 'for big reasons, that have nothing to do with me. You aren't being fair.'[28]

Sai and Gyan's difference in perspective can be gauged from the following exchange:

---

[26] Desai 6

[27] Desai 260

[28] Desai 260

'I'm not interested in Christmas!' He shouted. 'Why do you celebrate Christmas? You're Hindus and you don't celebrate Id or Guru Nanak's birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year.' (...)

'You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. (...)'

(...) 'No,' she said, 'that's not it.'

'If I want to celebrate Christmas, I will, and if I don't want to celebrate Diwali then I won't. Nothing wrong in a bit of fun and Christmas is an Indian holiday as much as any other.'[29]

Just as the judge is not able to reconcile how one could sip beef tea and still be Indian and uneasy in the company of English people, Gyan fails to understand how one could celebrate Christmas and not be enslaved to 'Western culture'. This exchange is illustrative of the distinction that my thesis draws between very set notions of identity demonstrated by those with masculine sensibilities and the adaptability and cosmopolitanism of the feminine.

Sai and Bela find themselves connected despite their dissimilar circumstances. Bela for the judge was too Indian, and Sai for Gyan is too westernized. It seems as if the world has remained static for them. Only the endings of their stories differ according to their particular situations in history. Bela is sent away to her brother's house by Jemubhai, and there is a suggestion in the text is that she is eventually burnt alive by her family. Sai on the other hand comes to a new realization by the end of the novel.

Between them are other characters who follow similar patterns of rigid, unbending men and flexible women. The characters of Lola and Noni are interesting in this regard. They are middle aged sisters that live together in Kalimpong. They are Jemubhai's neighbours, and are anglophiles quite like the judge himself. However, they are not represented as being

---

[29] Desai 163

traumatised by the schizophrenia of this experience as he is. Although they are caught in the same conundrum of two conflicting cultures as the judge, they seem much more reconciled to their situation.

The judge and the sisters belong approximately to the same era, but the narrative suggests that the sisters are unlikely to have received the same attention and importance in the culture of their origin as the judge did. Therefore the sisters, as all other women in the novel, are represented as accommodating, and find it easier to adapt. They, like the judge, belong to a time when a girl's education was of little importance. That Noni, who takes on the responsibility of tutoring the home-schooled Sai, has to stop after Sai reaches the age of sixteen can be seen as illustrative of this.[30]

Lola and her neighbour Mrs. Sen's daughters are both abroad, and both women are spoken of as doing well for themselves. Biju, the judge's cook's son, on the other hand, who is also in the US, is portrayed as finding it hard to cope in the foreign culture. Biju's experience, as depicted in the text, explicitly reveals the myth of globalisation as a facade engineered by capitalist forces, where global power structures remain intact but the poorer countries are exploited by the rich for cheap labour and rich markets. Moreover, people like Biju are misled by way of deceptive discourses of increased opportunities in a globalised world.[31]

---

[30] 'Once more they tried physics, but Noni couldn't find an answer to the problem. "I'm afraid I have exhausted my abilities in science and mathematics. Sai will require a tutor more qualified in these areas," said the note she sent home with Sai for the judge.' (Desai 69-70)

[31] As David Harvey argues, 'Just deserts, it has long been argued by the ideologues of free-market capitalism (...), are best arrived at (...) competitively (...). There is no need for explicit theoretical, political or social argument over what is or is not socially just because social justice is whatever is delivered by the market.' David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 343.

Biju soon realises that the system in the US, far from improving his financial situation in any significant way, actually puts him in various exploitative positions and deprives him of his dignity.

> Biju joined a shifting population of men camping out near the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids' rooms, laundry rooms, and storage rooms at the bottom of what had been a single-family home (...). The men shared a yellow toilet; the sink was a tin laundry trough. There was one fuse box for the whole building, and if anyone turned on too many appliances or lights, *PHUT*, the entire electricity went, and the residents screamed to nobody, since there was nobody of course to hear them.[32]

This population of voiceless men in the above passage tells an entirely different story of the notion of a global culture from what it is presented as being. It is a population that is kept hidden, as is made evident in the passage-- 'behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids' rooms, laundry rooms, and storage rooms (…)'. The narrative, through Biju's experiences in the US, tells of the danger of certain versions of cosmopolitanism, as ideological positions which in fact support the capitalist project of a spurious globalisation-- privileging the rich and disregarding and oppressing the poor. This version of multicultural existence can never be an empowering idea.

My thesis, however, endorses cosmopolitanism as being an enriching force, but only if it is not incorporated by mainstream, political and economic, machineries. This novel in itself is an example of how a cosmopolitan experience-- that of the author-- does not necessarily preclude enough critical distance to be able to discern the exploitative aspects of that very position. This will also be seen later in the thesis in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt*

---

[32] Desai 51-52

Shadows, which is a cosmopolitan novel but is very critical of American policies. However, as was demonstrated through Sai's argument regarding the celebration of Christmas, considering the human history of migration and conquest, a cosmopolitan experience is inevitable, and to fight it is to fight ever altering historical forces.

Corruption of the cosmopolitan ideal by political and economic forces, illustrated through Biju's experience, is similar to the corruption of the idea of care at the hands of professional, profit making organisations, seen later in the thesis in the examination of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. This process of the incorporation of an otherwise idealistic and a genuinely productive idea is seen all across profit making organisations. These positive ideas are then used as tools of deception so to speak, and in that form they strengthen established systems instead of challenging them.

Although it is important to recognise in these ways the double standards and inequalities inherent in the political and economic structures of the world, which make it difficult to tout any concept such as globalisation unproblematically, it is equally important to recognise the more positive aspect of a cosmopolitan experience as portrayed for instance through the feminine figure of Sai. And an acknowledgement of this other more constructive and more enriching aspect of a cosmopolitan sensibility is very significant for my thesis.

Besides the fact of Lola and Mrs. Sen's daughters and Biju being from disparate economic backgrounds and thereby being presented with unequal opportunities, I think their attitudes, and in this particular case their sexes, do play an important role in how they respond to their surroundings. The daughters and Biju occupy opposite spaces in their cultures, and although their cultures differ a little because of their different economic statures, there is no denying the fact that both cultures have patriarchy as their fundamental principle.

Accordingly, Biju, who has been pampered as a child for being a boy finds it harder to accept change than the daughters who have been taught to adjust to new names after marriage.

However, an example of a feminine male is Saeed, Biju's African Muslim colleague in America. Saeed is from the same class position and is of the same gender as Biju but they have extremely different approaches to each other and to their surroundings. Where Saeed adjusts quite easily, Biju finds it very difficult. Biju is wracked by conflict and thinks to himself:

> Saeed was kind and he was not a Paki. Therefore he was OK?
>
> The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy?
>
> Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis?
>
> Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslims?
>
> (...) This habit of hate had accompanied Biju, and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India.[33]

Biju, used to thinking of himself in strong and consolidated terms, quite like the judge sipping beef tea, finds it very troubling to come to terms with opposing forces within himself and around him. He also finds it difficult to be in circumstances in which his identity and his understanding of people and things are in any way challenged.

Having been brought up in a masculinist society, it is safe to assume that the migrant daughters would know how to survive being situated on the margins, and would by definition not be overly invested in the social and cultural systems of their origin. These women, as a

---

[33] Desai 76-77

result, would know how to forge a mixed culture of their own, belonging neither to this nor that. This difference between an Indian woman and an Indian man's experience of a new culture is brought out in the episode where Biju comes in contact with other Indian girls while delivering food in the US. The girls, the narrator confirms, '(...) ate their dadi's roti with adept fingers, donned a sari or smacked on elastic shorts for aerobics, could say "Namaste, Kusum Auntie, aayiye, baethiye, khayiye!" as easily as "Shit!"'[34] This scene is in complete contrast to the uneasy judge with his beef tea and also to the conflict ridden Biju in his response to Saeed. Besides other things, the above textual instance makes evident that these particular women are fluent in more than one language, which again, as will be seen later in the thesis, is a marker of a feminine, cosmopolitan mind-set. The women in the novel modify themselves and their situations according to their circumstances with greater ease than the men, and it is significant that the only really successful characters-- in the sense of those who manage to survive and even flourish-- in the novel are women.

Although the narrative voice sometimes ridicules their flightiness, it seems to me that the text as a whole expects the reader to understand that they are the ones-- Lola's and Mrs. Sen's daughters, the almost hypocritical Indian girls in the US, Lola and Noni themselves-- who can survive the atmosphere of the novel. The atmosphere, as mentioned earlier, depicts moments of transitions, where nothing can remain black or white and true or false. Thus, what emerges from a reading of the story is that these feminine women, who have never had the luxury to be complacent in their social situations and therefore rigid in their outlook and behaviour, can manipulate and respond to change and thereby negotiate the collapsing world of the novel.

---

[34] Desai 50

Bela and Sai would not have suffered as much as they do in the text if, like the migrant girls, they had dealt with their unformulated natures in ways that would be advantageous to them. It is also important to note that both Bela and Sai find themselves isolated, whereas all the above mentioned feminine women who learn to survive are spoken of as being in either groups or pairs. This observation reveals the importance of communities, and this is where Carol Gilligan's ethics of care, which seeks to bring together those with a feminine perspective under one ethical system, can be seen to be important. The ethics of care emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships and the need to make connections and build communities in order to survive hostile and mainstream masculinist environments. The issue of isolation resulting from difference will be discussed in more detail as the thesis progresses, as it is a recurrent theme in a few novels examined in this thesis. The isolated feminine men and women are represented as suffering greatly, whereas those who are able to establish communities are shown as relatively more secure and at peace.

The fact that the above mentioned feminine characters in the text adjust better in different cultures, as a result of their marginality in the cultures of their origin, brings us to the idea of cosmopolitanism as it is interpreted in this thesis. It is made clear through the above examples that the feminine men and women-- like Saeed and the 'Indian girls' for instance-- are immediately more open to other cultures and ways of life. As mentioned earlier, the feminine find it easier to forge mixed cultures of their own, unlike the masculine, who find it much harder to give up their secure identities and positions of authority in the face of change and turmoil: for example the judge, Gyan and Biju feel the need to see themselves as unified and formed, and are therefore unable to deal with the contradictions inherent in historical and personal journeys.

The reason that those with feminine sensibilities find it easier is that they are not invested in a uniform identity, as identity forming narratives privilege masculine over feminine principles. As a result, feminine characters are seen in this thesis-- which draws its conclusions from various fictional scenarios depicted in works like *The Inheritance of Loss*-- to be more open to cosmopolitan ways of life than those with masculine sensibilities.

Father Booty and Uncle Potty belong to the category of a few feminine male characters in the novel, and they are feminised men inasmuch as they are marginal. Besides Saeed, it is also through Father Booty and Uncle Potty that the text opens up the idea of the feminine. They seem to be in a homosexual relationship with each other which immediately relegates them to the peripheries of their cultures-- as is suggested by their names, since Booty brings to mind the usage of the word as slang for buttocks and Potty recalls defecation. They do not have a sense of belonging to this or that culture as the other men in the novel do.[35] Another marginalised/feminised man in the text is the judge's cook, Nandu. Nandu is also Biju's father as mentioned before, and as his profession as a cook might suggest, he is not a masculine man.

The crucial distinction between these attitudes-- masculine and feminine-- as represented in contemporary women's fiction, and their traditional imposition as rigidly defined identities for men and women, is that these categories are not biologically determined

---

[35] Father Booty's femininity/marginality and his lack of faith in political boundaries and nation-states as a cosmopolitan person are evidenced in the following passage. '(...) the police (...) turned everything upside down (...). 'Where are your papers?' Father Booty was now found to be residing in India illegally. Oh dear, he had not expected contact with the authorities; he had allowed his residence permit to lapse in the back of a moldy drawer for to renew the papers was such a bureaucratic hell, and never again did he plan to leave or to reenter India.... He knew he was a foreigner but had lost the notion that he was anything but an *Indian* foreigner....' (Desai 220) Father Booty is made to leave the country for the lack of official documents allowing him to stay. The Indian government throws him out as a result of the paranoia generated by the Gorkha rebels. Eventually, the narrative confirms, '(...) lovable Father Booty who, frankly, had done much more for development in the hills than any of the locals, and without screaming or waving kukris, Father booty was to be sacrificed.' (Desai 223) His fate as a sacrificial victim is similar to Bela and Sai's, and his femininity is emphasised through his position.

in these writings. In other words, within contemporary literature these categories have nothing to do with the sex of an individual; instead, they have to do with their socio-political positioning and conditioning. Accordingly, one way of realising the potential of the ethics of care and making it more relevant is also by basing it on these principles; instead of being based on a more arbitrary distinction between men and women, the ethics of care should take into account positions of marginality and privilege. It requires, as mentioned earlier, a reconstruction of the categories of masculine and feminine according to different principles.

Mutt, the judge's female dog, also belongs to the category of feminine characters-- like Bela and Sai-- that are sacrificed in the text. Many strands in the narrative converge in the character of Mutt. She is sacrificed at the altar of abstractions that are beyond her. With Mutt we see the category of the 'feminine' being extended beyond human beings to animals, which thereby empties these classifications of all sexual associations. Whether it is justified to equate an animal with the feminine or not is another question, nonetheless, the purpose that Mutt effectively serves through this comparison is to illustrate the sheer marginality of the feminine. Mutt, who is kidnapped by poor local people, is surrendered in the age long fight between the rich and the poor.

Mutt is connected to Bela not only through the judge but also because her destiny is the same as Bela's, given that, as a creature denied any agency, she ends up signifying something larger and external to her. She looks back to the tragedy of Bela and looks forward to what is going to happen between Sai and Gyan. Mutt, like Bela and Sai, is given up for reasons her consciousness cannot apprehend. She is likewise connected to the drunken man-- also a feminine male in that he is utterly marginal-- who is blinded by the police for causes that are beyond him. According to the narrative,

It was the impoverished who walked the line so thin it was questionable if it existed, an imaginary line between the insurgents and the law, between being robbed (...) and being hunted by the police as scapegoats for the crime of others.[36]

And it is the 'impoverished' that have been called feminine in this argument. The 'insurgents' and the 'law' for these feminine characters are, as the passage suggests, two sides of the same coin. Both are extreme positions that replicate and reflect the other. Through these examples, it seems reasonable to suggest then, that the ethics of care makes most sense when the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' are redefined as categories, inasmuch as the opposition is not between the man and woman as much as between the politically advantaged and the politically disadvantaged, and the political structure could be that of a nation-state or an alternative rebel group.

The feminine characters of the novel replicate each other's fates, in the same way as the masculine characters do. The feminine characters fall between the cracks, so to speak, and their mind-sets suit the deconstructing world of the novel, whereas the masculine characters, who have been the main players in a bygone world of rigidities, lose out in a collapsing world. On the other hand, it is this same indefiniteness of the personalities of the feminine characters that helps the masculine characters in the text to define themselves through them and thereby victimize them.

All this time, external realities are continuously creeping into the more inward world of the novel. The Gorkha National Liberation Front in Kalimpong is revolting against the Indian state. They are fighting for Gorkhaland, a state of their own, and secession from the neglectful Indian government. We get a sense of their encroaching presence right in the beginning when a group of rebel boys force their way into the judge's house and rob him of

---

[36] Desai 282

his guns. The judge, like a 'woman', is forced to lay the table for them during this attack. It is significant that the judge should be made to play such a 'feminine' role; he has to be feminised, the incident seems to suggest, to survive in a world that is breaking down.

In the same way, the descriptions of the judge's dilapidated house seem to hint at the breakdown that is already taking place around it. The once impressive house is shown to be falling apart and this process is symbolic of the world of the novel, where all certainties crumble and give way to a world of collapsing boundaries, a world that is difficult to grasp. In its reliance on the description of the dilapidated house to give the audience a glimpse into the larger world of disintegrating values, the text follows the tropes of a revelation plot. It focuses on minor details of the world it attempts to delineate, instead of drawing the audience's attention explicitly to the socio-political turmoil taking place.

By focussing on smaller details, the novel gives the audience an insight into the emotional landscape of the story. And indeed, even as the narrative commences, the entire environment seems to be enveloped in mist.

> Up and through the chimney and out, the smoke mingled with the mist that was gathering speed, sweeping in thicker and thicker, obscuring things in parts-- half a hill, then the other half.(…). Gradually the vapor replaced everything with itself, solid objects with shadow, and nothing remained that did not seem molded from or inspired by it.[37]

Like Dickens' *Bleak House*, the descriptions set the tone of the novel. It is a world where boundaries fade and it becomes impossible to hold on to any clear certainties or demarcations. The novel is enveloped in gray; all other colours become vague and indistinguishable.

---

[37] Desai 2

There remains no clarity, not only in the physical landscape of the novel, but also in the emotional landscape. Everything merges with its other, and that sets up the rest of the narrative: 'The judge felt old, very old, and the house crumbled about him, his mind, too, seemed to be giving way, doors he had kept firmly closed between one thought and the next, dissolving.'[38] Jemubhai, as a man with a rigidly masculine sensibility, has been resistant to contradictions that might challenge his sense of himself, his identity. It is both tragic and inevitable then that eventually, as he grows old, his conflicted mind starts to admit the limitedness of its perceptions. And it is with the entrance of Sai in his life, that he begins the process of asking for forgiveness from himself, and from the reader.

The Gorkha rebels become the agents of this dissolution within the novel; they threaten to violently destabilize everything, and they keep closing in on the otherwise interiorised world of the novel. They break into Lola and Noni's house and set up sheds in what the sisters considered their 'vegetable garden'. Noni, unlike Lola, sympathizes with the cause of the rebels. As a woman in a patriarchal world, Noni is shown to have always been very conscious of holding, along with the underdogs, an oblique relationship with society, and this allows her to empathize with their situation: 'Noni tried to rouse herself. Maybe everyone felt this way at some point when one recognized there was a depth to one's life and emotions beyond one's own significance.'[39] She recognises the ways in which she is connected to the rebels.[40]

---

[38] Desai 110

[39] Desai 248

[40] Noni as the feminine other and the rebels as outsiders are, as Noni realises, connected because of their marginalisation. The question of the ways in which they are connected is explored at some length in the analysis of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. The relationship between the other and the outsider is an issue that will be brought up at various points to illustrate how they share ethical attitudes and therefore can be understood together through the ethics of care.

Lola on the other hand forgets and therefore has to be reminded of her 'femininity' by the Gorkha chief:

> 'I am the raja of Kalimpong. A raja must have many queens (…),' he looked Lola up and down, tipped his chair back, head at a comical angle, a coy naughty expression catching his face, 'dear Aunty, would you like to be the fifth?'[41]

It becomes clear though this passage that all rigid organisations, be they of a national level or a smaller structure like that of the rebels, always have a centre and the margins. Although the rebel group is marginalised/feminised in the larger political power structure, the group has its own hierarchical structure, and the Gorkha chief is at the centre of it. The chief therefore feels that he can subjugate another with lesser power. Accordingly, he views femininity as something to be ridiculed. The above passage reiterates the point that both the standard and the alternative can be masculine in their rigidity and therefore reflect and sustain each other. The ethics of care does away with that binary opposition by articulating an ethical system for feminine personalities, no matter which structure--standard or alternative-- they might fall into

Despite their resentment, the novel suggests that it is Lola, Noni and other feminine characters like Saeed who have a chance of surviving the breakdown. The masculine characters on either side-- standard (judge, Biju) or alternative (Gorkha chief, Gyan) -- on the other hand, will be forever locked in a relationship of victory and defeat. As mentioned earlier, the patriarchal political structure of a nation-state is not substantially different from the patriarchal political structure of a rebel group, it is only the feminine, therefore, who have a real chance of creating a radically different ethical value system, and that is what the ethics of care potentially proposes.

---

[41] Desai 244

Significantly, the novel starts and closes with men being forcibly feminised. It is a symbolic transformation of course in that they are made to do things that have traditionally been associated with women. And although I seek to separate woman from femininity, this symbolism works in the text because of the traditional association. The unbending judge has to lay the table for the rebel boys that force their way into his house; it is the ultimate humiliation for him.

> The judge found himself in the kitchen where he had never been, not once, Mutt wobbling about his toes, Sai and the cook too scared to look, averting their gaze. (...). The judge fumbled for a tablecloth in a drawer stuffed with yellowed curtains, sheets and rags.[42]

And in the end, Biju, who was too rigid to be able to adjust to a new culture, is forced by the Gorkhas to wear women's clothing.

> One of them laughing wildly, pulled a nightgown off a hedge where it was drying. "No, no, don't give that to him," squealed a toothless crone, clearly the owner of the garment. "Let him have it, we'll buy you another. He's come from America. How can he go and see his family naked?"
>
> They laughed.[43]

In these scenes the masculine Gorkha rebels who seek to feminize and thereby humiliate the judge and Biju are ironised in the narrative, because it is in fact the femininity/adaptability of spirit that has been demonstrated to be a strength in the text.

Although, Biju in the US is offered the same opportunities as his African colleague Saeed, unlike Saeed he cannot survive. The reason for Saeed's greater potential for survival is

---

[42] Desai 6

[43] Desai 317

that being a feminine man, he learns to compromise and to work as cunningly as the rats with which they are confronted in their living quarters. Saeed is also more accepting of other people and their ways of living: 'Presumably Saeed had been warned of Indians, but he didn't seem wracked by contradictions; a generosity buoyed him and dangled him above such dilemmas.'[44] Biju, on the other hand, like the other masculine characters, constructs rigid boundaries around himself, which make contradictions inevitable and painful; therefore, like the judge in the beginning of the novel, Biju has to be feminised and thereby made flexible.

The sequence of events in the novel suggests that the distinction between the masculine and the feminine, according to which the characters have hitherto played out their parts, replicating each other's lives, needs to be dismantled; and the masculine need to adopt a feminine sensibility in order to survive in a rapidly changing world. Similarly, the idea of justice as impartial is also seen to break down in the text, to expose a more complex network of relationships, which, according to the ethics of care is the feminine way of assessing situations, since the feminine makes connections and establishes relationships instead of privileging autonomy and objectivity.

A deeper understanding of people also reveals that in a world where history is circular instead of linear, there is no place from which to begin judgement. Every victimizer has been a victim and vice versa. The vanity of the obsolete enterprise of pronouncing blind judgement is brought out most explicitly in the judge's character from the very beginning: 'The judge had fallen asleep and gravity acting upon slack muscles, pulling on the line of his mouth, dragging on his cheeks, showed Sai exactly what he would look like if he were dead.'[45]As is

---

[44] Desai 77

[45] Desai 2

seen in the passage then, the judge and all that he stands for from the start of the novel has been described as obsolete and decaying.

Following cinematic traditions, the narrative moves from detailing the minutest specifics of the characters to more panoramic descriptions. Therefore, from a glimpse of the judge's muscles, the reader is invited to look at his house, and this too, as mentioned earlier, is telling of his situation:

> Their noses wrinkled from the gamy mouse stench of a small place, although the ceiling had the reach of a public monument and the rooms were spacious in the old manner of wealth (…) They peered at a certificate issued by Cambridge University that had almost vanished into an overlay of brown stains blooming upon walls that had swelled with moisture and billowed forth like sails.[46]

This description seems to imply that the era when homogenising narratives of justice and nation-states were still believed to be relevant has passed within the text. With the rise of the Gorkha rebels, the cracks in the system become increasingly visible. Even the certificate from Cambridge University, with all that it signifies in terms of colonial pride for the judge, seems to be indistinguishable from the decaying plaster on the wall.

It is ironic that the judge himself, of all characters, is most in need of the compassion of those who are in a position to judge him, including the readers of the novel. The narrator, in laying bare the judge's deepest thoughts, is able to engender within the reader a sense of sympathy for him, but the reader is simulateously outraged by the judge's own lack of sympathy or understanding for any one around him. The judge, the audience understands, cannot pass judgment because he is himself caught in the cycle of history. In his story the

---

[46] Desai 6-7

idea of the oppressor having been the oppressed is played out most explicitly. He destroys Bela because he himself has been destroyed by historical forces. His character, therefore, proves to be the greatest illustration of the effectiveness of an ethics based on involvement and care instead of impartial objectivity. If his character is looked at objectively, without an understanding of his internal conflicts then besides it being an incomplete understanding of him as a man, there would also be no scope of redemption for him.

We learn that even his father's reasons for wanting him to become a judge were less than noble:

> His son might, might, *could!* occupy the seat faced by the father, proud disrupter of the system, lowest in the hierarchy of the court. He might wear a silly white wig atop a dark face in the burning heat of summer and bring down his hammer on those phony rigged cases. Father below, son above, they'd be in charge of justice, complete.[47]

Jemubhai's father's perspective reveals the ways in which an 'objective' and homogenising idea of justice can be manipulated easily by those who are in a position to manipulate it. It is only for those who are on the 'wrong' side of things that these 'objective' concepts become oppressive —the impoverished, women, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, disabled and so on, in other words all those groups that are feminine with respect to the dominant social system, and almost all of these have been represented in Desai's text.

All of the characters in the novel, including the judge, wish for an external system of ethical values to redeem them: 'Sai had arrived, so many years later, and though he had never properly admitted the fact to himself, he knew he hoped an unacknowledged system of justice

---

[47] Desai 59

was beginning to erase his debts.'[48] All characters look to each other for liberation. Each character is yoked to the other with feelings of guilt and a need to free themselves from that guilt. The judge looks to Mutt and Sai to liberate him from the guilt of condemning his wife and abandoning his daughter. Indeed, the judge knows about guilt more than any other character in the novel: 'In this life (…) You must stop your thoughts if you wished to remain intact or guilt and pity would take everything from you, even yourself from yourself.'[49] These lines reveal again the need for the judge to see himself as unitary and consolidated. Any recognition of one's internal conflicts and inconsistencies cannot be allowed in the judge's rigid scheme of things.

'Intactness' and sanity are sought after by all the characters within the novel, but descriptions of the collapsing physical and emotional boundaries-- crumbling houses, and the mist, like the Gorkhas, closing in surreptitiously and making everything indistinct-- suggest that most discourses that hitherto promised sanity, for example that of a nation-state or an impartial system of justice, are giving way to a different mode of relating to one another.

Initially Gyan is shown to feel guilty about betraying his people by falling in love with Sai and by the end he begins to feel guilty about betraying Sai for his people:

> In a corner of Thapa's canteen was Gyan, who had been let out of the house again. He wasn't laughing. Oh, that awful day when he had told the boys about the judge's guns. What, after all had Sai done to him? The guilt took over again and he felt giddy and nauseous.[50]

All of the characters at different points in the novel feel the need to free themselves of their feelings of guilt. The violence they perpetrate on each other is inextricably associated with

---

[48] Desai 308

[49] Desai 264

[50] Desai 314

their need for a different kind of ethical system and a need for liberation from guilt. They look for it, therefore, within their relationships with each other and not within a court of justice.

It is in the climactic episode of the judge beating the cook, Nandu, that the themes of violence, guilt and justice come together most palpably. Nandu, in this scene, wants to be punished by the judge because he is guilty of having sent his son, Biju, far away to earn money. The judge, on the other hand, has lost his dog Mutt, who had kept him going in the past by fulfilling his need for something to shower affection on, to assuage his guilt for having committed acts of cruelty within his relationships. Sai, a witness to the beating, has only recently been abandoned by Gyan. The atmosphere of the novel therefore reaches a crescendo of tension and ends with the cook debasing himself in front of the judge.

Nandu starts enumerating his 'petty crimes' deliriously and begs the judge to free him of his guilt:

> 'I've been bad,' the cook said, 'I've been drinking I ate the same rice as you not the servant's rice but the Dehradun rice I ate the meat and lied I ate out of the same pot I stole liquor from the army I made *chhang* I did accounts differently for years I have cheated you in the accounts each and every day my money was dirty it was false sometimes I kicked Mutt I didn't take her for walks just sat by the side of the road smoked a bidi and came home I'm a bad man I watched out for nobody and nothing but myself-- *Beat me!*'[51]

And the judge obliges, as if he thinks he is doing the cook a favour. It seems in this scene that the judge would have wanted a similar corporal punishment to scour himself of his own guilt.

---

[51] Desai 320

The cook's disgracing himself here also brings to attention the victim-complex that is perpetrated by an ethical system that arbitrarily privileges one and punishes another.

Ideas of guilt, judgment and violence come together in this scene, precipitating within Sai an understanding of her own life: 'Never again could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to herself, that she might create her own tiny happiness and live safely within it.'[52] This realization that Sai arrives at in the end is built up for the reader from the very beginning. The ethics of care with its foregrounding of interconnectedness corresponds directly with this eventual realisation in Sai. With Sai's recognition of the importance of connection and interpersonal relationships, it becomes clear that all the structures that had prevented this recognition within the characters in the text have finally collapsed, opening up possibilities for a different kind of ethical paradigm.

Just as the narrative shifts without warning from panoramic to character descriptions and in so doing provides for the reader a fuller picture of the environment of the novel, in the same way it shifts between individual subjectivities and jumps from one internal narrative to another to demonstrate their interconnectedness.

Although each character feels she/he is living her/his own individual life and has secrets that the others would never know, the reader in the process of making sense of the environment assists in the drawing of crucial connections, and thereby creating meaning. All of the characters unwittingly follow similar patterns. All of them imagine that even though they inhabit the same hill station, they are far apart and dwell in different mental spaces. But just as Sai in the end comes to recognize that her life is not merely her own concern, so do the other characters. Lola and Noni find their tiny universe desecrated by the Gorkhas and realize

---

[52] Desai 323

how their seemingly innocuous and private existence was in fact a privilege and a violation of the rights of others. The judge and the cook—master/servant-- find themselves connected in the climactic scene where there is violence between them.

An analysis of *The Inheritance of Loss* opens up a lot of ideas for my thesis' examination of the ethics of care through contemporary fictional scenarios. Desai's text helps to deconstruct the categories of the masculine and the feminine, putting any kind of biological determinism out of the question, at the same time as substantiating, as analysed in the piece, the relevance of these categories. The text also introduces the idea of cosmopolitanism and globalisation, which will be looked at in further detail in the following chapters. Through its portrayal of the characters, the text makes evident the very important connection between the marginal, feminine and the cosmopolitan, which is one of the central arguments of the thesis.

Toni Morrison's *Paradise*: Local prejudices

The various chapters of *Paradise* (1997) are named after the women characters in the text. Some of these women are part of the main, patriarchal, black community of Ruby-- set in the Oklahoma of the 1970s-- and they inhabit the roles of mothers, wives and daughters in that community-- Patricia, Lone and Save-Marie. The other female characters who lend their names to the chapters have only a tangential relationship with Ruby. These others are a group of maverick women who live together in a house that is called the Convent-- Consolata, Mavis, Grace, Seneca, and Divine. The women stand in opposition to the masculinist Ruby. Besides these women, *Paradise* also represents some male characters that have an ambiguous response to the social setup within Ruby. Therefore this text as well, and even more explicitly

than Desai's text, represents a conflict between values that have been termed masculine and feminine in this thesis.

Besides explicitly linking these two groups of women by naming the chapters for them, the narrative also connects these feminine women in many other interesting ways within the text. One set of female characters form a part of the community but are othered by it, and the other set are the women in the Convent, who are outside of the community. The two groups are potential threats for the established community; that the other and the outsider come together in this way is very significant for my argument.

By providing the reader with glimpses of Ruby through the lives of these women, the text places some distance between the reader and the community, and thereby provides the reader with an outsider's perspective on it. Guided by a conventional, biblical male god, a group of black men-- excluded by a white dominant society and also rejected by lighter skinned blacks in the Disallowing-- come together in search of the Promised Land and a sense of belonging.

> (...) the one hundred and fifty-eight freedmen were unwelcome on each grain of soil from Yazoo to Fort Smith. Turned away by rich Choctaw and poor whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built.[53]

The extent of their exclusion, both social and spatial, is underlined in the passage by the emphasis on their expulsion from 'each grain of soil'. They found a village which they call Haven, with an Oven as its symbol. However, although Haven is founded by this group of black people in opposition to their xenophobic counterparts, it is made clear from the

---

[53] Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (London: Vintage Books, 1999) 13.

beginning that this community-- based as it is not only on a very similar patriarchal mythology and value system, but also on the same policy of exclusion-- will not provide an effective alternative to the society that it seeks to reject.

The rebel women of the Convent are represented as having had a history of rejection, quite like Haven. However, they deal with their history differently; unlike the black community which replicates the structures that had disallowed them, these women build a very different kind of a community. One glaring difference between the Convent and Haven/Ruby is that where Haven is inordinately proud of its black identity, rejecting as impure all who are of a lighter skin colour, the reader is never told of the multiple racial identities of the women of the Convent. The black men see their policy of exclusion and their pride in their skin colour as a defiance of conventional racial prejudices. However, what is revealed is that this inverse prejudice is not really defiance, as it employs the same tools of bigotry and prohibition, and thereby does not have the power to radically challenge and change the basis of the oppressor/oppressed structure.

The reader is only tacitly made aware that the Convent women are from various racial backgrounds. The women leave behind all masculine narratives like race, colour or class, and come together to form a community built on principles of care and interpersonal relationships. And in so doing, they form a microcosm of a different ethical universe, one that ties in very well with the ethics of care that Gilligan outlines in *In a Different Voice*. These women occupy together a large house, which was once a Catholic school situated just outside the limits of the community. Their strategic geographical location vis a vis the village highlights their position as outsiders. The story sets up the black community and the Convent against each other. It is also interesting that both terms-- Haven and Convent-- have vaguely religious

connotations, in that a convent is understood to be a place for nuns, and the name Haven is very reminiscent of heaven.

Haven is seen by the men who live in it as a utopia of self sufficiency, but the fact that it is exclusively masculine men who are spoken of as having founded it, and that it is a male god that leads them, reveals that only masculine men are truly entitled to that utopian life. Haven is later abandoned and rebuilt elsewhere as Ruby, following the same masculine principles, with the same Oven at its centre.[54] The name Ruby again seems symbolic as it evokes the redness of blood. The name signals what the black community, which started out as a refuge and shelter for its members, has really become, with its central ideals of purity and honour, and the bloodshed that inevitably follows an adherence to these ideals.

The incident in which the women of the community, accompanying the founding fathers from Haven to Ruby, secretly resent the inconvenience of having to transfer the Oven from one place to another emphasises the fact that most women and some men in that ultra-masculinist community have a different standpoint:

> The women nodded when the men took the oven apart, packed, moved and reassembled it. But privately they resented the truck space given over to it-- rather than a few more sacks of seed, rather than shoats or even a child's crib.[55]

The women in Morrison's text, as in *The Inheritance of Loss*, feel that they have little to do with abstractions such as honour, for which the men would kill or get killed. Symbols and icons representing and demarcating cultural boundaries do not mean much to them because

---

[54] The Oven as a symbol is important to the founders of the community of course, in that it signifies the community's self-sufficiency. It signifies freedom for the women of the community, from having to work in the kitchens of the white masters.

[55] Morrison 103

they are only peripheral subjects within these narratives. It is ironic then that women, like Bela in Desai's text, should become primary targets when one culture or community is threatened by another-- the rape of a woman in such a case becomes tantamount to the rape of an entire culture. As was seen in Desai's text, these women although marginal, at the same time, come to signify the social structures that they are supposed to belong to.

From the Indian nation state in Desai's text, Morrison's novel directs the thesis to an examination of a black American community, revealing, besides other things, that patriarchal values do span most cultures and traditions. Acknowledging this makes it essential also to recognise that any challenge to such far-ranging, normative masculinist expectations needs to be mounted by an equally coherent feminine system that, although privileging difference, is not rendered ineffectual and fragmentary. The ethics of care, because of its respect for difference, and its attempt to articulate a more or less consistent ethical value system, provides a platform for just such a formulation.

Women, in *Paradise*, have to deal with the more immediate problems that these larger narratives of honour and prestige create for them. This point is best illustrated in the text through what Patricia Best is told by Soane Morgan about their ancestors who were turned away and 'disallowed' by coloured people but given some food and money as charity. She tells her that although the men forbade everybody to touch the goods, '(…) her grandmother, Celeste Blackhorse, sneaked back and got the food (...), secretly passing it to her sister Sally Blackhorse, to Billy Cato and Praise Compton, to distribute to the children.'[56] As more or less voiceless subjects of these rigid, masculine narratives, women have to adapt themselves as best they can, even if that entails having to lie or be duplicitous. Like the portrayal of Saeed

---

[56] Morrison 195

and the migrant Indian women in Desai's novel, these women from Ruby are also portrayed as having to be shrewd for the sake of survival, in a system that puts their needs last.

Although Saeed is a male character, he shares with these women a feminine sensibility, at an angle with the masculinist standard for various reasons, relating to class, gender, sexuality or ethnicity. It is important to reiterate here, as the above example suggests, that these attitudes have little to do with being a man or a woman. However, in *Paradise* most of the feminine characters are in fact women, and that makes for an interesting study as well, since it helps to examine the ways in which Gilligan's ethics of care-- which was originally aimed at women's experiences-- can be seen as problematic.[57]

I will be exploring the relationship between the outsider and the other at different points in the thesis. Because the women of the Convent are not from the community of Ruby and do not conform to their ideals, they are very much outsiders who threaten, by way of their very existence, the lopsided stability of that community. The feminine inhabitants of Ruby, however, have a different function. Although they are from that community, they are sidelined, and in many ways both sustain and challenge the values of that community. It is interesting to explore how these two groups develop tacit understandings or attempt to form alliances of an implicit kind. Lone Du Pres, who is from Ruby, for instance tries to gather as much force as she can to stop the men of Ruby from harming the Convent women:

---

[57] The care orientation can be seen as essentialising women by going along with the assumption that all women inherently react to situations in a particular way. It can also be interpreted as simplifying the mother/child dynamic, which Gilligan's conception, picking up from object relations theory, holds up as the fundamental relationship which socialises men and women in different ways. *Paradise*, in providing only female characters with which to examine the ethics of care, helps to both complicate and clarify some ideas within this ethical orientation.

> Lone didn't, couldn't, know all, but she knew enough and the flashlights had revealed the equipment: handcuffs glinted, rope coiled and she did not have to guess what else they had. Stepping softly, she made her way along the edge of her stream toward her car. "Thy will. Thy will," she whispered, convinced that what she had heard was no idleness.[58]

Lone Du Pres feels an immediate connection with the Convent women here. In the crucial situation where her loyalties are truly tested, she instantly sides with the Convent women-- the outsiders-- rather than the men of her community.

My argument is that the outsider, for example a refugee or an immigrant, can be allied to the other in very important ways. The other, as opposed to the outsider, is some one who is at an angle to the community of her origin, for reasons that can range from gender, class and sexuality to even disability. And both the outsider and the other can be brought together within the ethics of care, as falling outside of normative, masculine standards.

The feminine men and women of Ruby are not just subjects deprived of agency, it also becomes easy for the masculine to invest them with figurative and external meaning-- they ironically come to signify whole cultures-- because of their lack of a definite ethical and political identity. Therefore, like Bela and Sai in *The Inheritance of Loss*, Soane Morgan, Dovey, Billie Delia and the Convent women are transformed, mostly unbeknown to themselves, into ideas and concepts. And their personal security is based on whether the idea they happen to represent is one which is to be protected or one which is to be rejected.

The above point is illustrated through Steward and Deacon Morgan's attitude towards women. The reader is given a glimpse in the text of their idea of 'perfect' women. The

---

[58] Morrison 280

nineteen black church ladies they see as young men become for them epitomes of beauty and respectability. According to Steward Morgan,

> The women in the convent were for him a flaunting parody of the nineteen Negro ladies of his and his brother's youthful memory and perfect understanding. They were the degradation of that moment they'd shared of sunlit skin and verbena.[59]

Those nineteen women they see together while visiting another black town, stand, for the brothers, for feminine beauty and virtue. The convent women, on the other hand, are extremely distasteful to them because they openly flout these ideals, and by way of their strong personalities they resist being abstracted in the way the nineteen women are.

It is fitting then, considering the merely symbolic position that women occupy in the community, that the town should be named after a woman who is denied medical help during her pregnancy and thereby killed by the white people. Naming the town after Ruby does not translate into women having gained more substantial positions in the community. Its function is to remind the men of the town of notions like honour and hatred, and to fuel a general resentment towards the white population of the country. 'It was the shame of seeing one's pregnant wife or sister or daughter refused shelter that had rocked them, and changed them for all time. The humiliation did more than rankle; it threatened to crack open their bones.'[60] Quite like Desai's text, these abstract ideas in *Paradise* need to be embodied by women, in order for men to clearly define them. Therefore, feminine women in *Paradise*, as in *The Inheritance of Loss*, come to represent for the masculine men the success and failure of their own enterprise, in most cases an enterprise within which real feminine impulses and experiences have little to no place.

---

[59] Morrison 279

[60] Morrison 95

The narrative in *Paradise* examines an inverted form of the racial bias encountered by slaves and slave descendants in the United States. The gaze in this text is self reflexive regarding the black community. The white oppressor is only shadowy and becomes an excuse, in this self sufficient community, for the perpetration of violence by those who resist change and prefer the status quo inasmuch as it ensures their supremacy within the community.

The black people of Ruby guard jealously their blackness; they are what Patricia Best describes as eight rock blacks, any kind of involvement with a person of lighter skin is taboo for them. The oppressive 'white gaze' is substituted in Ruby with the oppressive black gaze; this is indicated in the very first sentence of the book, 'They shoot the white girl first.'[61] As Linda J. Krumholz argues, 'by calling her "the white girl" Morrison makes whiteness the exception, and thus she constructs the invisible and "universal" point of view as non-white.'[62]

Morrison's text explores two distinct models of paradise: the masculine model through Haven and Ruby, and the feminine model of the Convent which presents an obvious challenge to the masculine model, from which the women are systematically excluded. This exclusion is glaringly evident in the scene of the meeting between the young and the old people of Ruby, called by Reverend Misner. Although organized with the help of a daughter of one of the families, no woman is shown to voice her opinions in the meeting. This is true not only for the older generation of women but also for the young women of Ruby. It is a meeting called to talk through the disagreement between the old and the new generations, regarding the words on the lip of the Oven. One of the reasons that the women don't say anything is that, resulting from generations of exclusion, their concerns are completely

---

[61] Morrison 3

[62] Linda J. Krumholz, 'Reading and Insight in Toni Morrison's Paradise' *African American Review* 36.1 (Spring 2002): 21-34.

different; they were not, as shown earlier, interested in the symbolism of the Oven in the first place. The women of Ruby have a much more down to earth approach to these matters, as Dovey thinks about the whole fuss, that it is 'An argument fuelled in part (...) by what nobody talked about: young people in trouble or acting up behind every door.'[63]

Since the masculine paradise does not allow dissent, it creates a bubble that eventually has to burst. The young people of Ruby, who are expected to adhere to the social arrangements laid out for them, turn rebellious, and the fissures in the life of the community become increasingly visible. The older people of Ruby harbour a dangerous sense of patrilineal pride and a parochial attitude which comes into conflict with the rebellious young people and inevitably leads to the destruction of the community's peace and harmony. Therese E. Higgins sums up the conflict between the old and the young of Ruby as: 'Slavery, persecution, ancestry-- all deeply rooted, deeply psychological matters-- are wrestled with between people who have experienced a brutal, painful past and people who are attempting to experience a more hopeful and painless future.'[64]

However, the younger generation is aware that the 'hopeful future' that they are looking towards can be theirs only at the cost of painful reconciliations. They seek to deal more directly with the world and the civil rights struggle raging outside the community. The young of Ruby seek to confront their history, as exemplified by the debate over the meaning of the Oven inscription as follows:

'No ex-slave would tell us to be scared all the time. To 'beware' God. (...)'

---

[63] Morrison 83

[64] Therese E. Higgins, *Religiosity, Cosmology, and Folklore: The African Influence in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 125.

Deacon Morgan cut him off. 'That's my grandfather you're talking about. Quit calling him an ex-slave like that's all that he was. (...)'

Having caught Reverend Misner's eyes, the boy was firm. 'He was born in slavery times, sir; he was a slave, wasn't he?'[65]

Jettisoned for their black skin, the townspeople become averse to lighter skin, and the racial mixing that it represents. Patricia, tracing back the history of the community concludes that 'They became a tight band of wayfarers bound by the enormity of what had happened to them. Their horror of whites was convulsive but abstract.'[66] Not being particular, their hatred of white people takes on dangerously abstract dimensions. Their paradise, therefore, is even more fragile than an all white paradise inasmuch as it is based on bitterness and rejection.

Patricia Best, one of the female characters through whom the story is taken forward and the unofficial historiographer of the town, tells the reader of the community's obsession with purity.[67] Patricia's family is abandoned because her father marries a lighter skinned woman from outside the community. The woman named Delia that her father, Roger Best, marries dies because the town's men show reluctance in fetching medical help during her pregnancy. Ironically, it was a similar callousness from lighter skinned people-- of denying help to one of the community's own pregnant women-- that had led to the birth of Ruby.

---

[65] Morrison 84

[66] Morrison 189

[67] Philip Page's essay, 'Furrowing All the Brows: Interpretation and the Transcendent in Toni Morrison's Paradise,' is an interesting study on the multiplicity of meanings generated in Morrison's text. Regarding Patricia best he says, '(…) Patricia is analogous both to the author and the reader. As compiler of charts and writer of notes, she parallels the author's production of a text about the novel's characters. At the same time, her efforts are attempts to decipher what has happened and is happening, and therefore resemble the reader's role.' Philip Page, 'Furrowing All the Brows: Interpretation and the Transcendent in Toni Morrison's Paradise,' *African American Review* 35.4 (Winter 2001): 637-649.

In representing them as behaving the same way toward a lighter skinned woman-- presumably for vengeance-- the narrative indicates the endless repetition of the victim/victimizer position. This was also seen in *The Inheritance of Loss* in the judge's cruel treatment of people from his own culture, just as he was treated by the English in England. However, Roger's is not an isolated story:

> 'Look what they did to Menus' Patricia recalls, 'forcing him to give back or return the woman he brought home to marry. The pretty sandy-haired girl from Virginia. Menus lost (or was forced to give up) the house he'd bought for her and hadn't been sober since. And though they attributed his weekend drunks to his Vietnam memories, and although they laughed with him as he clipped their hair, Pat knew love in its desperate state when she saw it. She believed she had seen it in Menus' eyes as well as in her father's, poorly veiled by his business ventures.'[68]

The burden of this 'taint'-- of racially mixed ancestry-- has to be borne even by Billie Delia, Patricia's daughter. This need for the purity of race and colour is of course inextricably linked to women's sexuality. To make sure that the purity of the clan remains intact, women of the community have to be kept under strict subjugation, controlling '(…) the who fucks who' as Patricia describes it. Patricia, accordingly, realizes that '(…) everything that worries them must come from women.'[69]

This extreme need to control the movement and sexuality of women will be clearly evidenced in another text from a completely different culture, analysed in the thesis: the Turkish writer Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*. And it is the similarity within the patriarchal values of disparate cultures that validates my argument: the need to articulate a

---

[68] Morrison 195

[69] Morrison 217

coherent ethical system which may counter the more or less universal patriarchal value system.

Billie Delia, Patricia's daughter, is shown to be at an angle to society on both fronts: ancestry and sexuality. Her ancestry is tainted as she is the granddaughter of Delia and Roger, something that Patricia defiantly seems to have emphasised by naming her after her light-skinned grandmother. She is seen as being sexually deviant by that community since, as a child, she unwittingly reveals to those around her the clitoral pleasure she received while riding a horse. Billie Delia's character, therefore, can provide the most telling insights into the town of Ruby and its ways. She, unlike anybody else from the town, runs away from Ruby. Not even Roger Best, who committed the original sin of marrying a woman of lighter colour and who is discriminated against for the rest of his life, has the temerity to free himself from the tightly knit community.

It is fitting, therefore, that the rebellious Convent women are summoned, towards the end of the novel, by none other than Billie Delia. In this episode, Billie Delia as the other, wishes to join forces with the Convent women, the outsiders, to challenge the community. The resurrection of the women that occurs in the final chapter seems to be a result of her invocation, 'She hoped with all her heart that the women were out there, darkly burnished, biding their time, brass metaling their nails, filing their incisors-- but out there. Which is to say she hoped for a miracle.'[70] Here the Convent women are invoked by Billie Delia explicitly as warriors or destructive forces to raze the community to the ground for the creation of something new.

---

[70] Morrison 308

Patricia's observation regarding women as posing the greatest threat to the community rings true inasmuch as both the outsider and the other are mostly shown to be women in this text. However, I will argue that Roger Best and Menus are feminized men. They are feminine, as the category is defined in this thesis, but do not have the courage to confront their situations and therefore turn to outlandish business enterprises or alcohol. They are confused because, although feminine, they are not allowed to feel feminine inasmuch as they are men. Had they been able to understand their situations better, they might have more productively joined forces with Billie Delia and the Convent women.

Revealingly, what keeps the community and its power structure alive is monetary success, and none of the women within Ruby, except Anna Flood, is shown to deal with money. One of the ways men hold sway in the community is by having economic control. It is interesting to note here that neither of the two feminine men, Roger and Menus, is shown to be thriving financially. It is significant also that the patriarchs of the community, Steward and Deacon Morgan, run a bank on which the community is dependent.

One of the reasons for the Convent women's self sufficiency and some degree of power is that they earn their own money-- sometimes by selling food items to the people of Ruby. Albeit the town seems to flourish because of its financial success, it is also what renders the town and its interpersonal relationships fragile and superficial. Steward Morgan's wife, Dovey, realizes this about her husband; she knows that the more he gains in terms of money, the more losses accrue around him. And these losses are not just physical but spiritual: 'Almost always, these nights, when Dovey Morgan thought about her husband it was in terms

of what he had lost. (...). Contrary to his (and all of Ruby's) assessment, the more Steward acquired, the more visible his losses.'[71]

These issues-- of money forming the shaky foundation of relationships within the community, and the exclusion of women from the arena of economic exchange, as from all other 'serious' dealings-- are brought together in the scene where Richard Misner tries to reconcile the Morgans and the Fleetwoods. The surface reason for the debacle is that KD Morgan slaps Arnette Fleetwood. However, all women, including Arnette, are absent from the scene of reconciliation. The women can, significantly, only be heard shuffling upstairs while the men talk about compensating for the insult with money. And as soon as there is talk of financial compensation the atmosphere between the men cools down. 'They bowed their heads and listened obediently to Misner's beautifully put words and the tippy-tap steps of women who were nowhere in sight.'[72]

On the outskirts of Ruby is the other paradise: the Convent. It grows as a community by following its own principles; no external agency, be it black or white or man's or woman's interferes with it. It seems almost incidental that this feminine space is occupied only by women. However, the fact that they are all women helps to examine and problematise the essentialising aspects of the ethics of care, geared as the theory originally was towards women. It can also be argued that it is only because of the skewed relationship that most women share with patriarchal societies-- of which Ruby in many ways is a microcosm-- that most people who seek refuge in the Convent happen to be women.

---

[71] Morrison 82

[72] Morrison 61

However, some masculine men go there too. For example, Deacon Morgan conducts an affair with Consolata which is retrospectively referred to many times in the text. This is the only point in the narrative where the militantly masculine and the radically feminine meet. And the reader is told that Deacon gets so disoriented by the novelty of Consolata that he flees.

> An uncontrollable, gnawing woman who had bitten his lip just to lap the blood it shed; a beautiful, golden, outside woman with moss-green eyes that tried to trap a man, close him up in a cellar room with liquor to enfeeble him (...); a Salome from whom he had escaped just in time or she would have had his head on a dinner plate.[73]

Consolata, because of her feminine assertiveness is immediately demonised in Deacon's mind. This passage makes references to the myths through which womanhood and femininity, in their rebellious forms, have been constructed as frightening. And his head on a dinner plate obviously gestures at Deacon's anxiety of emasculation/castration by Consolata.

However, in yet another meeting of the other and the outsider, Deacon's wife Soane befriends Consolata after her sons' death. Deacon's stance on this friendship hints at the potential threat such an alliance poses to masculinist stability. He imagines that Consolata had

> (...) weasled her way into Soane's affections and (...) plied her with evil potions to make her less loving (...) it was not the eternal grieving for their sons that froze her but the mess she was swallowing still, given to her by the woman whose very name she herself had made into a joke and a travesty of what a woman should be.[74]

---

[73] Morrison 279-280

[74] Morrison 280

Deacon resents his wife's behaviour because she withdraws from him sexually. Woman according to Deacon has to be a source of consolation and pleasure to man, not requiring consolation and pleasure herself. That is why he is repelled by Consolata, because she passionately draws pleasure, like blood, from his body.

The women who gather in the Convent, unlike the men of Ruby, do not in fact mean to turn it into an incorruptible hallowed sphere. It turns into just that though, because its members do not follow a policy of exclusion and prudery, and therefore there is no need for anyone in the Convent to resort to deception and dishonesty. There is no need to tame women and their sexuality in the Convent because, unlike in Ruby, there is no desire for purity of race. Although the narrative does not state the racial backgrounds of these women, the reader can at times draw certain conclusions from a description of their past situations within society; Consolata, for example, seems to be a mixed-race South American. According to Linda J. Krumholz, in the convent '…the nomadic circulation of whiteness and blackness among the women prevents blackness from replacing whiteness as gaze and judgment.'[75] Accordingly, it is the Convent, not Ruby, which is able to offer a drastically different social structure.

The women let the Convent-- which seems to become a spiritual entity in itself-- function according to its own logic. The people of Ruby are represented as being extremely religious; the Convent, on the other hand, is called by that name almost ironically, because it is the one place where permissiveness and blasphemy are not looked at with censure.[76]

---

[75] Krumholz 28

[76] The difference in what religion means to both communities is an important issue in the novel. According to Channette Romero: 'The accepting, non-institutionalized spirituality that the Convent women practice is juxtaposed in the text with the exclusions of institutionalized religion, particularly Christianity. (…). The text is critical of normative Christian traditions for contributing to the subjugation of women. Even though Ruby is a small town, it has three separate Christian churches.' Channette Romero, 'Creating the Beloved Community: Religion, Race, and Nation in Toni Morrison's "*Paradise*"' *African American Review* 39.3 (Fall 2005): 415-430. Religion is taken up later in the thesis to further illustrate masculine and feminine ways of responding to various controlling and identity forming discourses. It is of course very visible in Paradise as well, that the masculine

Desires that within the Christian religion would be considered sins, for example appetite, anger and lust, are given free reign here. As Magali Cornier Michael notes, the convent '(…) depends on neither fixed subjectivity, nor hierarchical structures, nor totalizing metanarratives.'[77]

However, the term Convent is perhaps not wholly ironic in that it conjures up the image of a place where women have learnt to survive without men; only in this case 'man' and 'woman' is complicated further by those men who feel stifled by the man-made paradise and go to the convent desperate for solace. Therefore, it would be accurate to observe that in this text as well, the ideas of masculine and feminine are more or less divorced from the sex of individuals. It is after having borne witness to the many men that find their way to the Convent in time of need, that Lone DuPres comments,

> (…) it was women who walked this road. Only women. Never men. For more than twenty years Lone had watched them. Back and forth, back and forth: crying women, staring women, scowling, lip-biting women or women just plain lost….But the men never walked the road; they drove it, although sometimes their destination was the same as the women's (…).[78]

The Convent is not a space that is forcibly created, instead it creates itself, as an escape from the ordered world outside; in this the convent is represented as an almost mystical entity. People are drawn to this place where they let out whatever emotions they had hitherto been forced to contain.

---

people of Ruby are comfortable with an impersonal idea of religion, whereas the Convent women feel the need to relate much more personally and subjectively to religion and spirituality, or not at all.

[77] Magali Cornier Michael, 'Re-Imagining Agency: Toni Morrison's "*Paradise*"' *African American Review* 36.4 (Winter 2002): 643-661.

[78] Morrison 270

Moreover, the Convent is a community where difference is not suppressed. As Magali Cornier Michael points out, 'Communal caring does not homogenize the women, (…) who remain distinct from each other and who at times demonstrate overt dislike for each other.'[79] And this is why the Convent could be seen as a microcosm of a world which functions according to a parallel ethical system. This is very significant inasmuch as the question of an acknowledgement of and respect for difference is a very important issue for the ethics of care as well.

A respect for various kinds of individual, cultural and societal differences is absolutely central for the care orientation as interpreted in this thesis. The reason that it is accepting of difference is that the ethics of care itself is based on the idea of difference between masculine and feminine impulses. Moreover, according to Gilligan's theory, a feminine ethical sensibility always tends to privilege subjectivity and the particularity of various situations. Therefore, although the ethics of care as seen in this thesis attempts to bring together and theorise on feminine sensibility as whole, and tries to look for some common ground between different kinds of feminine experiences and from different parts of the world, it, quite like the Convent, does not do it at the expense of difference and particularity.

All voices are given equal reign in the Convent, which results in a liberating if highly volatile environment. The Convent is therefore as conducive to friction as it is to compassion and sympathy; both these get reflected in the relationship between Mavis and Gigi. They are shown rolling in the dust, fighting, but their combative embrace here is heavily reminiscent of and seems as liberating as the sexual embrace of the formation of rocks and trees that is invoked through the text as a leitmotif. Mavis thinks to herself later,

---

[79] Michael 654

'(…) she had enjoyed it. Pounding, pounding, even biting Gigi was exhilarating (…) more proof that the old Mavis was dead. The one who couldn't defend herself from an eleven-year-old girl, let alone her husband.'[80] Mavis, who, before taking refuge in the Convent had been accused of having accidentally killed her twin babies and was too submissive to rise up to the extreme harassment meted out to her by her husband and other children, not only finds peace in the Convent, but as seen in the above example, also learns to fight back. According to Michael, in the Convent there occurs a '(…) reconceptualization of identity and agency as decentered and multivocal (…).'[81]

As opposed to Ruby, where difference is looked at with intense suspicion, in the Convent, difference becomes the norm inasmuch as it was their difference that had caused these women to take refuge in the Convent in the first place. Those who gather in the Convent are not different only as regards the patriarchal societies outside the Convent, they are also different from each other; in fact each recognizes the other according to the different kinds of pain that each has endured. And in this, the homogenising Ruby and the heterogeneous Convent can be seen as paralleling the main distinctions between masculinist, neo-Kantian concepts of ethics and Gilligan's ethics of care respectively. The distinction between the two is that where neo-Kantian ethical concepts defend homogeneity for the sake of objectivity and impartiality, the ethics of care privileges particularity and context, for the sake of a deeper understanding of relationships and individuals.

Food, rather like money in Ruby, is one of the things that brings together the diverse members of the Convent. There are whole, seemingly unrelated, lyrical passages in the text dedicated to showing Consolata and the other Convent women cooking. 'The fear, the

---

[80] Morrison 171

[81] Michael 657

bickering, the nausea, the awful dirt fight, the tears in the dark-- all of the day's unruly drama dissipated in the pleasure of chewing food.' [82] However, while a social setup giving paramount importance to economic success is shown in the text to only bring negativity into relationships and foster unhealthy competition, food is portrayed as physically and spiritually nourishing. Food is something over which people are shown to connect; and this connection between its members is one of the main differences between Ruby and the Convent.

The text invests the concept of money with capitalist greed, whereas food is portrayed as more wholesome and organic. Also, food is tangible-- and therefore 'feminine'-- it has an immediate and use value effect; whereas money, like the idea of the Oven, is abstract and therefore inherently more dubious. Here again it becomes evident how the characters in Morrison's text are clearly divided into masculine and feminine categories. The patriarchal town of Ruby is associated with everything that might be considered masculine, like a general scramble for material gain and territoriality, whereas everything considered feminine is attributed to the Convent, including acts of connection and compassion, and they celebrate their femininity through food and acts of cooking.

Highlighting further the importance of a more nurturing way of life, the novel at various points emphasises the importance of physical well-being in order for the soul to cleanse itself of pain and bitterness, as Consolata says in her role as a 'pagan' priestess, 'Never break them in two. Never put one over the other. Eve is Mary's mother. Mary is the daughter of Eve.'[83] This quote, as also the idea of the nurture and connection, leads the discussion to the relationship between parents and children, especially the role of the mother. It is an important issue not only in this novel but also with respect to the ethics of care,

---

[82] Morrison 179

[83] Morrison 263

inasmuch as according to the care orientation the relationship of a child with its mother is one of the first caring relationships that a child enters into.

The relationship between parent/nurturer and child/nurtured and how it affects people as individuals and communities at large, is a very important question in the novel. Also, the bond between mother and child is seen by the narrative as crucial to the feminine experience. However, the question of it necessarily being a biological bond is problematised at various points in the novel, for instance through the relationship between Mavis and her children who terrorise her, and also through the relationship between Mary Magna and Consolata that will be discussed later. That these bonds of care and nurture are important in the text is evident in the fact that the masculine Ruby is rife with tension between children and their parents, whereas the Convent is full of women who-- although most of them have had bad experiences with regard to that relationship-- look to establishing similarly intense connections with fellow members. The narrative uses this relationship to further illustrate the difference between the patriarchal town of Ruby and the natural, uninhibited or feminine environment of the Convent. There is a clear pattern that emerges in this regard: Ruby seems arid whereas the Convent is mysteriously fertile.

In the form of the bond between Mary Magna and Consolata, the reader is introduced to a relationship that is akin to a mother and child's in the Convent. It is very significant that the novel should make this relationship exemplary. Mary Magna is not Consolata's real mother, but they share a bond and an understanding that parallels the intensity of the mother/child connection.

For thirty years Consolata worked hard to become and remain Mary Magna's pride (...) Consolata worshipped her. (...) while she lay in the children's ward a beautiful framed face watched her. It had lake-blue eyes, steady, clear but with a hint of panic behind them, a worry

that Consolata had never seen. It was worth getting sick, dying, even, to see that kind of

concern in an adult's eyes.[84]

Consolata, as an orphaned child, had been rescued by Mary Magna from the streets. By

upholding the adoptive relationship between Consolata and Mary Magna, the novel, to my

mind, problematises simplistic understandings of the mother/child relation and avoids

essentialising motherhood, and supporting theories that push women back into an, often,

imposed role of motherhood.

The narrative, through this relationship, makes clear the fact that instead of upholding

motherhood per se, it affirms compassion, love and deep connections. This is important for

the ethics of care since within the care orientation as well, it would be fallacious to look at

relationships of care, simplistically, as a simple giving and receiving of care. It needs to be

understood instead as a value system that takes a more involved view of relationships and

people. It is an ethical conception that views individuals contextually and with compassion,

instead of through 'impartial' and rigid ideas of right and wrong.

Mavis' character is a good illustration of this point, since like the judge in *The*

Inheritance of Loss, Mavis would have been subjected to very harsh judgment by the reader

had her case been looked at in isolation. She is, in the outside world, running away from an

abusive family situation and the guilt of having unwittingly killed her children, but when she

enters the Convent, she is, as it were, reunited with her twins. She feels that she can see and

hear them again and manages to have a living relationship with them in spite of the fact that

nobody else can see them. On her first day in the Convent,

---

[84] Morrison 224

> Left alone Mavis expected the big kitchen to lose its comfort. It didn't. In fact she had an outer-rim sensation that the kitchen was crowded with children-- laughing? Singing?-- two of them were Merle and Pearl. Squeezing her eyes shut to dissipate the impression only strengthened it. When she opened her eyes, Connie was there (…).[85]

In the Convent, Mavis is able to re-establish a spiritual relationship with her dead children. The convent, for all who go there, is able to mysteriously fulfil their spiritual needs.

Be that as it may, Mavis, having unwittingly killed her twins and having left her living children, complicates most productively any simplistic understanding of a mother and child relationship. Like the ethics of care, as interpreted in this thesis, *Paradise* is able to demonstrate, through cases like Mavis, that where the intensity of the bond between a mother and child may be celebratory, it nevertheless has to be established, and is not biologically inevitable. Had she been held to account more impersonally and 'objectively' then Mavis would have been categorically condemned, instead of being allowed to enter into loving relationships of empathy in that place of sanctuary.

Likewise, Pallas and Seneca come to the Convent having been injured by their mothers, and are able to find comfort amongst the women of the Convent. Gigi as well, although the reader is not told of her family, is looking for a symbol, a mythical rock formation, that would stand for love that may transcend time and space.[86] She too finds hope in the Convent; and in her narrative 'afterlife', she is united with a parent, her father.

---

[85] Morrison 41

[86] It is a natural formation that looks like a copulating couple, she is told of it by her ex-boyfriend and goes out in search for it, 'Over and over Mikey told Gigi how they looked and how to find them outside his hometown. They would have been (…) a tourist attraction, he said, except they embarrassed local people. (…). At sunrise, he said, they turned copper and you knew they'd been at it all night. At noon they were silvery gray. Then afternoon blue, then evening black Moving, moving, all the time moving. Gigi loved to hear him say that part: 'Moving, moving, all the time moving.' (Morrison 63-64)

All these women, if they leave the Convent at all, keep returning to it in search of the parental succour that the Convent, like a living, breathing entity, seems to provide them with. Although Ruby's physical landscape seems to be one of open spaces and fresh air, whereas the Convent in its physical description seems like an eerie, dungeon like space that is inimical to life, it is significant that within Ruby, both Steward and Deacon Morgan are shown to be without children.

Deacon and Soane's sons have been killed in the Vietnam War. And Soane too, after the loss of her sons, finds solace in the Convent. It is noteworthy that before going to the war, when Soane's son meets with an accident near the Convent, he is given the gift of life by a Convent woman, Consolata.

> Consolata looked at the body and without hesitation removed her glasses and focussed on the trickles of red discoloring his hair. (…). Pulling up energy that felt like fear, she stared at it until it widened. Then more, more, so air could come seeping, at first, then rushing, rushing in.[87]

Consolata has the magical power of bringing back the dying from the brink. She stands for all that the convent offers; magical powers to heal the ailing is one of them.

The dungeon-like Convent stands for life, and in fact provides succour and comfort like a womb, not a biological mother's womb, but symbolic of the intensity of a bond of love. The apparently beautiful Ruby, conversely, is a place where death reigns, inasmuch as the town's people don't let go of the ghosts of the past. Furthermore nurturing relationships are linked to hope, future, and healing, the absence of this connection in Ruby and its presence in the Convent is significant.

---

[87] Morrison 245

All of the people in the text who are not able to establish this bond of care, find comfort in the Convent. For example, Patricia Best's daughter, Billie Delia, runs to the convent when her mother in rage rushes at her with an iron. Likewise, Sweetie Fleetwood of Ruby, whose children are disabled at birth, is representative, as it were, of the stifling environment of Ruby. She remains oblivious to its charms but the Convent does try to work its magic on her. The one time she walks there, without consciously intending to, she hears the cry of infants, the sound that her children cannot make. She attributes it to the devil, but the house only seems to be opening itself to her,

> Somewhere in the house the child continued to cry, filling Sweetie with rapture-- she had never heard that sound from her own. Never heard that clear yearning call, sustained, rhythmic. It was like an anthem, a lullaby, or the bracing chords of the decalogue. All of her children were silent. Suddenly, in the midst of joy, she was angry. Babies cry here among these demons but not in her house?[88]

Through Sweetie's experience here, the convent comes across as a religious space, even though Sweetie is conditioned to not trust the Convent women. This passage illustrates the point that the Convent has been portrayed in the text as a mysterious/spiritual, sentient entity, which changes form according to what is needed most by those who visit it.

In their 'afterlives' as well the Convent women try to mend relations and try to establish similar connections. And therefore, it is their parents or children that the Convent women encounter again, to settle scores and free their spirits of the pain that the early familial relationship caused them.

---

[88] Morrison 129-130

The young people of Ruby rebel against the older generation, and that reflects the lack of the above mentioned connection between the people of the town. In the Convent, on the other hand, the young and the old live together, their ages, most of the time, are of little significance to them. The final celebration of the spirit of connection in the Convent is around the end, when Pallas, along with the other Convent women, dances in the rain with her baby in her arms.[89] It is ironical then that the town blames, and later kills, the Convent women, holding them responsible for Soane's and Arnette's abortions. However, the fact that they do perform those abortions at the request of the pregnant women again problematises any simplistic idealisation of the biological connection between the mother and child.

The Convent in these ways is set up as an obvious alternative to Ruby. However, an examination of the relationship between the standard and the alternative reveals a lot more about the efficacy of these spaces. Albeit the Convent has been presented as a powerful alternative, it is also what keeps Ruby alive. The problem with Ruby is that it reflects the structures that oppressed it, it does not challenge the victim/victimiser cycle; the problem with the Convent, on the other hand, is that, in its spatial positioning just outside of Ruby, and in its portrayal as a matriarchal sphere, it is set up as an alternative social organisation with respect to Ruby. It turns into a safety valve where all kinds of aberrant energies are freely expressed. Billie Delia, Arnette, KD, Deacon, Soane Morgan, and Menus are a few of the members of Ruby who go to the Convent in moments of distress, but only to return to

---

[89] The final healing and cleansing of the Convent women occurs during the dance in the rain. They let go of their fears, however, this is spiritual cleansing. Therefore, this cleansing achieves no more than freeing these particular women of their individual pains. 'The rain's perfume was stronger north of Ruby, especially at the Convent (…). Mavis and Pallas, aroused from sleep by its aroma, rushed to tell Consolata, Grace and Seneca that the longed for rain had finally come. (…) It was like lotion on their fingers so they entered it and let it pour like balm on their shaved heads and upturned faces. Seneca embraced then finally let go of a dark morning in state housing. Grace witnessed the successful cleansing of a white shirt that never should have been stained. Mavis moved in the shudder of rose of Sharon petals tickling her skin. Pallas, delivered of a delicate son, held him close while the rain rinsed away a scary woman on an escalator and all fear of black water.' (Morrison 283)

Ruby. Billie Delia is the only one who feels that 'What she saw and learned there changed her life forever.'[90] For the others, the Convent has more of a rejuvenating effect, so that they return to Ruby determined almost to maintain the status quo.

None of them notice anything amiss with Ruby as it is, until the final catastrophe, when it is too late to save either the Convent or Ruby. It would seem that Ruby can function only so long as the Convent is allowed to go on. In destroying it, therefore, the men of Ruby display their myopia, since the cracks in Ruby become even more apparent after the destruction of the Convent. The fall of the Convent, thereby, heralds the fall of Ruby. Some critics, like Magali Cornier Michael, argue that 'the novel examines the ways in which this group of women threatens the dominant social structures that remain patriarchal and hierarchical.'[91] However, it seems to me that although the Convent is shown through the text as a liberated and a liberating space, *Paradise* also appears to suggest that both worlds go hand in hand. The norm cannot sustain itself if an alternative is not made available, but the opposite is also true, the alternative would lose all meaning if the norm were not kept in place.

The ethics of care, to which life in the Convent has been likened throughout this analysis, differs from it in two ways. For one, contrary to the way the ethics of care is interpreted in my thesis, the Convent, even if not necessarily from design, is a space that is dominated by women.[92] Besides that, and very importantly, the ethics of care is different from life in the Convent in that the Convent is represented as an *alternative* to Ruby in

---

[90] Morrison 152

[91] Michael 647

[92] Pallas' first impressions of the Convent are illustrative of the exclusively female domain that it eventually becomes, one that stands in direct opposition to, or as an alternative to the male-dominated Ruby. It is because of this that the Convent ends up seeming like the opposite side of the same coin. 'The whole house felt permeated with a blessed malelessness, like a protected domain, free of hunters but exciting too. As though she might meet herself here-- an unbridled, authentic self, but which she thought of as a "cool" self-- in one of this house's many rooms.' (Morrison 177)

Paradise. The ethics of care, as interpreted in this thesis, is not set up merely as an alternative to neo-Kantian ethical conceptions but functions in a distinct way, and according to very different principles. According to the ethics of care, homogenising and universalising masculinist conceptions simply cannot be applied to all people indiscriminately. The ethics of care is not just a critique of masculinist ethical frameworks but a break from them.[93]

Just as the town depends on the Convent, the Convent depends on people who tire with mainstream society and come to the Convent for solace, and most of these people happen to be women. What Mikey tells Gigi about the relationship between the rock formation that looks like a copulating couple and the Methodists, also holds true for the convent and Ruby:

> Mikey said the Methodists wanted to get rid of them but they wanted them to be there too. That even a bunch of repressed rednecks, too scared to have wet dreams, knew they needed the couple. Even if they never went near them, he said, they needed to know they were out there.[94]

In the same way, the men of Ruby need the Convent and its women as a safety valve, as something to vent hatred on, and something to work against. It is interesting also that the black men of Ruby here are likened to the 'rednecks'. However, they don't realise the

---

[93] Carol Gilligan herself attempts to show how the two conceptions of ethics-- care (feminine) and justice (masculine)-- do not stand in opposition to each other as alternatives, but that there is a need for an entirely different kind of ethical formulation, arrived at through a judicious coming together of both their principles: 'While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality-- that everyone should be treated the same-- an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence-- that no one should be hurt. In the representation of maturity, both perspectives converge in the realization that just as inequality adversely effects both parties in an unequal relationship, so too violence is destructive for everyone involved. This dialogue (…) gives rise to a more comprehensive portrayal of adult work and family relationships.' Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982) 174.

[94] Morrison 63

importance of the Convent for their own survival and therefore end up destroying both the Convent and, by extension, their own town.

Therefore, although Morrison's text does provide the reader with a utopian space where women are empowered, the ending renders this space insubstantial.[95] Unlike Desai's text, where, by the end, it starts to seem as if there might be a way to grasp reality if people open themselves to it, in Morrison's text there seems to be no way out. The flawed and the perfect worlds are like two sides of the same coin.

The sense of loss in Morrison's text is emphasized in the end, when the narrative enters and presents what seems like a miraculous afterlife. According to Krumholz, 'when Morrison portrays the women of the convent as living presences after they have been murdered, Morrison requires of the reader an act of imagination and an acceptance of something more than or outside of our comprehension of life.' [96] This stretching of imagination, however, does not answer the questions that are raised in the reader's mind through the text. Questions of whether a better world is at all possible are opened up through the novel, but the ending does not offer the reader any easy answers.

There is a sense of loss by the end of the novel, because despite a final meeting of the women with those they had once loved and those they needed to forgive, it is devoid of any sense of redemption inasmuch as the women are now insubstantial, and of another world. Their other worldliness is emphasised by the fact that at times they are completely

---

[95] Melanie R. Anderson argues, '(...) I believe that these women (…) illustrate the power of women to work through a ghosted and powerless social position into a more balanced, liminal state (…) the women are outside the purview and acceptance of society, but they also have achieved a power that threatens the town.' Melanie R. Anderson, '"What Would Be on the Other Side?": Spectrality and Spirit Work in Toni Morrison's "*Paradise*",' *African American Review* 42.2 (Summer 2008): 307-321. My argument, however, is that although these women exhibit some degree of subversive power when alive, their after lives are not only too non-physical but also too isolated to be able to present a substantial challenge.
[96] Krumholz 30

disconnected from the ones they meet again; Pallas and Seneca's meeting with their mothers is illustrative:

> 'Seneca!' she screamed, and ran toward her. As she approached she was intercepted by another girl, who, holding a bottle of beer and a cloth, began to clean away the blood.
>
> 'Seneca?' Jean shouted over the second girl's head. (...)
>
> 'What happened? It's me!' (...)
>
> The girl wiping Seneca's hands looked up from time to time to frown at Jean. 'Any glass get in?' she asked Seneca. (...)
>
> 'Don't you remember me?'
>
> Seneca looked up, the bright lights turning her eyes black, 'Should I? From where?'[97]

Although Seneca's mother runs towards her, Seneca seems to have completely forgotten her and the pain that the relationship caused her. Where this forgetting might be good for her soul personally, it is not a redemptive idea for the politics of the novel inasmuch as there is no addressing of past traumas or an effort to understand them.

The women are ethereal now and whatever deliverance does occur for them is of an intensely personal nature. And as the women are shown in complete isolation, the sense of community that had once substantially opposed the patriarchal community is completely destroyed. Ruby, on the other hand, though shattered, has a better chance for survival in that it is still a reality on the ground. Billie Delia is the only one who stands in the end hoping for the return of the Convent women, but even if they do return, the reader is aware by now that the only real hope left is that of continued strife.

---

[97] Morrison 316-317

Whereas Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, focussing on the larger politics of nation-states, shows a world already in transition, Morrison's *Paradise*, having taken the thesis into a more local and entirely different community, only hopes for this transition. One reason for that, perhaps, is that *Paradise* was published in 1997, almost ten years before *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Both, Desai's text and Morrison's text, bring up very important issues regarding masculine and feminine tendencies, which contribute in very significant ways to an examination of the ethics of care in this thesis. One of the new questions that *Paradise* helps us look at, and which will be examined further as the thesis progresses, is the relationship between the other and the outsider, and how both can come together and form productive alliances under the framework of the ethics of care. The other issue that *Paradise* helps to raise is that of the normative and the alternative. The text presents a bleak picture of the idea of the alternative inasmuch as it seems to suggest not only that the alternative really works only in relation to the mainstream but also that it is significantly less powerful. It is important then that in *The Inheritance of Loss*, published ten years later, this schema is reversed through the powerful Gorkhas and the powerless judge, although in Desai's text as well, the alternative is not simplistically presented as an answer to all prayers. Both texts, in this way, come together and offer many interesting insights, which help to further my investigation.

Chapter 2: The West and the East

After introducing concepts and examining questions in global and local settings through *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Paradise*, I will bring two other standpoints within the thesis. In this second chapter, I will look at texts that emerge from and are set in the Eastern and the Western parts of the world. These texts-- Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Latife Takin's *Dear Shameless Death*-- are not representative of the West and the East in a simplistic way of course, but are definitely very situated within their disparate scenarios, and will thereby help to test my ideas thoroughly, from two different perspectives.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* is an urban tale set in Boston, United States, whereas Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* is mostly set in rural Turkey. Although both texts employ modes of comedy and deal with family life and community, their designs are completely different. Also, the relationships that develop between the characters of one text are of an entirely different nature from relationships in the other text. However, the one common thing between these textual scenarios is the political and social dominance of masculinist values, pitted against a very different set of values that I have called feminine. Accordingly, these texts together help me to show that the ideas that I have discussed in the thesis make sense across cultural boundaries, as also that two completely disparate cultures have enough common ground to help to conceive of a more or less universal feminine stance.

Zadie Smith; Latife Tekin

Before *On Beauty*, 2005, Zadie Smith, a British-Jamaican, had published *White Teeth* in 2000 which received a lot of critical acclaim. In 2002 Smith came out with *The Autograph Man* which got somewhat lukewarm reviews; *On Beauty*, however, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize the year it was published. Latife Tekin is relatively lesser known in the English speaking world, but is one of the most influential contemporary women writers in Turkey. *Dear Shameless Death* was published in 1983 and was Tekin's first novel. Both writers draw from other texts in their narrative: where Smith attempts to rewrite, so to speak, E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, Tekin draws from Turkish folk tales and mythological traditions.

Both Smith and Tekin's texts deal with the complications of family life. Smith's novel looks at the ultra-urban Belsey family in the United States, while Latife Tekin's text explores the life of a rural Turkish family of Huvat and Atiye. These texts work well together because they bring into the picture narratives from very different societal organisations. The one thing that is similar in the environments of both texts, however, is an implicit masculinist value system according to which these societies are organised.

It is useful to examine texts that are set in completely disparate environments because they help to establish whether some similarities may in fact be found in what I term feminine responses in different parts of the world. That Atiye and Huvat's family and Kiki and Howard's family are embedded in very dissimilar economic, cultural and religious situations makes my examination of these texts together very revealing. In exploring the ways in which these families respond to the transitions and turmoil in their lives, both texts offer insights

that help to further my argument. The central concern in Smith's text is beauty and different responses to beauty, whereas in Tekin's text, the idea of community takes precedence.

According to Tracey Walters, 'In writing *On Beauty* Smith drew from her year-long experience as a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University and produced a satirical campus novel.'[1] Latife Takin too draws from her own life in *Dear Shameless Death*. According to the translator of the text, Saliha Paker, 'The unnamed city in *Dear Shameless Death* is Istanbul. Latife/Dirmit and her family came to live there, not in the squatter huts (...) but in the derelict wooden mansions in an old neighbourhood (...).'[2]

Another similarity between the writers is that they use comedy to a great advantage in their narratives. According to Philip Tew, '*On Beauty* views the comedy inherent in University life, a microcosmic world dominated by domestic and professional conflict, its undercurrents, human irresolution and betrayal.[3] Latife Tekin, on the other hand, imbues her narrative with myths and folk tales and idiosyncratic, and sometimes exaggerated characters, all of which come together to make *Dear Shameless Death* a very humorous tale—all the more disturbing because of the tragedy inherent in the characters' situations, caused by impoverishment and transition.

Both novels together bring up for examination many issues that are very relevant to my argument and both use family life to bring to light the questions that emerge in the

---

[1] Tracey L. Walters, 'Zadie Smith,' R. Victoria Arana ed., *Twenty First century "Black" British Writers* (London: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009) 287.

[2] Saliha Paker, introduction, *Dear Shameless Death* by Latife Tekin (London: Marion Boyars, 2001) 11. I am examining *Dear Shameless Death* in translation inasmuch as Latife Tekin wrote the text in Turkish. The fact that the text is in translation helps to explore in my thesis—which otherwise concentrates on narratives in English—how non- English speaking cultures differ in terms of their responses, and whether they can be broadly understood through the ethics of care as well.

[3] Philip Tew, *Zadie Smith* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 91.

different social settings of their narratives. In depicting complicated domestic situations in the United States and Turkey respectively, *On Beauty* and *Dear Shameless Death* will help to study the significant ways in which my argument is problematised and validated when examined across cultural and national boundaries.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*: Beauty and care

Zadie Smith's novel, as the title suggests, is an exploration of the idea of beauty. Inspired by Elaine Scarry's essay *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) Smith's narrative examines the connections that emerge between the ability to appreciate beauty and the ability to make connections and transcend limitations for the sake of a greater good. It is this examination of the relation between various kind of beauty and the presence or lack of connection that makes this text important for the thesis. Attempts at understanding the relationship between beauty and good/care/connection (*caritas*) have marked the Western philosophical tradition. According to Plato's *Symposium*,

> (...) The beautiful and the good coincide, and it is the beautiful that is the object of love. The philosopher who makes the purely intellectual pilgrimage of the *Republic* is also the ideal lover of the *Symposium*, who is led by examples of beauty in the world of sense to the (...) contemplation of the Form of Beauty, a mystical experience which is incommunicable (...). He is a philosopher or lover of wisdom, because wisdom is beautiful and beauty is the object of Love. [4]

---

[4] Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. W. Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983) 21.

Beauty and love-- another term for the same feeling of compassion, care, connection or good-

- are spoken of as inextricable in *The Symposium*. My analysis, similarly, argues that a genuine appreciation of beauty leads to the recognition of the importance of human connection in people; whereas if beauty is externalised, professionalised and impersonalised, it loses its power to change lives and situations. It is, as evidenced in Smith's text, a delicate concept, like care, which can either facilitate the quest for goodness or impede it, and that is why it is important to make the distinction between various perceptions of and responses to beauty that Smith's text and my analysis seek to make.

This is how Howard Belsey, who is one of the official experts on beauty in Smith's text, explains his infidelity to Kiki:

> It's true that men-- they respond to beauty…it doesn't end for them, this…this concern with beauty as a physical actuality in the world-- and that's clearly imprisoning and it infantilizes…but it's *true* and…I don't know how else to explain what-.[5]

Kiki is no longer the svelte woman that Howard had married long ago. She has not only lost her own 'beauty', but has no pretension to any intellectual understanding of it either. Elaine Scarry, in her theory about beauty argues,

> (…) When the beautiful person or thing ceases to appear beautiful, it often incites the perceiver to repudiate (…) the object as an invalid candidate or carrier of beauty. (…). But of course it is we (…) who make (…) promises to one another about the enduring beauty of these beautiful things. (…) it puts at risk not the repudiated object but the capaciousness of the cognitive act.[6]

---

[5] Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* (Leicester: W F Howes Ltd, 2006) 316.

[6] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (London: 2000, Duckbacks-Duckworth Media Group, 2001) 49-50.

In this passage Scarry places responsibility, not on the object of beauty but on the beholder's ability to appreciate beauty. Kiki, having altered physically from being conventionally beautiful as a young woman, can more easily appreciate, unlike Howard, this other dimension of beauty that Scarry promotes.

Howard and Kiki, therefore, stand, as it were, on opposite sides of the idea of beauty. The different stances taken up by the characters with respect to beauty give us insight into their particular situations within the societal structure depicted in the novel. Their perceptions of beauty also help to explain their responses within the relationships they share with those around them. In this text as well, the masculine and feminine paradigm-- clarified in the previous chapter as the normative and the sidelined-- can be applied to the way various characters respond to the notion of the beautiful. This, however, is not an indiscriminate imposition of the framework onto the novel and its ideas; instead, there are clear parallels between the way the characters react to beauty and the principles according to which the thesis reconstructs the masculine and feminine categories.

Although class is a glaring issue in both *On Beauty* and the novel that inspired it, E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), the difference in the perspective of characters in either text does not seem to be merely class-based. Also, even though the general attitudes of the characters towards things are indicative of their different class positions, there are instances within both texts that significantly problematise any generalisations based on class. As is seen in the novel, the issue of gender, among other things, is fundamental to the way the characters react to their class positions, as well as to the class positions of those around them. For example, although Claire Malcolm in *On Beauty* and the Schlegel sisters in *Howards End* are from a higher, more educated class, they can sympathise with Carl Thomas and Leonard Bast

who are represented as being from lower strata of society in both texts. Accordingly, gender is also seen, in some cases, to have a lot to do with the way these characters interact with each other.

According to this thesis, both class and gender issues, which are seen to put all the characters at an immediate advantage or disadvantage, can be understood in masculine and feminine terms, in the sense of masculine being the more privileged and feminine being the marginalised. Besides class and gender, other hierarchical relationships-- which will be brought out later in the analysis of the novel-- can also be understood by way of the masculine and feminine impulses, which will help examine the ethics of care as interpreted in my argument.

Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End* tells her husband, Henry Wilcox, in exasperation,

You will see the connection if it kills you Henry! You have had a mistress-- I forgave you. My sister has a lover-- you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel-- oh, contemptible! (…) These, man, are you. You cannot recognize them because you cannot connect.[7]

This way of stepping outside the constraints of received ideas of morality and making such connections, that Henry Wilcox in *Howards End*-- like Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps in *On Beauty*-- is portrayed as having shunned all his life, is shown as being a very important feminine characteristic in both texts.

Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*, like *The Symposium*, explicitly links the idea of beauty to connection, care and justice. According to Scarry's argument, beauty leads to involvement, which is the first step towards the caring impulse; she stresses, 'Beauty

---

[7] E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (New York: Signet-Penguin Books, 1992) 243-244.

always takes place in the particular, and if there are no particulars, the chances of seeing it go down.'[8] And it is the beauty of and connection with the particular that the feminine and the marginal characters in Smith and Forster's texts are open to, unlike the more masculine characters that talk, unfeelingly, in the realm of the abstract and the general. The emphasis put on the idea of connection in the above quote by Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End* becomes even more noteworthy in the light of the fact that it is the role of the particular and that of connection that Carol Gilligan also stresses in her system of ethics. And it is significant then that Henry Wilcox, the patriarch of Forster's text, is shown to be failing in just that ability.

In the eighteenth century debates about the sublime, by Kant and Burke, beauty, as Scarry points out, was relegated to the feminine sphere, as the sublime was the more portentous and therefore, the more masculine (in Schiller, *Letters on Aesthetic Understanding*, the distinctions are set up explicitly in gendered terms).[9] The fact that these masculine/male thinkers enthusiastically linked masculinity to the lofty idea of the sublime also reveals a lot about how the masculine characters in Smith's text view themselves in relation to these ideas. It is equally interesting to see how Smith's text uses these essentialising concepts in such a way that the feminine relationship to beauty-- dismissed by the above masculine theorists, as also by the masculine characters of the text-- is revealed eventually as being a more evolved state of being than the 'objective' masculine stance.

---

[8] Scarry 18

[9] Paul Crowther's discussion of the Kantian Sublime indicates that the idea of the sublime was related to the triumph of rationality over human feeling. This is the difference between masculinity and femininity that this analysis in particular and the thesis in general draws. '(...) Moral consciousness is sublime because it manifests the ultimate authority and transcendence of our rational over our sensible being. (...). Moral consciousness does not start from some affectionate feeling for humankind which is then generalized into a universal principle; we find instead that moral feeling (...) is the outcome of our recognition that the will is necessarily subject to the moral law. It arises, in other words, from our self-transcendence towards the universal.' Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 22.

Smith's narrative, like Forster's, in these ways brings various individual responses of the characters to the notion of beauty, into larger debates with respect to life and ethics. It manages to concretise through its characters these abstract notions, in order to demonstrate the ways in which they tie in with each other. Smith's text-- by rejecting the traditional notion of the feminine as inherently related to womanhood, and at the same time linking implicitly the notion of beauty to a construction of the feminine as caring and involved-- helps to further my argument in the thesis.

Beauty plays an odd role within the emotionally desolate American landscape that is explored in the text. The landscape comes across as desolate inasmuch as there is a general lack of the above mentioned connection between people, be they family members or friends, and between characters and their physical surroundings; the characters seem to stand alone and abandoned in relation to the world. It is perhaps to highlight the brief but redemptive moments of connection that Smith's narrative portrays the everyday world as being devoid of it.[10] That is the reason, it seems to me, that the one brief, almost surreal moment of connection, in which the siblings, Zora, Jerome and Levi, serendipitously run into each other, stands out in the text:

 Just before Thanksgiving, a lovely thing happened. (…). Zora was in Boston, leaving a second hand bookstore she had never visited before. (…). She (…) was holding on to her hat and stepping out to the sidewalk, when a cross-county bus pulled up in front of her. Jerome stepped off. (…). The two held each other as much for stability as for delight (…). Before

---

[10] Christian Moraru asserts, regarding the idea of connection in *On Beauty* and *Howards End*, 'In Smith, the world is a world of relations rather than an assemblage of entities. We live fully, she suggests, to the extent that we make connections and relate to one another. In her view, relationality is a world rationality, the very fomula of being. To be is to be with others.' It is then perhaps to remind the reader of the importance of connection that the text sets up a world where it is rarely visible. Christian Moraru, 'The Forster Connection or, Cosmopolitanism Redux: Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, *Howards End*, and the Schlegels.' *The Comparatist* 35.1 (2011): 133-147.

they had a chance to speak, a loud cry of 'Yo!' came from behind them. It was Levi, delivered to their feet by the wind.[11]

The Belsey siblings who are very different from each other, and are also quite disconnected from each others' lives, are magically brought together by the narrative in this scene. This moment of connection between the siblings draws attention to the otherwise almost bereft atmosphere of the text. The scene also gestures towards the fact that where beauty leads to connection, it is at the same time inherent in connection per se.

Even as all characters seem somewhat isolated from each other, there are clear behavioural patterns, as mentioned earlier, that emerge in the text and align certain characters without their conscious knowledge. These patterns again correspond directly to masculine and feminine sensibilities. On the one side are those who have a functional relationship to beauty, those who earn money by analysing it and those who are able to get ahead in life by exploiting it; and this group is headed, so to speak, by Howard Belsey. On the other side, conversely, are those that beauty touches, those whose lives change in profound ways because of it, and those who have the capacity to appreciate the particularity of different kinds of beauty. Kiki can be seen as heading this other group. The former group is masculine, as interpreted in this thesis, and as Elaine Scarry would put it, this group has repudiated the 'metaphysical' behind the beautiful, that aspect of beauty which gives it meaning and the power to change lives. Whereas the latter is the more feminine and views beauty as life altering, in the way that Scarry would, perhaps, recommend.

However, it is important to clarify at this stage that I am not making a simplistic or essentialised judgement and referring to particular characters as feminine merely because

---

[11] Smith 233

they are more responsive to beauty. Going by the argument of the thesis, all those who find it difficult to get on in the masculinist environments of their societies-- represented through a set of characters in both *On Beauty* and *Howards End*-- are referred to as feminine. The feminine develop different ways of responding to their surroundings and to each other, and their stance towards beauty is also a result of their different stand point in relation to the world around them. Furthermore, it is implied within the narratives of *On Beauty* and *Howards End* that the characters who are at an angle as regards normative structures are the ones that develop the most intimate relationship with beauty. These responses reveal a lot about feminine sensibilities and attitudes, which in turn helps to determine whether it makes sense to insist on an articulation of a different kind of ethical approach based on these responses.

Accordingly, while Howard Belsey and his arch rival in the academic world of Wellington University, Montague Kipps, believe that they are at loggerheads because of their ideological positioning-- one being a liberal and the other being a conservative respectively-- they are really on the same side within the scheme of the narrative.[12] Howard's wife, Kiki, and Monty Kipps' wife, Carlene, realise this from very early on in the novel. They covertly reach out to each other right from the time they are introduced within the narrative. Carlene, rather boldly for her ostensibly passive nature, says to Kiki at their first meeting, 'Yes, you sit

---

[12] Kathleen Wall describes the absence of affective engagement in both Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps, with respect to all aspects of their lives. 'For Belsey and his nemesis, Sir Montague Kipps, scholarship on Rembrandt is a means to an end: the study of the painter's work swells their reputations; their theoretical line on Rembrandt stands as a defense of their contradictory ideologies – Belsey's Marxism and Kipps's conservativism. Neither acknowledges the intersubjectivity of the aesthetic experience, the sense of a presence beyond themselves. The result, Smith's plot implies, is a concomitant ethical blindness to the particularities of the individuals in their world; they violate their intersubjective relations with others, treating wives, students, and children as adjuncts to their reputations and desires.' Kathleen Wall, 'Ethics, Knowledge, and the Need for Beauty: Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*,' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77.2 (2008): 757-788.

down and we can talk properly. Whatever problems our husbands may have, it's no quarrel of ours.'[13] They effectively form a tacit alliance to save all that is precious to them, all that is beautiful, from being debased by their husbands. Their relationship is reminiscent of the way Mrs. Wilcox in *Howards End*, unexpectedly, leaves her house to Margaret Schlegel. The significance of this Henry Wilcox does not realize until the very end, just as Howard Belsey does not recognize his wife's changed beauty until the very end of Smith's novel.

Claire Malcolm in Smith's text has a somewhat more ambiguous (or perhaps more evolved) relationship to beauty inasmuch as she is, despite being instinctively appreciative of art, also an academic who, like Howard, may be viewed as intellectualising the beautiful. However, although Claire earns money by being analytical and critical of beauty, her saving grace is the fact that she is also a poet,

> Claire spoke often in her poetry of the idea of 'fittingness': that is, when your chosen pursuit and your ability to achieve it-- no matter how small or insignificant both might be-- are matched exactly, are fitting. *This*, Claire argued, is when we become truly human, fully ourselves, beautiful.[14]

Claire's understanding of beauty is endorsed not only by Scarry and Smith, but also by Plato's *Symposium*, as has been quoted earlier in the analysis, 'The philosopher who makes the purely intellectual pilgrimage of the *Republic* is also the ideal lover of the *Symposium* (...).'[15] Plato in the *Symposium* talks about an idealistic coming together of the intellectual and affective realms in the perfect human being. This idealistic quest, however, will remain unattainable as long as one-- intellectual/masculine-- is always privileged over the other--

---

[13] Smith 91

[14] Smith 214

[15] Plato 21

affective/feminine. Be that as it may, we are told throughout the text that Claire is more of an artist than an academic, which of course entails from her a more feminine, and thereby intuitive, enjoyment of art than would conventionally be allowed to an academic.

Because she has the uncertain position of being a feminine artist and a somewhat more masculine academic, Claire's character in *On Beauty* corresponds most directly with Margaret Schlegel's in *Howards End*. Margaret in Forster's text also occupies the in-between space as regards an instinctive/personal and therefore feminine attitude towards life and people, and the kind of masculine and calculating attitude that her husband, Henry Wilcox, expects her to appreciate, if not adopt. Claire's position in *On Beauty* and Margaret's position in *Howards End* is much trickier for this reason, than Helen Schlegel's in Forster's text or Kiki Belsey's in Smith's text, as both Kiki and Helen are able to more straightforwardly reject masculinist ideals and conventions.

Either despite or because of her half and half position in relation to beauty and intellect, it is Claire's poetry class that seems to accord almost exactly with Scarry's theory of the association between beauty and justice/care. According to Scarry, an appreciation of the beautiful leads to a caring or relational disposition as it inspires in its beholder the requisite clear-sightedness to notice the injustices around her, the 'pressure,' according to her, that 'beauty exerts', is 'toward the distributional.'[16] Claire, through her appreciation of poetry, is able to see the talent around her, which lies wasted for the lack of proper schooling and she admits into her poetry class, students who would otherwise have no access to that college.

She tries to work around the University system and selects students based entirely on talent, instead of good grades or any other influence that a student may be able to exert. She

---

[16] Scarry 80

understands the difference between an instinctive appreciation of beauty and a merely informed perspective on it. For Howard's daughter Zora who tries to force her way into Claire's prestigious class she says,

> (…) Zora Belsey couldn't write a poem if Emily Dickinson herself rolled out of her grave, put a gun to the girl's head and demanded one. She's simply untalented in this area. (…) I'm not trying to teach molecular biology (…) I'm trying to refine and polish a… *sensibility*. (…) She has arguments. That's not the same thing.[17]

Zora is not talented enough according to Claire, and therefore her seat must be awarded to a more deserving candidate. Zora, however, proves too persistent, and even Machiavellian, to be kept out.

The exclusivity of education is an important issue in Smith's text; and it relates to beauty inasmuch as beauty is related to culture, and culture in turn is accessed through education. However, this exclusivity of education in the text does not have to do with the talent that an individual may possess; whereas, according to Claire's speech in the above passage, it perhaps should. This exclusivity is in fact a result of the unequal distribution of wealth in that society, something that Claire tries to overcome through her poetry class. Therefore, although an opening up of education to all people irrespective of the rather vague measure of talent may sound in some ways a democratic idea, what actually happens, in a culture like the one described in Smith's text, is that the more quantifiable idea of wealth replaces talent, so that education and culture can be accessed only by those who can afford it.

As a result, in this society, the untalented but well-off Zora Belsey has much easier access to education than the immensely talented but penurious Carl Thomas. In *Howards End*,

---

[17] Smith 158

on the other hand, it is wealth coupled with an older system of class hierarchy that establishes who gets a good education and who does not; as a result Leonard Bast is left out despite his great yearning for high culture. Furthermore, it is important to note that in both texts this lopsided distribution of wealth has been favourably tilted, through generations, towards people of certain ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, racial background and so on. Therefore, according to the logic of the thesis, I will term the favoured groups masculine because of their privileged positions.

Likewise, distinctions between high culture and low culture and their respective elitism and accessibility are related to these issues; they are important questions not only in Smith's text but also in *Howards End*. The empathy that Claire's character demonstrates through her poetry class corresponds, as mentioned earlier, with that of the Schlegel sisters in Forster's text. In the case of the Schlegels as well, an appreciation of beauty and culture leads to 'the distributional' impulse; an impulse of care and compassion. It is because the Schlegels can afford the luxury to learn about and thereby appreciate high culture, that they so keenly feel the deprivation of Leonard Bast who, like the unschooled Hip-hop artist Carl Thomas in *On Beauty*, has an instinctive appreciation for art and culture, but does not have the means to acquire it properly. Claire's first ever conversation with Carl is illustrative.

Carl looked down and found the obstruction.

"Yeah, thank you, man-- thanks," he said presuming her message was the same as everybody else's. He tried to get by her but she caught him by the elbow.

"Are you interested in refining what you have?" (...)

Claire repeated her question (…)

"We're a class, a poetry class, in Wellington. (…). We have an idea for you."[18]

Claire invites Carl to her class in the hope to help him hone his skill in poetry. However, his introduction in the Wellington environment leads to issues and problems that reveal a lot about the University and its people, and give evidence of the difficulties inherent in trying to achieve a feminine ideal in a world with masculine standards.

Hip-hop is situated at an interesting point in this debate. It is part of the low brow culture of American society, and it is no accident that it is an African-American art form.[19] The deceptively inclusive impulse of that society-- behind which the United States, as represented in Smith's text, continues to insidiously bolster established macro and micro power structures-- does not allow Hip-hop to remain a revolutionary medium through which the underprivileged would express their discontent. The elite University of Wellington in the text tries to incorporate Hip-hop within its curriculum.[20] Instead of opening itself up in substantial ways to those that are impoverished in society, the University in the text makes

---

[18] Smith 232-233

[19] In its original form Hip-hop served as a medium for the expression of the anger and frustration felt by certain-- mostly African-American and Hispanic-- communities in the United States of the 1970s.

[20] Kanika Batra argues that the Black Studies Department at Wellington, in Smith's text, serves no revolutionary purpose, '(...) there is no clear sense of the purpose of the department within an institution such as Wellington. It is at best a space existing on the margins of the predominantly white liberal arts institution, and at worst a misuse of its resources since its curricular and social commitments are never defined. The superfluity as well as the status quo nature of the department is evinced in its director's expertise in making people feel important.' The Black Studies Department and the later inclusion of Hip-hop in the University curriculum are attempts at token representations that are more harmful than genuine. Kanika Batra, 'KIPPS, BELSEY, AND JEGEDE: Cosmopolitanism, Transnationalism, and Black Studies in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*,' *Callaloo* 33.4 (Fall 2010): 1079-1092.

the flimsy and even treacherous gesture of including in its curriculum an art form that evolved within the underprivileged strata of society, thereby destroying any potential for change that it may have otherwise presented.

Although the inclusion of Hip-hop in Wellington's library would make it seem as if the University was becoming increasingly more accepting of all that had been hitherto looked down upon as low culture, and thereby automatically barred from its hallowed environment, it is clearly only a token recognition of the culture of the underdogs and the reality of the situation is represented in the career graph of Carl Thomas. The characters of Leonard Bast in *Howards End* and Carl Thomas in Smith's text are distinct from each other only in that Carl is allowed to feel more comfortable about his social position in the superficially more liberal American society. The result, of course, of this token representation is a stifling of aspirations and a quiet acceptance of the marginal status that society grants a section of its people. Leonard Bast, on the other hand, is constantly faced with his own lack in a society that is more obviously hierarchical, and less insidious in its suppression of particular groups of people.

An understanding is seen to develop in both texts between groups that feel marginalised for disparate reasons in the masculinist system within which they are forced to function. The sympathy they share becomes then a bridge between those who are sidelined because of the lack of money and thereby education, which would have equipped them to appreciate beauty and culture-- Carl Thomas and Leonard Bast-- and those female characters that are born into wealth and 'high' culture, but feel sidelined nonetheless in a patriarchal society.[21] The sidelined women and the marginalized characters come together here in their

---

[21] Lourdes Lopez-Ropero discusses how race related issues raised in Smith's *On Beauty* replace class related issues of *Howards End,* and argues, 'Just as Leonard Bast stirs the liberal humanitarianism of the Schlegels as well as their guilt over their affluence and carefree aestheticism, the Belseys, especially Kiki and her son Levi,

appreciation of beauty per se. I have therefore called the space both occupy, the space of the feminine.

I will explore further, as the thesis progresses, how various marginalised groups in these fictional scenarios actively seek each other out in hostile masculinist environments, thereby making a strong case for a common ethical value system that could coherently articulate their perspectives and responses. For the feminine characters in both *On Beauty* and *Howards End*, then, beauty and culture are not merely remote values to be attained within the walls of a University, or advantageous attributes leading to greater sexual prowess or career status, as they largely are for those with masculine sensibilities in both texts. Beauty for the feminine is personal, to be found in particular objects, individuals and relationships, and it is because they are personally invested in it that beauty inspires within them the compassionate and caring impulse, evidenced in Claire's poetry class.

Zora Belsey and Carl Thomas in Smith's text are very important characters for the argument of this thesis because their genders do not immediately make obvious their relationships to beauty. Zora, who is portrayed as an opportunist, is not moved by beauty. She, instead, views beauty as something that could provide her with opportunities for self-aggrandizement, and, later in the text, the reader learns that she has a similar self-interested attitude to political activism as well. Quite like her father, Zora is one of those for whom an intimate appreciation of beauty is very difficult, if not impossible, and luckily for her, a

---

try to atone for their privileged status within the black American community through their interactions with the Haitians and underprivileged African-Americans.' We see here that all who find themselves at an angle to the mainstream, be that because of class, gender or alternative political commitments, come together and attempt to pose a considerable challenge to the masculine system. Lourdes Lopez-Ropero, 'Homage and Revision: Zadie Smith's Use of E.M. Forster in *On Beauty*,' *Commonwealth* 32.2 (2010): 7-14.

personal appreciation of the beauty of art is not required to get ahead in the kind of University environment that she is part of.

It is important to reiterate here that this argument does not imply that all those who are marginalised/feminised are necessarily creative geniuses. The argument here is that the feminine-- understood as all those who are sidelined in the mainstream patriarchal value system-- as seen in the various fictional scenarios examined in this thesis, develop a different way of relating to people. As a result, the feminine quite often have opposing perspectives on various ethical, political and social issues from the masculine. Beauty is one such issue, and the assertion here is that those who are identified as feminine in the text feel the need to experience beauty more subjectively and personally, be it the beauty of an art work, a human being, or a relationship.

The University's over-intellectualising of beauty betrays its suspicion of it.[22] It illustrates what Scarry says about the current trend in the humanities: 'The banishing of beauty from the humanities in the last two decades has been carried out by a set of political complaints against it.'[23] Carl's response to beauty is very different from Zora's in that he is a poet. Zora's bogus attempts at making Carl more aware of his rights in America are wasted on him because he does not care as long as he is allowed to continue to express himself

---

[22] Gemma Lopez discusses the diligent student Katie Armstrong in Smith's text; and through Katie's disappointment in Howard's lecture she illustrates his inability to invest personally in art. 'Howard's extravagant, theoretical discourse is devoid of the (real, fleshy) meaning Katie Armstrong finds in her personal view of the paintings and she is frustrated to discover that she has nothing to say, her initial ecstatic joy has effectively evaporated in a matter of seconds (…).' The notion within academia that an instinctive response to beauty is somehow an inadequate response is very well illustrated in this scene with Howard and Katy Armstrong. Beauty, within current trends in academia has to be deconstructed, analysed and thereby objectified. Any 'unproblematic' acceptance of it is almost considered politically incorrect.

Gemma Lopez**,** 'After Theory: Academia and the Death of Aesthetic Relish in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005),' *Critique* 51.4 (2010): 350-365.

[23] Scarry 57

through his poetry. It is also possible that he sees through her activism on behalf of him. He joins Claire's class not for phony political reasons so much as because he hopes it might help him to understand poetry better. And eventually, because of the politics attached to it, he stops caring about the class as well.

> Certainly, his intention was to always be nice to Zora Belsey (...). But she did not make it easy. (...). She 'passed by' his office pretty much twice a day, usually with news of her campaign to keep him in Claire Malcolm's poetry class. He hadn't been able to tell her yet that he no longer gave a damn if he stayed in that class or not.[24]

He loses interest in Claire's class because he realises that things are not as simple as they might seem. He realises that the University authorities do not really want him because they do not get much out of him.

One of the powerful instances in the text, in which Zora and Carl's relationship to beauty and art is made evident, is the scene where the Belseys go to Boston Common to listen to a rendition of Mozart. This is also the first time that Zora and Carl come in contact with each other. The reader is shown the event through the point of view of the Belseys, and as the scene progresses, it is Kiki Belsey's perspective that becomes most important in the narrative. The narrator focuses on her son Jerome's state of mind, which provides the reader with some insight into Carl's mental state inasmuch as both Carl and Jerome share a similar, feminine, sensibility. Kiki makes this connection explicit by revealing to the reader a direct link between the two: according to her, the fact that these were two young black men enjoying Mozart made them special, and she unwittingly allies them in very important and profound ways in the American landscape.

---

[24] Smith 375

> The tears were silent and plentiful. Kiki felt moved, and then another feeling interceded: pride. *I* don't understand, she thought, but *he* does. A young black man of intelligence and sensibility, and *I* have raised him. After all, how many other young black men would ever come to an event like this-- I bet there isn't one in this entire crowd, thought Kiki, and then checked and was mildly annoyed to find that indeed there was one, a tall young man with an elegant neck, sitting next to her daughter.[25]

Kiki's thought process makes evident here that her son Jerome and Carl are connected in a significant ways: both are young black men who, like herself, possess an ability to relate to beauty.

Where Jerome, and by extension Carl, is moved to the point of tears by Mozart, Zora, on the contrary, spends the whole time listening to the instructions about the piece being played on her headset, as a result, she loses the music altogether. 'Poor Zora-- she lived through footnotes.'[26] Kiki thinks of her. This event is reminiscent of the Beethoven rendition in *Howards End*, in which it is Tibby, the youngest of the Schlegels, who is shown to be more intent on instructions regarding the piece being played than the music itself. Tibby's character in *Howards End* parallels Zora's in Smith's text. Both are committed students, only the definition of the appropriate student has changed. They are both apolitical and cynical people. However, Tibby's political apathy is more apparent because in his world of early twentieth century England, it is fashionable for young people to be that way; Zora's apathy, on the other hand, like everything else in the contemporary American world, is hidden under her apparent political activism, although it inevitably becomes reflected in her emotional detachment.

---

[25] Smith 70-71

[26] Smith106

Beauty, for those in the text with a masculine perspective on life, is then an extraneous idea, an idea that is abstract and impersonal. It is a concept that has to be objectified in order to be negotiated, because it is otherwise an experience that can be too overwhelming, and could potentially give rise to tragedy and pain. In Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, the judge's thoughts with respect to guilt and pity, which he believes can complicate the path of justice too much for convenience-- 'In this life (…) You must stop your thoughts if you wished to remain intact or guilt and pity would take everything from you, even yourself from yourself.'[27]-- finds echo in the way the masculine characters in Smith's text regard beauty. Both, the judge in Desai's text and the academics in Smith's text, significantly, have a professionalised relationship with the concepts of justice and beauty respectively.

Accordingly, beauty, as looked at by the masculine group of characters, needs to be negotiated with in an understated way, so as to avoid being emotionally altered by it and thereby to circumvent, as Scarry argues, any 'radical decentering'.[28] The judge's father in *The Inheritance of Loss* recognizes the potential of this subtle manipulation of rigid and abstract laws. Jemubhai's father in Desai's text wishes for the day when father and son can together, with impunity, take advantage of the system by insidiously twisting it, and at the same time keeping the veneer of respectability intact. In a different way, a similar effect is achieved by Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps in *On Beauty*. Although ostensibly they are on opposite sides with respect to their ideological principles, they in fact eventually complement each other due to the superficiality of both their positions. The detached relationship that they have

---

[27] Desai 264

[28] Scarry 111

with their ideological positions makes it easy for them to impersonalise issues, and at the same time, to interpret them in such a way so as to further their own agendas.

Just as Jemubhai and his father, in Desai's text, refuse to mix emotions with the course of justice, viewing emotionality as a definite weakness, in the same way, Howard and Monty refuse to invest emotionally in the idea of beauty. Both are looking to exploit an idea of objectification to advance their academic careers. It is a system in which people like Carl, Kiki, Carlene, Jerome and a messed up Victoria, really do not have any place because of their 'overly emotional' natures. Where Mr. Wilcox in *Howards End* is a self-confessed man of the world, Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps in Smith's text have pretensions to the transcendental world of art and beauty, and their superficiality is thereby more dangerous and complicated than Mr. Wilcox's. In this case again, therefore, Smith's contemporary world of the United States shows itself to be more insidiously problematical than Forster's world in *Howards End*.

What makes Zora Belsey the right candidate for a flourishing academic career is this very superficiality of feeling that she seems to have inherited or learnt from her father. 'Was anyone ever genuinely attached to anything? (...) It was either only Zora who experienced this odd impersonality or it was everybody and they were all play-acting, as she was.'[29] She is bemused by her detachment as a young person, but the reader is able to gauge that it is, in fact, this quality which will help her in her later career. She too, like Howard, feels beauty to be out there, something objective and abstract, only secondary to a successful career.

> Zora Belsey's real talent was not for poetry but persistence. She could dispatch three letters in an afternoon, all to the same recipient. She was the master of redial. She compiled petitions and issued ultimatums. When the city of Wellington served Zora with (in her opinion) an

---

[29] Smith 320

undeserved parking ticket, it was not Zora but the city-- five months and thirty phone calls later-- which backed down.[30]

Zora succeeds with the city council not because she is passionate about the injustice of the parking ticket but because she is determined to have her way, and it is this quality, the narrative suggests, that will help her to thrive in a competitive masculinist environment.

It is because they have an impersonal and therefore superficial relationship with beauty that Howard and Monty have affairs, something that Kiki is unable to comprehend as somebody with a very different response to the beautiful; and it is because Zora has the same attitude that she pursues Carl, and consequently devalues the political cause for which she fights. Zora remains insincere, both in her appreciation of beauty-- as illustrated through the Mozart concert-- and in her political activism-- as shown by her struggle on behalf of Carl. In both cases, she can make no personal investment, and therefore cannot go through the transformation that, according to Scarry, both an appreciation of beauty and political justice require.

Victoria Kipps suffers most because of this objective notion of beauty that she, as a conventionally beautiful woman, is burdened with; because she is viewed in that way, she starts viewing herself as an object too. She sends men images of her body as a product to be consumed. Howard's affair with Victoria and his earlier affair with Claire are important as regards this objective notion of beauty. Kiki, being a middle-aged, large black woman, doesn't fit Western notions of beauty anymore, a notion that helps to sell fairness creams for dark people and fake tans for white people. It is interesting to note how objective, masculinist ideals of beauty come together here with masculinist capitalistic marketing strategies.

---

[30] Smith 369

Be that as it may, Victoria's character resembles Mrs. Bast in *Howards End*. Mrs. Bast is almost a ghost in Forster's text; her character is emptied out of all human dimensions. She is a once-beautiful lower class woman who is there merely to highlight Leonard Bast's deprivation and to serve as a tool through which to reveal Mr. Wilcox's murky past. However, it is significant that she is the point of connection between the underdog and the patriarch. In a similar way Victoria in Smith's text connects the rival families, by being the daughter of one man and a temporary lover of the other.

The difference between the two characters is that where Forster does not provide any insight into Mrs. Bast's character, Smith fleshes out Victoria's; at any rate, Mrs. Bast and Victoria are the most tragic characters in the texts. They are tragic not only because they suffer, but also because both internalise their suffering and find it difficult to completely comprehend the nature and complexity of their situations.

> (...) For all Victoria's glamour and chutzpah, the quality that she truly exuded right now was breakability. She was wholly breakable, and there was a threat there, in her shaky bottom lip; there was a warning. If he broke her, where would the pieces fly?[31]

It is not only Victoria's aggression that Howard fears in the above passage, but the fact that if he did get involved in the beauty and complexity of what they had shared, he would risk losing not only a fraudulent sense of his own integrity but also his job and family. Therefore for Howard, where it was acceptable to exploit Victoria sexually, letting her enter his life would be extremely damaging. His attitude here is reminiscent also of his relationship with the Rembrandt paintings that he professionally analyses, in that he capitalises on his

---

[31] Smith 338

knowledge of Rembrandt's art, but refuses to engage with it in any way that might effect a 'radical decentering'.

Both, Mrs. Bast and Victoria's suffering, accordingly, has to do with a collective defensive stance towards beauty, the need to make oneself invulnerable to it: because beauty overwhelms the beholder, it distracts her from her apparent purpose in the world. The only way to control the power of beauty, therefore, is by objectifying it and making it impersonal. For that reason, both Victoria and Mrs. Bast are categorized as 'whores': highly sexualized beings from whom it is as easy to turn away as to succumb to.

> 'I know you think (…) that you (…) *know* me. You *don't* know me. This,' she said and touched her face, her breasts, her hips, 'that's what you know. But you don't know *me*. And you were the one who wanted *this*-- that's all anybody ever…' She touched the same three places. 'And so that's what I….'[32]

Beauty is, then, both feminine and therefore fickle and dismissible, but at the same time, too potent to surrender to. As Scarry argues: 'Berated for its power, beauty is simultaneously belittled for its powerlessness.'[33] Both viewpoints, though ostensibly contrasting, seem to me to be aiming toward the same thing, to restrain the effect of beauty on the beholder.

Smith's *On Beauty*, as I have argued, creates for the reader almost stereotypical Western characters, and explores American life and its politics through their positions with respect to beauty. In opposition to the masculine characters are the more feminine characters for whom beauty is a profoundly personal matter. In their case beauty has the effect that both Plato's *Symposium* and Scarry's argument gesture towards: beauty increases their capacity

---

[32] Smith 593

[33] Scarry 85

for love and care, and awakens them to injustice. Jerome, Howard and Kiki's son, is one such feminine character. He, unlike his father, falls in love with Victoria. Zora's attitude towards Carl, on the other hand, can be likened to Howard's attitude towards Victoria in that she too finds Carl 'objectively beautiful'. She does not get emotionally attached to Carl and his cause; it is evident then that both father and daughter differ from the feminine brother who is emotionally moved by his love for Victoria.

Significantly, in the light of *The Symposium*, Jerome is the only character in Smith's text who is shown to fall in ove seriously and intensely in a way that seems old fashioned in the environment of the novel, where all such romantic notions seem to have been replaced by a general suspicion, be it amongst people-- even friends and family-- or towards art and culture. Various glimpses into Howard's family life are described in a way that seems to imply a general lack of interest on the part of the family members towards each other. This scene in which Howard runs into his youngest son Levi while leaving his house is illustrative:

Howard was surprised by Levi. (...).

'What's the deal?' asked his son.

'Nothing. Leaving.' (...).

'What's the deal with *this*?' asked Howard, flipping the interrogation round and touching Levi's head. 'Is it a political thing?'

Levi rubbed his eyes. He put both arms behind his back, held hands with himself and stretched downwards, expanding his chest hugely. 'Nothing,' Dad. 'It's just what it *is*,' he said gnomically. He bit his thumb. (...).

'Yeah. Just what it is, just a thing that I wear. You know. Keeps my head warm, man. Practical and shit.' (...).

> He gave his son a friendly squeeze on the shoulders and pulled him close. (...).
>
> Levi pulled back now from his father, patting him down like a bouncer.[34]

Both meet each other almost like strangers. Levi of course is going through an adolescent phase in the text. However, what becomes clear through this exchange is the unease each one feels at the other's presence. They are not wholly devoid of affection of course, but that affection seems to well up from the remembrance of love that they once had-- maybe when Levi was a child-- instead of it being a result of the present state of affairs between them.

It is important to note this lack of conviction and connection between the various members of the family. It puts into perspective Howard's seemingly militant atheism, which appears more a part of this general faithlessness than a position arrived at through passionate engagement with the matter of faith and religion. Religion too then falls into the category of care, love and beauty, in that it is rejected by the masculine as a life changing experience. However, it is not religion that is being defended in my argument; instead it is an unthinking following of the cult of suspicion and cynicism that is being attacked. And this is apparent in the other stance towards religion that the narrative and my argument find problematic, which is Monty Kipps' fanatical and equally meaningless piety.

It is the superficiality, in the guise of open-mindedness, of the Belsey household that is incomprehensible to Jerome, and because of a sense of alienation, he rebelliously turns to that which is abhorrent to the whole family: faith in the Christian religion. However, religion for him is not the same as it is for Monty Kipps, just as atheism for Kiki is not the same as it is for Howard Belsey; it is not for them a way to exercise control. For Jerome and Kiki, their

---

[34] Smith 21-22

separate beliefs are more emotional matters: it is a cry for help in one case, and the result of a genuine disillusionment with the answers religion offers in the other.

For Monty and Howard, on the other hand, religion-- the acceptance or rejection of it is same as beauty; it is something out there, the subtle exploitation of which would lead to a better control over their own lives and the lives of those around them. Religion doesn't lead to 'radical decentering' in their cases, any more than beauty does. Even though Howard Belsey's turning away from religion might implt that he is more open-minded a man than the fanatically Christian Monty Kipps, Howard's liberal standpoint is really one of the many guises that the characters in Smith's text, like the larger socio-political environment within which they are located, employ to hide the prejudices and intolerances within.

Religion and beauty are ideas that can either be viewed as abstract and unyielding narratives, or can be looked at as matters that are intensely private and subjective to individual human beings; and these attitudes to religion and beauty fit the masculine and feminine paradigm as defined in my argument. An impersonal attitude to these ideas would constitute a masculine response inasmuch as only those who are in a position to gain from it would seek to twist ideas into rigid narratives of control. For the masculine characters, more involved in the public and mainstream life of society, feelings for beauty and of care are almost irrelevant and in many ways dangerous. Kiki confronts Howard for having cheated on her with his friend Claire, and saying to him,

> '(...) It's like after 9/11 when you sent that ridiculous email round to everybody about Baudry, Bodra-'

> 'Baudrillard. He's a philosopher. His name is Baudrillard.'

'About simulated wars or whatever the fuck that was... And I was thinking: *What is wrong with this man?* I was *ashamed* of you. I didn't say anything, but I was. Howard,' she said, reaching out to him but not far enough to touch, 'this is *real*. This life. We're really here-- this is really happening. Suffering is *real*. When you hurt people it's *real*. When you fuck one of your best friends, that's a *real* thing and it *hurts* me.'[35]

This speech sets up the difference between these two kinds of people very clearly. It sums up the argument of this analysis to some extent. Where Kiki, like Jerome and the other feminine characters, can't help but *feel* beauty and injustice deeply, Howard prefers to rationalise his feelings so as not to be personally moved by them.

Throughout *On Beauty* and *Howards End*, the marginal, non-schooled characters mostly lose out. Carl Thomas loses his job and the very important political struggle being fought on his behalf by Zora proves to be a sham. The occasional rapping at the Bus Stop is all that his poetic talent accomplishes by the end of the novel. Leonard Bast of *Howards End*, whose life is the closest to Carl's in *On Beauty*, ends up getting killed. Victoria and Mrs. Bast, the 'whores' of the texts, vanish without a trace. Kiki, realizes that she spent most of her life nurturing the family of and loving the person who lacks the ability to appreciate her. Carlene Kipps and Mrs. Wilcox remain shadowy figures, and were presumably oppressed in some way by their husbands and families.

Nevertheless, the final symbolic victory in both the texts is granted to this group of characters. In *On Beauty*, the painting, 'Maitresse Erzulie', was one of Carlene's most cherished possessions. It miraculously and conveniently finds its way under Levi's bed after Carlene's death and is never returned to Monty Kipps, who would only have been interested in its objective value.

---

[35] Smith 394

> Jerome saw his mother get a grip on the sides of something. She slowly began to pull out whatever it was from under the bed. (...). Kiki dragged the painting into the middle of the floor and sat next to it, hyperventilating. Jerome came up behind her and tried to touch her to calm her, but she slapped his hand away. (...). Kiki leaped to her feet and left the room, leaving Jerome to stare at the naked brown woman surrounded by her Technicolor flowers and fruit.[36]

Likewise Mrs. Wilcox in *Howards End* leaves the house she loved to Margaret Schlegel, believing that she would be able to appreciate its beauty, thus saving it from her worldly wise family; as Helen Schlegel says to Margaret, 'We know this is our house, because it feels ours. Oh, they may take the title-deeds and the doorkeys, but for this one night we are at home.'[37] Of course the scenario is different in the case of the 'Maitresse Erzulie' in Smith's text since Levi has acquired the painting illegally, citing his political beliefs as an excuse. It was not left as a gift by Carlene Kipps to Kiki. However, the reader does not feel outraged at Levi's theft; the narrative instead suggests that the painting has in fact found its rightful place under the watchful eyes of Kiki.

It is only at the end of Smith's narrative that Howard goes through what might be called a transformation. In a dramatic and epiphanic moment, Howard Belsey, stranded on the dais without his notes, through which he had hoped to rationalize Rembrandt's art, is struck by the beauty of it. He turns from the painting to look at Kiki in the audience, and enacts Scarry's theory about beauty of all kinds serving as 'wake-up calls to perception.'[38]

---

[36] Smith 426

[37] Forster 238

[38] Scarry 81

> Howard looked at Kiki. In her face, his life. Kiki looked up suddenly at Howard-- not, he thought, unkindly. Howard said nothing. Another silent minute passed. The audience began to mutter perplexedly. Howard made the picture larger on the wall (…). He looked out into the audience once more and saw Kiki only. Howard looked back at the wall, Rembrandt's love Hendrickje.[39]

Howard, through Rembrandt's painting, becomes aware of Kiki's beauty once again; it comes to him like a gift. With the ability to perceive beauty, Howard also wakes up to the love he feels for Kiki; it is presumably the kind of love that Rembrandt felt for Hendrickje, the kind that is discussed in *The Symposium*.

It is at that moment that the reader realizes, along with Howard himself, that all his misery was due to his endemic failure to appreciate beauty. This loss of beauty, of course, has nothing to do with Kiki; it is what Scarry terms a lack in the 'capaciousness of the cognitive act.'[40] In *Howards End*, Henry Wilcox, in the end, gives Margaret Schlegel the house that his late wife had willed her. It takes a murder in the text for him to be shaken out of his complacency and to recognize the wisdom inherent in the Schlegels' outlook on life.[41]

In both texts, therefore, the main patriarchs, Wilcox and Howard, are seen to undergo major transformations by the end of the narratives; and in these transformations is the biggest victory for the feminine sensibility which privileges interrelations and connections, and

---

[39] Smith 442-443

[40] Scarry 50

[41] Melanie Williams concludes her essay on Foster: '(...) By the end of the book the property has not only passed out of the conventional patrilineal (and matrilineal) chain, it has also passed to the spiritually legitimate inheritor (the "outsider" woman) and from her to a bastard child who represents the future dissolution of traditional social and class barriers—a clear distributive message.' Both books end with the older world order showing signs of having cracked as it were. Melanie Williams, 'Only Connect: *Howards End* and Theories of Justice,' *Law and Literature* 18.2 (Summer 2006): 253-280.

thereby care and love. As regards the ethics of care, *On Beauty*, with the help of ideas propounded by other thinkers and philosophers, amply demonstrates the differences inherent in attitudes described here as masculine and feminine. Smith's text shows that different attitudes to ideas like beauty and culture fall into particular patterns, which are in turn revealing about masculine/feminine sensibilities and mindsets. Smith's *On Beauty* helps to illustrate the necessity for a different kind of ethical system which would take into account these different sensibilities. The text, in these ways, helps advance the examination of an ethics of care a little further.

Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*: Mother, daughter and community

Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* (1983) steers the thesis towards the trials and tribulations of a family in Turkey. While Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* presented for analysis the ethical dynamics of a very disconnected and ultra-urban American family, Latife Tekin's text portrays a community which could perhaps even be called overly connected. Also, in many ways the ultra masculinist set up of the community in *Dear Shameless Death* is reminiscent of the patriarchal and suffocating community depicted in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. However, whereas both Morrison and Smith's texts are set in the United States of America, *Dear Shameless Death* presents a wholly different setting: a family on the move from rural to urban Turkey.[42]

---

[42]Providing some context to Tekin's characters in many of her novels, Saliha Paker argues that 'Tekin's characters are (…) hapless players controlled by economic and social forces. (…) second-generation migrants from villages who settled mainly on the fringes of the big city in their makeshift huts (…).Saliha Parker, 'Translating 'the shadow class (...) condemned to movement' and the Very Otherness of the Other: Latife Tekin as Author-Translator of *Swords of Ice*,' ed.Dimitris Asimakoulas and Margaret Rogers *Translation and Opposition* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011): 146-147.

It is important to note again that although this community is, in very significant ways, different from the ones examined earlier, it is governed by very similar patriarchal principles. If similar patriarchal value systems can be found in these diverse political and cultural scenarios, ranging from middle-class India of Desai's narrative, urban and rural black communities in the United States of America in Smith and Morrison's texts, to this particular Turkish setting in *Dear Shameless Death*, the obvious corollary, to my mind, is that some kind of feminine, ethical solidarity may also emerge from within these varied cultural situations. An examination of the text through the masculine and feminine paradigm set up in the previous chapters will help to take the care orientation in a different direction and explore its implications more fully. All these examinations will contribute in ascertaining the relevance of the ethics of care as a viable ethical model for the 'feminine', situated in different cultural, political, social and economic contexts.

Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* weaves together fantasy and folk-lore within more realistic depictions of the lives of the different members of one particular family. The family is shown as being in transition, from the village to the city. Huvat, the father, and Atiye, the mother, head the family, and all the other members branch out, as it were, from that nucleus. All seven to eight of them live cramped together in a tiny flat in the city, but each one of them has a different story, so that all their stories converge in that little flat, giving the novel a sense of both richness and claustrophobia. One of the main characters of the novel is the youngest daughter of the family, Dirmit. She is the most sensitive of them all and it seems through the narrative that she will most likely grow up to be an artist. Her character is presumably based on the author's own life.

The novel slips into surrealism and folk-lore and returns to reality almost seamlessly.[43] The description of Atiye's experience, who arrives as a foreigner in the village and, while pregnant, is locked up in a stable by the villagers, is illustrative of this merging of dream, myth and reality.

> On her first night in the stable the woman dreamed she was bending over an iron cradle to kiss a sleeping baby (...) whenever she closed her eyes she had the same dream (...). This went on until a longhaired, snow-white talking goat charged at her. (...).Slowly the goat backed away and disappeared. From then on the saintly Hizir Aleyhisselam never left the woman alone in the stable. Sometimes he appeared as an old man with a radiant face and snow-white beard and as a ball of light at others. (...) One evening, when the woman had been in the stable almost nine months, she was seized by stabbing pains from her waist down to her tailbone. (...).The pangs were so powerful that after a while her bones cracked open and her waters broke, gushing hot from her womb. And there on the straw at her feet lay a girl-child as big as the chimney of a paraffin lamp.[44]

Dream, in the form of the goat, myth and folk-lore in the form of Hizir Aleyhisselam and reality in the birth of the baby come together in this one passage. This is the general tone of

---

[43]Keith Hitchins in his review of *Dear Shameless Death* says, 'Drawing extensively on her own experiences, she writes as an insider who honors traditional beliefs and practices rather than as an outsider, a reformer or Europeanizer, who would turn the village away from its ancestral roots. She is by no means uncritical, and the village she describes is often hard and coarse, where people are unhappy and a prey to the irrational and the whimsical. Nevertheless, her affection for the village enables her to catch its prevailing moods and enter into the psychology of its inhabitants. She uses fantasy and the supernatural on a grand scale to convey ideas and delineate character, means that she has surely adapted from Turkish fairy stories and folklore and even from the medieval heroic epics. Many pages call to mind a surrealist painting.' Keith Hitchins rev. of *Dear Shameless Death* by Latife Tekin, *World Literature Today* 75.3/4 (Summer 2001): 234.

[44]Latife Tekin, *Dear Shameless Death*, trans. Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne (London: New York: Marion Boyars, 2001) 20-21.

the narrative, and that is because the story is narrated mostly through the 'superstitious' standpoint of the main family. The sensibility of this family remains remote, even after they move to the city, from the modern sensibility of the city people. Also, for the different members of the family, and in different ways, these myths seem to turn into forms of escape from their lives of hardship and penury in the city. There is, nonetheless, a definite reduction in the interference of these stories within real life, as the family begins to settle in the city.

The text makes use of a third person narrative voice, which, as mentioned earlier, mixes realistic descriptions with hallucinatory or imaginary visions and folk-tales without a change of tone. Another instance of this is when an external description of Dirmit's school in the village is narrated in the same tone as Dirmit's encounter in that school with the 'Neighing Boy' djinn which drops its trousers and chases women. As an autobiographical novel about the author's childhood to some extent, it is Dirmit's consciousness that dominates the narrative voice. Therefore, Dirmit's own blurring of the real and the fantastic, because of her fecund imagination, can be seen as another reason for the obscuring of the distinction between myth and reality by the narrative voice. A further effect of the dominance of Dirmit's consciousness within the narrative is seen in the way it employs humour either to endear a character to the reader or to disenchant the reader with the character at different points in the novel, according to that character's relationship with Dirmit.

The mood of the voice shifts between humorous and tragic; and at times, humour becomes a mode by which to emphasise the tragedy of a situation. The villagers' reaction to Atiye's arrival in the village, for instance, although severely xenophobic, is narrated in a way that makes it humorous at the same time:

> For days on end the poor woman was surrounded by a crowd of women and children, who
> never stopped pawing her. They rubbed her face with the edge of their yashmaks moistened

with spit to see if the redness was real and they tugged at her hair and skirt. She was soon

worn down to skin and bones. Finally, she collapsed and fainted. Then they knew why three

sheep had bloated up and died one after the other, why the hen who laid double-yolked eggs

had stopped laying, and why Huvat's mother had fallen off the wooden veranda. All were

caused by the ill-omened woman who was possessed by a djinn.[45]

Aitye, Dirmit's mother, is harassed by the villagers, as illustrated by the above passage, not

only because she is a foreigner in that community, but also because she has a more assertive

temperament than is allowed to the women of that community. Her foreignness not only

creates problems for Atiye herself, but also, in many ways, for her family, which has to bear

the brunt of her continuous anxiety to be accepted by the community and not be seen as an

outsider. This last point is very significant and will be discussed later in the analysis in terms

of her relationship with Dirmit.

Because the narrative identifies with Dirmit to a great extent, almost all of the

characters in the text, except Dirmit, are mostly treated with some humour. Dirmit, on the

other hand, is presented throughout the novel as a poetic and artistic soul, into whom the

reader is given special insight. This results in the creation of some distance between all the

other characters and the reader. One of the consequences of this distance from the other

characters is that these consciousnesses are, to a degree, made available to the reader through

Dirmit, and can be judged only in relation to her character. For these reasons, her mother

Atiye mostly comes across as a comically hysterical figure.

Resting her chin on her palm, she sat by the window. Just then a fairy girl with a doll (...)

appeared (...). Dirmit's mouth dropped open (...). She pulled Atiye over to the window. Upon

beholding a girl (...) standing in the street clutching a raggedy-haired plastic doll, Atiye beat

---

[45]Tekin 20

on her knees and exclaimed: 'Is that the fairy girl?' Beginning to weep, Atiye wandered about the house, prayer beads in her hand, mumbling that Dirmit was seeing things again.While she recited and blew prayers about (...).[46]

The humour of this scene arises from the misunderstanding between the daughter and the mother because of their differing perception. Where Dirmit has the transforming, magical viewpoint of an artist, Aitye is only too caught up in the practicalities of life. While Dirmit sees a fairy, Atiye can only see a poor girl with a tattered toy.

Moreover, this availability of Dirmit's inner life to the reader and the description of Atiye through Dirmit provide a direct entry into the mother/daughter relationship mostly by way of the viewpoint of the daughter. This is helpful in the analysis of the care orientation in the novel in that, very importantly, it makes available the perspective of the one being judged, or the viewpoint of the cared-for, on whom rest the expectations and demands of the carer. '(...) Dirmit moaned and kicked anyone who came near her. The one particular person she saw as an enemy, however, was Atiye. If her mother drew near, Dirmit grabbed her hair, scratched her face and hands and bit her.'[47] This scene is a clear illustration of the difficult relationship between them. What the scene also makes evident is Dirmit's need to free herself from her mother's care.

The plight of the receiver of care is a significant issue. It shows how the cared-for may feel smothered by all the care and attention showered on her. The mother/daughter relationship is not held up as at all exemplary in this text, and that helps to examine the ethics of care more thoroughly. The narrative reveals that the care impulse is not by itself an incorruptible notion. Like any other conception, the idea of care can be appropriated by

---

[46]Tekin 82

[47]Tekin 72

various forces and made to function in a way that supports masculinist agendas, forcing the

errant individual to conform through relentless care giving. The suggestion here is

reminiscent of Foucault's view of organisations like the family working as tools within the

larger system to ensure that all members governed by that system conform to social

conventions.[48]

The issue of the mother and child is very important in the text, as also in Gilligan's

care orientation, as the ethics of care is seen to draw from object-relations theory.

Accordingly, within Gilligan's conception, the mother-child association is considered crucial

to the development of a morally sound human being. According to Gilligan, the mother-child

relationship is exemplary inasmuch as it plays a definitive role in determining the nature of

all attachments in the future of the child.[49]

By showing the members of the family as deeply connected to each other, as also to

their village community, Tekin's text presents another point of view from which to examine

---

[48]Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) discusses the ways in which strategies of exclusion are employed by social forces to 'correct' behaviour that challenges a particular social structure. According to his argument, 'On the one hand, (…) the tactics of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand, the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the "leper" and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion. The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise. All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive.' Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (NY: Vintage Books, 1995) 196-197.

[49]In a study by Sharon Rich the issue of the mother daughter relationship is explored in some detail. 'Daughters tell of feeling close to their mothers for a variety of reasons, especially talking and sharing (...). Conversely, daughters relate lack of closeness to poor communication, to the presence of major differences, and to inconsistent care from their mothers. Yet, even girls who recount weak connections say that they would like to feel closer to their mothers.' Sharon Rich, 'Daughters' Views of Their Relationships with Their Mothers,' Carol Gilligan, **N.P. Lyons, and T.J. Hanmer** ed., *Making Connections: The relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990) 258.

the ethics of care. Unlike Smith's exploration of the family in the United States, which is shown to be relatively disconnected and masculinist, the Turkish family in Tekin's text, like the community of Ruby in Morrison's *Paradise*, already functions well at the level of community and at the level of relationships. It is only when they move to the city that explicit forms of impersonality and abstraction enter the text in the form of Huvat and his son Halit's religion.

However, the question that gets raised is whether the kind of interpersonal care within this village community is necessarily better. The reader is shown examples throughout the narrative about the ways in which the village members themselves work together to evaluate and judge all situations within its boundaries. Interpersonal connections within the community are of the utmost importance for all of them, to the point that anybody displaying any signs of excessive individuality is immediately either labelled eccentric, or brought in line with the rest of the community by way of punishment. The question, therefore, is whether interpersonal relationship is in fact all that is needed for an inclusive and caring ethical orientation.

In Smith's *On Beauty* the problem was that most characters were not interested in each other and did not try to establish interpersonal relationships, and those who were interested in establishing deep connections found themselves to be in an ethical minority. In Tekin's text and in Morrison's *Paradise*, on the other hand, the problem is not the lack of interest between people. Instead, members of the communities in *Dear Shameless Death* and *Paradise* are overly interested in each other; the problem, however, is that they do not establish connections of the kind that might help them to respect each others' differences at the same time as appreciating each other's similarities.

For instance in *On Beauty*, Kiki and Carlene's relationship-- held up in that text as exemplifying a feminine sense of connection-- is not based on their similarities, inasmuch as they are presented as being completely different kinds of people; the only quality that they share is an ability to reach out and emotionally invest in other people. Within the community in Tekin's text on the other hand, it is essential for harmonious relationships that all members conform equally to the conventions of that society. Accordingly, what gets compromised in this system, as much as in any other impersonal ethical code of conduct that people as a group may follow, is an appreciation of *difference*. Difference in this community is not only frowned upon but brutally suppressed. Moreover, it is an extremely masculinist society in which feminine men and women who dare to assert their femininity, are put down and punished.

However, this social order is obviously not governed by 'Western', impersonal or abstract discourses that dictate this suppression of the feminine. This is a patriarchal system that is situated in a very different cultural context, and therefore this system has to have arisen from very different cultural knowledges. The patriarchal values of this community are very visibly different from the patriarchal values of other socio-political contexts examined in my thesis. For example, although Zadie Smith's text also portrays a masculinist society, its nature is completely different from the one seen in this text. Kiki and Atiye, or Dirmit and Jerome do not deal with the same problems at all, inasmuch as there isn't a physically brutal suppression in Kiki and Jerome's case, whereas the suppression of Atiye and Dirmit is not as insidious as was seen in Smith's scenario. However, all of them can still easily be identified as being embedded within and suffering due to their respective masculinist systems. This recognition is what justifies the need for a feminine ethical conception that might be able to locate a sense of solidarity within the differences of various kinds of marginalities; a need

that the ethics of care with its bottom up approach and its respect for difference may be able to fulfil.

It is not fallacious to suggest then that masculinist values, whatever their source, are more or less universal, and although they need to be understood according to particular contexts, they need equally to be opposed by a shared feminine experience. The examination of Gilligan's ethics of care in this thesis is an attempt to find just such a feminine solidarity. These masculine and feminine stances, as I have been arguing through the thesis, need to be reconstructed according to different principles, and cannot be simplistically understood to signify men and women, but need to be defined according to the particular positioning of an individual within a patriarchal system.

Masculinist brutality in this community does not arise from an ethical system that privileges impersonality; in fact, in this community acts of brutal suppression are shown to be intensely personal, inasmuch as the mode of punishment, among other things, is immediate and extreme, and supposedly for the good of the entire community. The case of the school teacher and Mensur is illustrative.

> That night Settar's daughter Mensur ran off with the school teacher. Around dawn the village awoke to shrieks and the howling of dogs. Horses were saddled and bridled as men slung their cartridge belts around their necks and their shotguns over their shoulders. (…) Mensur entered the village at noon slung over the back of a horse. (…) Two women wrapped themselves in shawls and went to fetch Sittile. (…) Sittile entered, leaning on her stick. After closing the door, she walked over to Mensur's side, drew the girl's dress up to her waist and checked to see if she was still a virgin. (…) 'Put the cauldron on the *tandir*, get her henna

ready,' wailed the girl's mother (…) 'My Mensur's a virgin after all.' So Mensur entered the earth with honour, dressed in her bridal dress and with her fingers hennaed.[50]

In this passage, both men and women are shown to be working in complete harmony to decide Mensur's fate, who has dared to run away for love; one half of the paragraph is devoted to the action the men take, in finding her and killing her, the other half is dedicated to the establishing of her virginity along with her burial, which is taken care of by the women of the community. It becomes clear here that it is not the women who partake of this sacrificial ritual that are necessarily feminine, but in fact it is Mensur and the school teacher who can be identified as having feminine attitudes.

There is no apparent impartial and impersonal judicial system backed by masculinist doctrines that the community believes in; instead, the members deal with every situation personally and immediately. However, this does not make the end result any more just. It is in fact clear in the text that the impulse behind the community's actions and judgments is to ensure that both men and women of the village comply with unwritten laws which guarantee the continuance of a system that functions through patriarchal ideals and principles. Women suffer mostly because their sexuality is for obvious reasons threatening; if left unmanned women's sexuality, resulting in 'illegitimate' reproduction, might lead to radical disruptions within the system. The men that are persecuted are generally also made to suffer for the same reason: a need to keep women's sexuality in check. In its curbing of female sexuality, the community recalls Ruby in *Paradise*. This connected community, then, rejects any sign of dissent or individuality lest it should disrupt the establishment, quite in the same way as various knowledge systems privileging ideals of detachment and objectivity in other parts of

---

[50]Tekin 35-36

the world invalidate other ethical perspectives that might threaten similar patriarchal social systems.

It can be argued, as I have in fact been arguing, that all communities and groups function according to their own ethical perspectives, and therefore judging the Mensur incident through Western-centric notions of right and wrong would be a fallacy. However, the issue is obviously more problematic than that, inasmuch as an absolute reliance on the idea of difference here will disallow the necessary acknowledgement of basic human rights. As Martha Nussbaum in *Sex and Social Justice* argues, the only solution is a political position which can bring together a poststructuralist respect for difference and a theoretical argument that would effectively establish fundamental human rights across cultural and political boundaries. These universal rights need to be established in order that under the guise of progressivism and an acknowledgement of difference, age long injustices are not perpetrated.[51] My attempt in this thesis-- to step back and examine the ethics of care through various works of fiction to arrive at a feminine ethical behavioural pattern-- is an endeavour towards just such evaluations and normative arguments as Nussbaum discusses.

I would argue in this case that a sense of community and particularity is not enough; and that the care orientation has the potential to locate a common ethical thread running

---

[51]Nussbaum argues that seemingly 'progressive' political and academic positions, which make any attempt at finding political grounding through a sense of solidarity untenable, are more harmful than empowering. She argues that,'(…) We see (…) people who think of themselves as progressive and feminist and antiracist, people who correctly argue that the concept of development is an evaluative concept requiring normative argument-- effectively eschewing normative argument and taking up positions that converge, as Hobsbawm correctly saw, with the positions of reaction, oppression, and sexism. Under the banner of their fashionable opposition to universalism march ancient religious taboos, the luxury of the pampered husband, educational deprivation, unequal health care, and premature death.' Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 36.

through the interests and perspectives of those groups of people that are sidelined within masculine discourses. What becomes clear through Mensur's death, as mentioned earlier, is that however personal the relationship between its people, the community in *Dear Shameless Death* still functions through a set of implicit but rigid values, which are imposed upon the group as a whole. Any inability to accept those values and any rejection of those values is rewarded with severe penalty.

Another illustration of how the implicated men and women are severely chastised whenever threatening sexuality comes into question is the love story of Seyit, who is one of Atiye and Huvat's sons. Seyit is beaten up for falling in love with a girl named Elmas, who has already been betrothed to another man. Even though the girl loves Seyit as well, he is presented to Atiye 'drenched in blood.'[52] Later, after her marriage, the villagers perversely entertain each other with the story and feel sorry for Elmas, who, they say, 'wept herself dry of tears because her heart belonged to Seyit.'[53] Any behaviour that is unconventional therefore, and threatens to disrupt the larger scheme, is not tolerated by the community as a whole.

As a consequence of it being a patriarchal social system, women are at an obvious disadvantage as they are by definition marginalised within the community. However, the position of the marginalised-- as those who sustain the system by way of their own marginality-- also makes them equally dangerous. Accordingly, any act of defiance by women can significantly destabilise the community. For instance when Atiye arrives in the village for the first time, her vigorous nature, along with her foreignness, come across as threatening to the villagers, so that they try to straighten her out by locking her up in a stable.

---

[52]Tekin 64

[53]Tekin 64

She is described as a woman with 'flame-red cheeks and milky skin. And her head and legs (...) bare.'[54]

However, even after Atiye settles down in the village and learns to behave in accordance with their customs, traces of her older personality remain, 'After a while her speech changed too, and she began to speak just like the other villagers. One thing she never learnt, however, was to stop and give way to the men she met on the road.'[55] Atiye's position is doubly problematic therefore, because she is not only a woman-- the 'other' within the community--but also a foreigner-- the 'outsider'.

Discussion of the relationship between the other and the outsider is picked up at various points throughout this thesis. It is an important relationship for my argument because the attempt is to illustrate how both groups are ethically allied, and thereby to substantiate my assertion that both can be understood through the ethical scheme of the care orientation. Women as the others and foreigners as outsiders are allies because both are excluded and inhabit the margins of societies, and it is for this reason that these categories are both referred to as feminine in my thesis. Atiye's character is interesting in that she embodies both positions. She is doubly marginalised, and for that reason doubly dangerous.

Atiye of course does not see herself as in anyway powerful, and her paranoia, caused because of her precarious position in the village, could be viewed as the reason for her over cautiousness regarding her family, particularly Dirmit. Throughout the text she is constantly worried for her family and wants them to fit in. However, all members of her family, including her husband Huvat, are too idiosyncratic-- and thereby too transgressive-- to fall

---

[54]Tekin 20

[55]Tekin 22

completely in line with the village community. Be that as it may, being a system that favours men, Huvat's transgressions are not be looked at with as much severity as Atiye or Dirmit's; men's transgressions would be seen as humorous eccentricities, unless they involve-- as in Seyit and the school teacher's case-- women's sexuality.

Nevertheless, all of Atiye's family seems cursed by her own foreignness. Their idiosyncrasies get emphasised even more when they move to the city, and Atiye finds it difficult to cope with their wayward behaviour,

> (...) She grumbled morosely behind his back. But she couldn't get her husband to work for daily wages like the husbands of other women. 'I won't do day labour,' Huvat told Atiye fiercely (...). Atiye finally left him alone and gave herself over to her prayer beads. Dropping her head and moping, she hissed out prayers all day long, blowing them all over the place (...).[56]

Huvat becomes fanatically religious and refuses to go to work; however, the reader is made aware that his religion is not so much a deep belief as another eccentric phase. Atiye is represented as becoming progressively more tired in trying to control her family members. Nevertheless, the family members, by not falling in line, reveal for the reader the tyranny of a community that cannot accept difference. It is fitting that the narrative should focus on an eccentric family to expose the injustices of a rigid community.

Dirmit's case is particularly telling, not only because she finds it the most difficult to conform in any way, but also because she is a girl child. Her fate is prophesied by Djinnman Memet right at the time of her birth, 'Mark my words! If the child is born healthy and whole,

---

[56]Tekin 88

there's no telling what might befall it!'[57] She is a thoughtful and imaginative young girl who requires freedom to flourish. She does not have the space to develop, however, in that overly personal and interfering community, and feels smothered by her mother's excessive care and attention. Dirmit and Atiye's relationship, rejecting any simplistic notions of mother/daughter connection and interpersonal care, helps to explore more thoroughly the care orientation endorsed by my thesis.

Gilligan's reliance on object relations theory for her formulations meant that she placed great importance on the mother/child relationship. Her argument is that the feminine and masculine attitudes are formed according to every individual's relationship with her environment (mother) as a child. It is questionable, however, that in a society which is based on unequal premises, any relationship, such as mother and child, could remain untouched and pure for there to be an impartial and direct correlation between the child and the adult; these relationships would always be mediated by personal and individual reactions to social conventions. An acknowledgement of this fact would help to explain Atiye's problematic relationship with her daughter Dirmit.

She is constantly dogged by Atiye to behave like the other girls in the village, and not to indulge in crazy and subversive behaviour-- like making conversations with water pumps and falling in love with school teachers. As a girl, Dirmit is supposed to follow a strict code of conduct; she fails to do so, however, and is instead caught by her mother with a boy in a chicken coop, with her pants down. Dirmit is showered with personal attention, both by her mother and by her community, but this care is far from nourishing for her; it is instead stifling and demanding. Tekin's novel helps to problematise the idea of care, and it becomes clear

---

[57]Tekin 26

through the text that care on its own, without a different ethical grounding, cannot be either positive or revolutionary. It can instead be detrimental to any subversive thought and action in that it is a concept that is easily manipulable. In Tekin's text, it becomes a mode of surveillance, to make sure that Dirmit falls in line with the rest of the community.

It becomes clear through Atiye and Dirmit's equation with each other that to put too much premium on this relationship would be very limiting, for it realigns women with the private realm of the nurturer and is therefore detrimental to the feminist opposition to traditional, patriarchal impositions. *Dear Shameless Death* presents a mother whose care-giving is not nurturing for the daughter. The problem with Atiye's care is that the motivation behind her care is not purely that of Dirmit's own wellbeing-- although Atiye herself does believe that she has her daughter's best interests at heart. Instead, Atiye bestows all her attention on Dirmit to make sure that she conforms to the standards of behaviour established by her community.[58] Motivation and context, to my mind, are of utmost importance when discussing an ethics based on a principle like care.

It needs to be re-iterated at this point that the ethics of care as interpreted in this thesis is not a simplistic theory in which one person takes on the responsibility of the giving while the other is the receiver of care. It is instead an attempt to understand how relationships and ethical decisions are made differently by marginalised standpoints. It is an ethical conception whereby Atiye and Dirmit are not looked at objectively but each of their individual pressures and needs are appreciated in order to understand their behaviour towards each other and towards their surroundings in general.

---

[58] Daryl Koehn criticises the ethics of care in that she argues that the mother-child relationship cannot be treated simplistically. She asserts, 'our relations are not transparent (…) if what we mean by being a mother is debatable (…) then we are not entitled to treat the mother-child relation as if it were an uncontroversial, ethically exemplary relation.' Daryl Koehn, *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust and Empathy* (London: Routledge, 1998) 14.

Accordingly, it is important to remember that Atiye is oppressive to Dirmit because of her own insecurities regarding her foreignness in that community. Because she has been made to suffer, she wishes for her daughter to meet the standards set by that society.

> While everyone else slept, she (Atiye) lay wide awake worrying about where Dirmit might have gone to and who she might have seen that day. Gripped once more by the concern that her daughter might have got herself into trouble, and curious, she crawled over to Dirmit's bed (...). She felt for Dirmit's legs and hesitantly drew back her nightie (...). (Dirmit) woke up with a start and screamed, thinking it was a mouse. (...) (Atiye) finally revealed that she had only wanted to find out if her daughter was still a virgin.[59]

This passage illustrates my earlier argument regarding the anxiety within patriarchal cultures over women's sexuality. Atiye, of course, is obsessed with making sure that Dirmit behaves in accordance with conventions, be it in her sexuality in her everyday behaviour. She is burdened with her own past and feels it to be important that her daughter follow the straight line to attain the sense of belonging that Atiye never had. The other thing that becomes clear through this case is that whatever has been endured in the past, or historical baggage, is very significant in every relationship. No relationship is free from social conditioning; it would, therefore, be absurd to see the mother-daughter relationship as existing in a vacuum instead of being as socially embedded as any other relationship.

Atiye, however, does have another side to her which can understand and connect with Dirmit at a deep level. She recognises Dirmit's intellectual and creative talent-- although she is completely intolerant of the eccentricities that her very talent gives rise to-- and insists that she study hard.

---

[59]Tekin 197-198

Finally one day she began to shake with illness and gathered everyone around her bedside. 'This time,' she said, 'I'm on my way,' (...). Huvat enquired if Atiye had some last wish. In a sulk, she tossed about in bed (...) All she wanted was for Dirmit to keep going to school and for Seyit to remove the gun from his belt (...). Upon hearing her mother (...) Dirmit did not lift her head from her books. She brought home from school authorised certificates of praise, which Atiye had framed and then hung up on the walls.[60]

Even while the family is in the village, Atiye is one of the only people to send her daughter to study in the village school. It is significant here that she chooses to send Dirmit to school, instead of any of her sons.

Atiye then, in many ways, seems to understand Dirmit more than any one else in the family; it would be reductive, therefore, to look at Atiye's relationship with Dirmit as entirely negative. The bond that Dirmit and Atiye share, despite their problems, complicates and mystifies their relationship even further. What becomes clear though is that the relationship cannot be understood simplistically, and that neither motherhood nor care is in itself a pristine concept than can be accessed to come up with a utopian ethical universe. It becomes evident through the representation of their relationship that motherhood, like any other social relationship, is governed by social forces and limitations. Also, it shows that care can be stifling when appropriated by socio-political structures as a mode of control and surveillance.

As seen throughout the text, the community, when in the village and even after many members move to the city, remains connected and close knit. They all participate, by way of rituals, in each others' joys and woes. Atiye's eldest son, Halit, and Zekiye's marriage is an illustration of their togetherness,

---

[60]Tekin 121-122

> A week before the engagement the women of Akcali came together to help Atiye. They rolled out mountainous layers of thin pastry, stewed all kinds of fruit and made plenty of *baklava*. (...) Before noon all the men and womenfolk had arrived. The women collected in the house, the men outside. (...) By noon every one was at Rizgo Agha's doorstep. The girl's village welcomed the boy's. Standing shoulder to shoulder, menfolk from both started dancing the *halay*.[61]

This scene is an example of how the various members of the community act in unison to join in the joys of their brethren. It is important to take into consideration the complexities inherent in the relationship between individual members and the community as a whole. The above example illustrates that although the community suppresses dissent and individuality, one of the reasons for their encouragement of homogeneity is so that they can share joy and grief harmoniously, as one.

As is seen in the above passage, the rituals and ceremonies, although based on rigid patriarchal assumptions, are very personal. Also, the community has a perverse way of brutally squashing all dissenting perspectives and attitudes, yet retrospectively recalling those very moments emotionally, and almost regretfully. After those who have to be suppressed are quashed, the villagers seem to collectively achieve some kind of catharsis by crying over all that has been lost in the process. It appears to be an effective way of ridding themselves of any passions that might threaten their social system. One example of their retrospective regret is when Huvat and Atiye, with the whole family, are about to leave the village for good and move to the city; all the people of the village start to feel sympathy and compassion for what happened to Seyit because of his love for Elmas. The villagers even forgive Dirmit for having strayed so many times:

---

[61] Tekin 50-51

> Now the villagers fretted that it was a pity Seyit hadn't been able to marry his love Elmas. (...).
> Weeping and laments mingled with *turku* singing. (...) Dirmit moved about the village freely,
> as children competed with each other to play picnic and stickball with her. Men lifted her up
> in their arms, as they had done once before, and affectionately called her 'goat girl'.[62]

These are very affectionate scenes, but the fact that this kind of behaviour-- repression followed by compassion-- is repeated so frequently suggests that the community functions according to a deliberate pattern.

Even the idea of god for them is a personal matter, and it gets mixed up with their everyday myths, rituals and superstitions. Religion is an interesting issue in the novel; and where it is a fluid set of beliefs in the village community, it takes on a more rigid aspect in the city. There is no mention of an institutionalised space like a mosque in the village, where everyone must gather to pray on a particular day or at a specified time. One example of how trivially the village people treat religion is when Huvat sends three wise men-- recalling the three magi-- to the village, to reconcile the fighting villagers. The villagers shun them and reject their dictums, ''It's sinful to be enemies', they said. Then, one night, one of the old men started off to prayer, fell down Stumpy Ali's stairs and died. After his death, the other two somewhat moderated their mission for reconciliation.'[63] The villagers seem to have gotten rid of the first wise man to warn the others about the consequences of meddling in their matters.

Religion, therefore, is a domain that Atiye monopolises within the household, at least until the family moves to the city. She makes sure that all the members of her family are

---

[62]Tekin 76

[63]Tekin 32-33

protected from djinns and bad omens, either by offering up prayers or concocting blessed or cursed potions. Even when in the city, she appears to believe that religion is something that she can take in her own hands, and its major, if not only, function is to keep her family members from whatever she considers would lead to unhappiness. Particularly since her family is so prone to eccentric behaviour, 'Atiye once more clutched her prayer beads, this time hoping to save her husband from his passion for water. Blowing holy words around, she begged God to restore her husband's sanity.'[64]

The narrative shows, however, that in the city religion takes on a very different aspect, revealed to the reader through Huvat and Halit's religious transformations. Atiye's marginalisation as a woman gets emphasised even more in this impersonalised form of religion. For Atiye personally, though, her faith remains private to her; she has the same personal relationship with it that the feminine characters in Smith's text have with beauty. And, periodically, she makes god speak through her by falling sick and assuming the role of a messenger, and in that way, manipulates her husband and her children to behave better.

It is interesting that religion in the text should take on a more rigid and prescriptive form in the city. Both Huvat and Halit successively go through zealous religious phases and employ a particular demeanour and outward appearance to express their religiosity. As part of their newly acquired piety, both impose their family one strict commandment after another. Huvat '(...) enrolled Dirmit and Mahmut in the mosque school, ordered Atiye and Nugber to cover their heads (...). He crammed the house full of black sheep pelts, prayer beads, heavy essences and even issued a *fatwa* (...)'.[65]

---

[64]Tekin 161

[65]Tekin 89

Atiye, on the other hand, approaches religion in a very different manner, she doesn't feel the need to dress in particular ways to appear religious. Even though she too periodically lays down injunctions, they are more to turn around the fortune of the household, and could thereby be thought of as more secular. Her injunctions sound crazy, but they are harmless and never as imposing as those of Huvat,

> Atiye forbade her children to sit with their hands stuck between their legs in case this would bring bad luck (...). She went so far as to proclaim that drinking water while sitting down (...) would also block their good fortune.[66]

Atiye does not modify her religion in the city. She continues to worship in the way she did in the village, where there was no mention of a hodja who showed people the 'true' path to spirituality. Her main concern remains her family's wellbeing; she is not concerned with philosophical abstractions.

It is significant then that the saintly Hizir Aleyhisselam chooses to appear to Atiye instead of the more apparently devout Huvat. The text endorses this more flexible form of religion. God personally interferes in Atiye's household whenever anything needs to be 'corrected'. It is important, similarly, that Huvat and Halit's religion does not bring anything productive to the family. Religion is a phase in their case, which when it ends it disappears completely, merely giving way to other obsessions. Huvat in the end, embarrassingly finds himself as part of a militant religious group, and eventually comes to his senses after being assaulted by a group of young men. Huvat and Halit's religion is reminiscent of Howard's fanatical atheism and Monty's religion in *On Beauty*. Because of their impersonal attitudes

---

[66]Tekin 87

regarding it, all of them-- Howard, Monty, Huvat and Halit-- remain untouched by their beliefs. It is either a distraction for them or a professional exigency.

Atiye in the caring attention she bestows on her family, and the village in its connectedness, function through what the thesis has so far identified as feminine ethical responses. Even Atiye and the village's response to religion is personal and unmediated, therefore their sense of religion also fits in with what has been defined in my argument as feminine. However, Atiye's care and the village's interconnectedness are both complicated in the narrative, and this helps to productively problematise these ideas. Atiye's relationship with her daughter complicates the idea of care, while instances such as the one with Mensur and the school teacher complicate the relationship between the community and its members. The basic ideas of care and personal connection that have hitherto helped to understand the care orientation in the thesis are put to the test in this narrative of a rural Turkish community.

The village community is connected and the members are involved in each others' lives; moreover, its members are personally invested in what is considered just and unjust within the community. The villagers are also flexible in their treatment of religion. In these aspects it comes across as a community that the care orientation would probably see as exemplary. However, what is also made evident through the narrative is that any of these attributes do not, by themselves, prevent the community from being dictated by an implicit and rigid, lopsided ethical code. Unless the very ethical core of society is replaced by another, ideas of connectedness, personal investment and care are merely cosmetic.

Although these ideas and relationships are rendered problematic, the conclusion, nevertheless, is not that they are rendered entirely meaningless; instead, it reveals that these are concepts, like beauty, that can be incorporated or manipulated in ways that support

existing socio-political and economic systems and therefore they need to be dealt with carefully. This idea of incorporation is an important one and will be taken up at various points in the thesis. It is important to understand, as mentioned earlier, that the ideas under discussion-- care, beauty, connection-- cannot be extracted from their political and historical contexts. It would be reductive to view them as concepts that exist in a vacuum, divorced from social contexts.

All the themes in the text are gradually destabilised by contrary, underlying narrative threads which thwart any attempt at a straightforward reading. Atiye's relationship with Dirmit, for instance, comes across as an oppressive one, and at the same time, the text makes clear that it is indeed Atiye who is closest to Dirmit. In fact Dirmit's rebelliousness is constantly reminiscent of Atiye's own foreignness; her own aggression as a young woman, who never learnt to give way to the men in the village, seems to become reflected in Dirmit's wantonness. It becomes evident that Atiye's singling out of Dirmit is to save her from a fate like her own, because she sees herself in her. Therefore, although the mother-daughter relationship is demystified in the text, Atiye and Dirmit do seem to share a very close bond. The relationship reminds us of the complexity inherent in human nature, and therefore the need to test and complicate all ideas regarding people through their particular locations, to come to any real understanding. My examination of the ethics of care through these various fictional scenarios is just such an attempt.

Similarly, although all the people in the village are deeply connected to each other and care for each other, and can therefore be interpreted as 'feminine' in the way mentioned earlier, there is no denying the fact that they function through implicit values that are severely patriarchal. The narrative's stance on the village is an equally ambiguous one, inasmuch as the tone with which its rituals, legends and customs are spoken of is in fact celebratory, yet

these descriptions do not disguise the brutality of the manner in which all subversive acts are put down by the whole village community together.

It is important to note here that although Huvat is seen to follow the religion of the city, which is abstract, impersonal and explicitly masculinist in nature, within the family he is only the token head. It is in fact Atiye who holds the family together. By way of her personalised religion, Atiye is able to influence the members of the family to do what she considers is best for them. The men of the family become tools in her hand, brute force which she exploits to punish aberrant behaviour by any member of the family. She is the matriarch, therefore, who cares for her family deeply and considers all abstract discourses, including formal religion, useless, inasmuch as she can't apply them to immediate and particular familial situations. However, the fact that neither her personalised religion nor her immense concern for those she loves makes her less oppressive to Dirmit is significant. The reader is left wondering whether Dirmit would not in fact be better off in the care of the more impersonal Huvat, who might be able to allow her the space that she needs to flourish. Even her brothers, Halit and Seyit, are relatively tender when dealing with Dirmit, in fact all the male/masculine members of the family are less oppressive than Atiye, when it comes to the girl.

This analysis of the text makes clear, as mentioned earlier, that in order to arrive at a less vague understanding of the feminine care orientation, it is imperative to stress the importance of context, as well as motivation. Questions such as 'why' and 'where' are significant when discussing the efficacy of the ethics of care. It is essential to ascertain that the care that is being talked about is not merely an instrument in the hands of the social, political and economic structures already in place. The issue of care being incorporated for the benefit of patriarchal value systems will also be taken up later in the thesis in Ishiguro's

Never Let Me Go. Be that as it may, the ethics of care according to its own logic as well, stresses context and particularity, and thereby makes it even more necessary to ask questions like 'why' and 'where'.

According to the ethics of care every individual should be viewed as embedded within her context; this prevents it from turning into another ethical system useful for 'objectively' apportioning blame. The ethics of care instead provides a way of engaging more deeply with people. It is an ethical code within which neither Atiye nor Dirmit are blamed; there is instead an attempt to understand them and their situations. *Dear Shameless Death* helps to determine the fact that femininity, as defined in my argument, is not in itself revolutionary. Atiye's case makes evident that if difference/femininity is felt to be a matter of disgrace by the feminine person, due to the internalisation of social norms, then it in fact becomes detrimental to any favourable change. In such a case, the feminine seeks desperate ways of distancing herself from her own femininity. Atiye's mode of coping with it is to enforce with redoubled vigour on her family the norms of the community that had once rejected her.

Smith's *On Beauty* is set in the United States and Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* tells the story of a family in Turkey. Both environments are, in their own way, highly masculine. The disconnected setting of Smith's text has the Wellington University at its centre which works in similar ways to the community in Tekin's text. Both the University and the community seek to quash dissent. Smith's American, academic community does it by insidiously sidelining or even incorporating elements that fall out of line with its system. The Turkish community, on the other hand, quashes dissent in much more direct ways, by straightforwardly rejecting and even eliminating dissenting elements. The question then is, which patriarchal system is preferable, the one that is more straightforward or the one that functions in more devious ways. Nonetheless, what this ascertains is the fact that masculinist

systems of thought are prevalent in otherwise unrelated parts of the world, and thereby it makes sense to gauge similarities in feminine attitudes from different parts of the world as well.

Chapter 3: The West and the East in Fiction by Men

After having examined four women writers coming from and writing about different parts of the world, I will briefly be looking at how male writers deal with similar questions of gender, and the divide between the priveleged and the underprivileged. Quite like Smith and Tekin in the previous chapter, Rushdie and Ishiguro are also writing about two different parts of the world in *Shame* and *Never Let Me Go*. These two texts are also situated in the East and the West respectively. Rushdie's text seems to be based in Pakistan whereas Ishiguro's text is about an imagnary England.

My reasons for bringing together these two texts in this chapter is the same as for the previous one: they will give me an opportunity to examine my argument through two entirely different perspectives. The social set-up in *Never Let Me Go* is very different from the one in *Shame.* The state in *Shame* comes across as explicitly tyrannical and its social environment is presented as being degenerate and oppressive. In *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, the state maintains more of a facade of benevolence; however, in this text as well, the state and mainstream society conspire, so to speak, against the underprivileged. In these texts too, therefore, the fight is between the politically strong and advantaged and the poltically sidelined and disadvantaged. Both these texts are seen to play out the same struggle that has been analysed so far in this thesis, and will thereby help to take the discussion further.

Salman Rushdie; Kazuo Ishiguro:

I have included two male writers at this stage in the thesis to examine briefly whether and/or to what extent contemporary male writers also construct their narratives according to the masculine/feminine framework, as understood in my thesis. Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro are both writers whose lives reflect, in different ways, a cosmopolitan experience, and both have expressed in their works and in interviews, the internal conflicts resulting from that experience. Salman Rushdie has, on many occasions, remarked on the censure that a lot of writers of displacement have to deal with, by those that place stress purity and authenticity.

Both Rushdie and Ishiguro have at some point or another claimed that they have had to rely on memories or imaginations of India and Japan to be able to write about their countries of origin, each having more of an emotional than a physical bond with their 'mother' countries. According to Ishiguro, 'I grew up with a very strong image in my head of this other country, a very important other country to which I had a strong emotional tie (...). In England I was all the time building up this picture in my head, an imaginary Japan.'[1] Rushdie's response is remarkably similar; according to him, '(…) if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge-- which gives rise to profound uncertainties-- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.'[2] The idea of having emotional and imaginative ties with countries and cultures other than the ones that are physically occupied, is an interesting idea for the issue of cosmopolitanism: it makes sense in a world with a history of cross-cultural interaction, where invasions, colonial enterprises and

---

[1] Kenzaburo Oe, 'The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation.' *boundary 2* 18.3 (1991): 110
[2] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1992) 10.

trade have led to, among other things, the language of one culture being taken up by another, entirely dissimilar culture.

Both of these texts are situated within eras that are interesting for my thesis, in that Rushdie's *Shame* came out at the time that Carol Gilligan and other feminist thinkers, like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, were engaged in significant debates about womanhood and womanhood in literature, [3] while Ishiguro's work is more contemporary and therefore provides a more recent perspective on various ideas. Both texts are also interesting in terms of the narrative setting, *Shame* in Pakistan and *Never Let Me Go* in England, which helps to examine my arguments through narratives located in distinctly different parts of the world. The role of the state is very important in both texts, and it is productive to examine how the state machineries and the social structures feed into and take away from each other.

Rushdie's *Shame* (1983) came out after *Midnight's Children* (1980) which was about India and its independence. In *Shame*, on the other hand, the narrator, throughout the book, is at pains to deny that the country being spoken about is strictly Pakistan, 'My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan'.[4] However, many Pakistani and even Indian political figures are discernible in his characterizations.[5] Before *Never Let Me Go* (2005) Ishiguro had published a crime novel called *When We Were Orphans* (2000) which mostly received

---

[3] Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* was published in 1982, while Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* came out in 1979. Juliet Mitchell, Shoshana Felman, Rachel Blau DuPlessis were other feminist thinkers of the 1980s who were engaged in defining the nature of womanhood and femininity. Nancy Chodorow, taking up from Melanie Klein, had delineated her object-relations theory around this time in her book *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978), so that not just womanhood but motherhood as well was being debated in the 1980s. Another important work in this area is Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World* (1987). Melanie Klien's work had also influenced other theories of attachment, care and motherhood, for example, John Bowlby's trilogy, *Attachment and Loss*, 1969, 1972 and 1980.

[4] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995) 29.

[5] 'By employing self-reflective rhetorical and narrative devices, Rushdie interrogates the promise of political leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, General Zia and Iskander Harappa, as well as the official narratives of national independence in order to address the division between the political elite and the people.' Stephen Morton, *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 33.

lukewarm reviews. *Never Let Me Go*'s narrative is set in England of the 1990s, but the narrative technique plays with time in very interesting ways.[6]

These texts will take my argument further as they represent the workings of very different kinds of state and social setups. Ishiguro represents a welfare state in *Never Let Me Go*, whereas Rushdie's *Shame* portrays what seems instead like a dictatorship. However, in their examination, it is revealed that neither is better than the other inasmuch as both states function according to masculinist assumptions; therefore, the privileged continue to thrive, whereas the sidelined in both texts are sacrificed.

Rushdie's *Shame* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*: The state and its people

Like Smith and Tekin's texts, the two novels examined in this chapter will help to extend further the East and West discussion. These texts are in many ways representative, and help to examine the differences and similarities between the socio-political structures of what Rushdie's narrative suggests is Pakistan, and Ishiguro's imaginary England. I have chosen to examine male writers at this stage in the thesis in order to explore whether their standpoints differ significantly from those of the female writers, or whether the male writers also use what has been defined in my argument as the masculinity/femininity framework to delineate the environment of their narrative and depict the relationships of the various characters to that environment. This analysis will also help to explore the ways in which the masculine and

---

[6] 'The first-time reader of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is tempted into a false start by the information given at the opening: 'England, late 1990s.' Published in 2005, the novel might seem to be announcing a scrutiny of the way we now live. Most of Ishiguro's novels have had settings remote from contemporary Britain. Here the novelist seems to be edging towards the present. It is a necessary illusion as the opening announcement does not, as it turns out, root us in contemporary reality. Instead it is calculated to have a defamiliarizing effect. While this measures carefully the passing of time, its chronology, we soon realize, is removed from any historical reality that we can recognise.' John Mullan, 'On First Reading Never Let Me Go,' Sean Matthew and Sebstian Groes ed., *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2009) 104.

feminine categories are complicated and problematised within narratives by men.

Both of these texts, *Shame* and *Never Let Me Go*, engage with the question of the nation-state, and they portray two different kinds of state machineries. The English state in *Never Let Me Go* sees itself as one that seeks to ensure the wellbeing of its subjects-- a welfare state; however, this welfare state, although outwardly benevolent, is rife with inequalities when examined closely, so that the disadvantaged are cruelly exploited and disposed of. The state in *Shame*, on the other hand, is explicitly corrupt, even tyrannical, and it protects itself by disguising its iniquities behind external narratives of respectability and honour that have, for generations, sustained the society that it seeks to govern. However, it is not of course a one way transaction; corruptions in that social structure effect its government and vice versa, so that in the end the whole system is reduced to a cesspool of moral corruption, in dire need of a fresh beginning.[7]

Accordingly, because both texts are to a great extent about how the two states function, it would be fitting to begin my analysis in the light of what is defined as a good state in Plato's *The Republic*. According to Socrates,

> (...) All men desire justice, but, like honour, its attainment requires effort, discipline, and risk. The price of justice is high, and many are unwilling to pay it. Hence they are prone to accept counterfeit wares in the form of deceptive definitions.[8]

This is what happens in *Shame*: the social system in Rushdie's text collapses because people within that system reach a point of decadence where any hope for change sounds naïve, and

---

[7] As Robert Nozick asserts regarding the interconnectedness of the morality of a society and that of its state, 'What persons may and may not do to one another limits what they may do through the apparatus of a state, or do to establish such an apparatus. The moral prohibitions it is permissible to enforce are the source of whatever legitimacy the state's fundamental coercive power has.' Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 6.

[8] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985) 15.

the idea of shame turns into another deceptive narrative. In this scenario Socrates' claim that '(...) a very small number of modest changes' would help to transform bad governance seems inaccurate.[9] Socrates goes on to argue,

> The chief function of the state (...) is education. (...) Not simply what is taught in schools. It includes what parents teach their children, what peers learn from peers, and how the state and society instruct their people to distinguish between friends and enemies, safety and danger, good and evil, respectability and disrepute. State and society are the chief guardians of public tradition (...).[10]

The idea of shame in Rushdie's text is just such a traditional narrative which has generally proved useful to people in that society to 'distinguish between' 'good and evil' and 'respectability and disrepute'. It is a narrative that could in other circumstances result in a caring and careful society and state. However, the idea of shame, as with many such manipulable ideas examined in the thesis, for example the idea of beauty in *On Beauty*, turns into an externalised discourse in Rushdie's text, through which to exercise control and deceive the masses.

Similarly in *Never Let Me Go*, although the state seemingly cares for its people, it is portrayed as really protecting the interests of only a particular section of society. Those who are underprivileged therefore are ruthlessly exploited for the benefit of those who are privileged, and at the same time the state creates institutions to show that it cares for the welfare of the disadvantaged. Accordingly, just as shame becomes a meaningless charade in Rushdie's text, care in Ishiguro's text is also turned into a state sponsored charade. According to the Introduction in *The Republic*, 'Socrates and Plato declare that human being's true

---

[9] Plato 17
[10] Plato 15

purpose is the happiness that comes from being just.'[11] In an ideal system this individual quest for justice and happiness should extend to society and state; however, in the welfare state depicted in *Never Let Me Go* there is no sense of happiness for anybody, and justice is only a sham which protects a privileged few. Through the fantasy mode Ishiguro's narrative portrays the disadvantaged (human clones) as being physically exploited and abused. The state, by way of a perverse and self-interested notion of justice, warps the idea of care by providing its abused victims with nurses-- to make sure they remain fit for further exploitation-- who are termed as 'carers'.

Rushdie's *Shame* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* are situated at interesting moments as regards the emergence of Carol Gilligan's ideas on the ethics of care, presented in *In a Different Voice*, 1982. Rushdie's text came out a year later than Gilligan's and is useful in instantiating contemporary reactions to ideas then being put forward by feminist thinkers. Ishiguro's text, inasmuch as it opens up certain questions regarding relationships and the concept of care-- ideas seminal to Gilligan's theory-- can provide a glimpse into more recent and current views on these issues.

The extreme reaction to the idea of a feminine space evidenced in *Shame* participates in the kind of debates that would have emerged in response to conceptions of a feminine/female ethical domain as developed by Gilligan. Rushdie's text is important because it acknowledges and problematises the possibility of an exclusively female space through the three sisters. In *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, these suspicions have to do with the appropriation of such ideas, like care, by dominant patriarchal modes of functioning. It raises questions regarding care homes for instance where the act of caring is professionalised and where people are paid to provide care and empathy. Accordingly,

---

[11] Plato 14

amongst the key issues that are raised in Ishiguro's text is the professionalization of care in a capitalist society, where affective relations become commodities of economic exchange.[12]

Neither of these texts is developed in a straightforward mode of realism; Rushdie's text might be located in the genre of magic realism, whereas Ishiguro's text is closer to science-fiction. It has to be noted again that where Rushdie's narrative only suggests that the events of the text might be set in Pakistan, Ishiguro's narrative states clearly that the events of *Never Let Me Go* take place in England, and through the mode of fantasy, both deal with real emotions and socially significant issues. Rushdie's characters evoke ancient legends and monsters.[13] Ishiguro's text, on the other hand, is a futuristic tale where human cloning becomes an everyday reality. Inasmuch as myths can be read as stores of collective, conscious and subconscious ideas, it seems appropriate that the two novels-- by investing these myths and legends with added meanings and associations-- explore issues that are immediately relevant to their societies. Furthermore, the novels become more universally relevant because the myths they draw from are not from one particular culture, but are instead taken from a pool of stories that have now taken on a more global character. The myth of the three sisters, for instance, that Rushdie's narrative seems to have drawn from in *Shame*, is not

---

[12] Richard Sennett's work on the welfare state is very significant. According to him, 'Reformers of the welfare state are sociologists of a sort. (…) They believe institutions and professionals should be replaced wherever possible by communities and volunteers. Behind these social aspirations lies the belief that welfare state should operate more like a profit-making business. (…) This (…) is naïve sociology (…) because complications of talent, dependence, and caregiving cannot be erased by privatization or community care; moreover the reformers view of social institutions themselves is faulty. To act on this faulty knowledge only exaggerates inequalities of respect, disconnecting welfare clients from the rest of society.' Richard Sennett, *Respect: The Formation of Character in a World of Inequality* (London: Penguin Books, 2003) 53.

[13] Justyna Deszcz's essay, 'Salman Rushdie's Attempt at a Feminist Fairytale Reconfiguration in *Shame*', is an interesting examination of Rushdie's use of folklore in his novel and asks many pertinent questions regarding Rushdie's feminist stance within the novel. 'Rushdie is certainly aware that fairytale images or motifs have become significant cultural factors that mediate between culture, social groups and individuals in the process of constructing our perception of reality. But does he use them so his stories become an act of femaling and a move against sexist bias; or if he does resort to the language of patriarchy, does he use it to offer any workable options to the sexist archetypes?' Justyna Deszcz, 'Salman Rushdie's Attempt at a Feminist Fairytale Reconfiguration in *Shame*,' *Folklore* 115.1 (April, 2004): 27-44.

a Pakistani myth.[14] Similarly, the figure of the werewolf, of which the character of Sufiya Zinobia is reminiscent, has become part of an international horror movie circuit. Sufiya's character also recalls the destructive goddess Kali from Hindu mythology. Ishiguro's novel, in the same way, deals with a global scientific myth about cloning and its potential side-effects.

Rushdie's text turns the three sisters into what might be seen as radical feminists, and, as mentioned earlier, uses the imagery of the werewolf to delineate the character of Sufiya Zinobia. The representation of the attributes of the werewolf and goddess Kali in Sufiya, not only allows the narrative to embody and play out deep-seated fears and anxieties, but also becomes a means for the narrative to vent underlying and growing anger within the text at social and political abominations. Likewise, it is interesting that Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* (1979) came out just a few years before Rushdie's *Shame*, articulating the idea of the repressed woman expressing herself by way of hysteria, which again, can be seen to apply to portrayal of Sufiya Zinobia.[15]

Sufiya's character and the three sisters are indicative of the narrative's mixed reaction to the feminist politics. Where the three sisters are rendered futile and even harmful in their

---

[14] The myth of the three sisters is said to be part of Aboriginal folk tales. They refer to a particular rock formation in the Blue Mountains in Australia. The story is about three rebel sisters-- Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedoo-- who wish to marry outside their tribe. They are turned to stone by an elder who is later killed, so that the sisters are frozen in that state forever. This myth fits the portrayal of the three sisters in the text on various levels, as these too are rebel women who are frozen in an exclusive world of their own. The myth is of course a negative and scornful portrayal of the 'feminine' space as the sisters are inert. It is not a sphere of newness and revolution but that of death.

[15] Gilbert and Gubar's description of the representations of the nineteenth-century woman corresponds to a great extent with the character of Sufiya Zinobia who, in her isolation and alienation, eventually embodies the absolute other. 'At times (...) in the severity of her selflessness, as well as in the extremity of her alienation from ordinary fleshly life, this nineteenth-century angel-woman becomes not just a memento of otherness but actually a *memento mori* or, as Alexander Welsh has noted, an "Angel of Death."' Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth–Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1979) 24.

feminist seclusion, it is through them that the corrupt head of state is killed in the end; and whereas Sufiya's feminine hysteria is extremely destructive and brutal, it is not only effective but can also be seen as an articulation of repressed female sexuality. The text suggests that Sufiya takes upon herself all the real shame that her society should rightly feel. There are two kinds of shame in the text: one is related to outward respectability, behind which degenerate political conspiracies are hatched by people high up in the system. The other kind is the real shame that human beings should feel at the ruthlessness of these political intrigues. This other, more personal kind of shame is the kind that could destabilise systems and lead to real change, and this destabilisation would be the price for social honour and a caring state that Socrates talks about in *The Republic*. Therefore it is this kind of shame that most characters in the text refuse to feel, the ever increasing suppression of which results in the monstrosity of Sufiya Zinobia.

It is because the fake and impersonal sense of shame/respectability acts as a veneer that duplicity and double standards within that political atmosphere remain rampant and unchecked. For example Raza Hyder's religious gatta on the forehead-- caused by constantly genuflecting in prayer-- is a strong symbol of his 'respectability', and allows him to kill innocent people, without shame, for the sake of political advancement. Sufiya, Omar Khayyam Shakil, and the three sisters are all feminine characters as defined in my thesis, in that they fall on the fringes of society; it is significant then that they are the least 'real' of all characters in the text. They are drawn from various myths and legends and invested with numerous potential meanings. They are highly dangerous and disruptive. Also, the text remains ambiguous regarding their sexuality.

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* employs a more contemporary mythology of science.[16] Ishiguro's narrative, through its depiction of an imaginary futuristic state, examines the hypocrisy and the exploitative nature of a capitalistic welfare society. It is a state which goes to any lengths to serve all whom it considers to be its own people. However, what makes the state sinister is the representation of what happens to those in the bottom rungs of society, inasmuch as it is a hierarchical system which takes from the less privileged and gives to the more privileged, and as a result, those who are at the bottom are squeezed of everything that they possess. The narrative accentuates this alarming aspect of a capitalistic welfare state by situating within the novel, an eminently exploitable, imaginary species-- human clones manufactured for organ donations.

What makes the clones even more vulnerable is that they are not merely mechanical, but are capable of human emotions; therefore, the injustice of their condition is even more pronounced. Fantasy and myth are used in *Never Let Me Go,* as in Rushdie's *Shame*, to examine ideas that are immediately socially and politically relevant. Myths are effective as story telling devices; and the story of insidious exploitation by a state, told from the perspective of an imaginary colony of clones instead of a real oppressed social group, may be far more compelling and persuasive for an urban audience increasingly surrounded and

---

[16] Keith Mcdonald examines the efficacy of the genres employed by Ishiguro's narrative as follows: '*Never Let Me Go* is reminiscent of two canonical Science Fiction texts, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), the former of which deals with the issue of cloning and the social implications of a eugenics program, and the latter of which focuses on the plight of a woman in a world where biological reproduction has been hijacked by a totalitarian state. Aaron Rosenfeld points out that the many "future histories" of Science Fiction "offer a critique of how we live and who we are now . . . they speak in and to the present, if not of it" (40). *Never Let Me Go* is no exception to this. It provides us with a window into a culture of genetic engineering and cloning technology in which people are exploited and killed by a state seeking the wider benefits of organ farming, a window that nevertheless reflects in part the decisions facing contemporary culture.' Keith McDonald, 'Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as "Speculative Memoir",' *Biography* 30.1 (Winter 2007): 74-83.

fascinated by science and technology.

Ideas of shame and honour, which are central to certain cultures, like that of Pakistan, are for that reason central in Rushdie's *Shame*. In a mode that has sometimes been referred to as magic realism,[17] the text traces its characters' relationships to the emotion of shame. The masculine characters in Rushdie's text-- Raza Hyder, Iskander Harappa and Arjumand Harappa-- consider themselves very much in the process of the creation of history. The feminine characters, on the other hand, are the porous kinds through whom history, as it were, passes. As in the other texts that I examined, the feminine characters in Rushdie's text do not have a stake in that process because they are not part of it-- being 'others' and 'outsiders' in relation to the system, the feminine observe from the fringes. Consequently, some like Rani Harappa become scrupulous recorders, while others, like Bilquis or Pinkie Aurangzeb, disappear within the crevices of history.

The shawls that Rani Harappa knits to record the real story of her husband, Iskander Harappa, a key political player in the text, illustrate her complete sidelining in that environment,

> Rani had depicted herself as being composed of the same materials as the house, wood, brick, tin, her body merging into the fabric of Mohenjo, she was earth and cracks and spiders, and a mist of oblivion clouded the scene (…).[18]

Even as she recedes into the background, merging with the inanimate objects that make up the surroundings, she does not disappear entirely, as do Pinkie and Bilquis. Instead, she gains

---

[17] According to David W. Hart's essay, 'Making a Mockery of Mimicry: Salman Rushdie's *Shame*,' 'The general usage of the term magical-realism to describe Rushdie's literary genre is problematic because its invocation includes mostly Third World literatures and excludes similar Western European literatures which are deemed to be European Modernism (…)'. David W. Hart, 'Making a Mockery of Mimicry: Salman Rushdie's *Shame*,' *Postcolonial Text* 4.4 (2008): 1-20.

[18] Rushdie 194

insight because of her marginalisation, and then strikes back by recording meticulously the otherwise suppressed truth about her husband's life.

One of the more mysterious feminine characters in the text is Omar Khayyam Shakil. He is obviously reminiscent of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, both because of his name and because, just as the poet was born in the city of Nishapur in Iran, Omar Kahyyam Shakil in *Shame* is born in a house called Nishapur. His character is also like that of an artist's in that he is the consummate observer. Moreover, he becomes a kind of a leitmotif or a poetic refrain in the text, standing at the margins and constantly looking in. His only active role in the narrative is when he unwittingly brings the reprobate to his nemesis. He is, therefore, an unsuspecting agent of justice in the text.

The masculine and the feminine characters establish very different kinds of relationships within their social circles in *Shame*. The feminine characters develop relationships of genuine connection between them, while masculine characters develop relationships of convenience and/or rivalry amongst themselves. And in this text again, what gets sacrificed in the showdown between the powerful masculine characters that shape everything in the public, socio-political sphere, is the above mentioned feminine connection.

The feminine characters are shown to be forced into sacrificing their relationships because they find themselves dependent on and having to go along with the larger plans of their masculine counterparts. For instance, the friendship that grows between Bilquis and Rani Harappa is completely destroyed in the storm that brews between their respective husbands, Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa. Their relationship in some ways is reminiscent of Kiki and Carlene's in Smith's *On Beauty*, but where Kiki and Carlene's relationship gets consummated in a positive ending through the transfer of Carlene's painting, Bilquis and Rani are doomed to live out their separate and lonely lives. As the story progresses, the text

continues to compare their fortunes,

> (...) Both had husbands who retreated from them into the enigmatic palaces of their destinies, but while Bilquis sank into eccentricity, not to say craziness, Rani had subsided into a sanity which made her a powerful, and later on a dangerous, human being.[19]

This passage is illustrative of all that I have been arguing. The narrative explicitly sets up these characters according to the pattern defined here as masculine and feminine. Both husbands as alpha males inhabit highly masculinized spheres, plotting how they may attain more power within the Pakistani state, within which their wives have little to no place.

This inequality between the advantaged and the disadvantaged is not limited to *Shame* but pervades all fictional scenarios examined in the thesis. The difference is that in this case the narrative is not from a female but a male author, which validates, because of that reason, the argument of my thesis. One of the basic reasons that these nation-states and communities are unjust is because they-- recalling Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of morality-- are based solely on discourses that are impersonalised/masculinized.[20] On the other hand, the feminine wives in their isolation either descend into madness-- Bilquis-- or gain destructive strength through their resentments-- Rani Harappa.

The three sisters and the mothers of Omar Khayyam Shakil-- Chunni, Munnee and Bunny-- stand for female connection taken to an extreme, trapped indoors as they are, within

---

[19] Rushdie 152

[20] '(…) From the perspective of women, Kohlberg's moral stages (…) centre on the ideas of justice, equality and rights (…) rather than on issues of responsibility and obligation. The latter (…) are likely to be more central values in the lives of women and could modify the definition of the moral stages.' Moreover, Thomas Lickona mentions that 'Simpson (1974), in a critique of Kohlberg's work titled "Moral Development Research: A Case Study of Scientific Cultural Bias," argues that he (Kohlberg) draws his moral principles solely from Western philosophers (Kant, Mill, Ross, Rawls, Dowey) and that 'an adequate explanation of the concept of morality throughout humanity implies the examination of its meaning in the *non*-Western world as well.' Thomas Lickona, introduction, *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research, and Social Issues*, ed. Thomas Lickona (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, c1976) 8. Kohlberg presumes to theorise on human nature with the Western masculine Man at its centre. This example gestures towards a philosophical, moral, social and political system that, at its best, refuses to acknowledge any perspective that differs from the Western, masculine standard.

a world of undisturbed union. 'Although some five years separated Chunni from Bunny (...) the sisters, by virtue of dressing identically and through the incomprehensible effects of their unusual, chosen life, began to resemble each other so closely that even the servants made mistakes'.[21] Their rhyming names are also suggestive of the contempt with which the narrative treats the idea of an exclusive feminine space. Nonetheless, it is significant that the one thing that the sisters intensely loathe is the sense of shame imposed on them by society, from which they retreat into their solitary tower.

Nussbaum, in *Upheavals of Thought* argues, 'They (…) project these loathed attributes onto various groups of social enemies, by subordinating whom they achieve a vicarious victory over their own humanity.'[22] In other words, it becomes a mechanism through which those in power assume immunity from any kind of 'weakness' which is then cast onto, not only women, but any powerless social group; shame becomes a mechanism through which societal structures are kept in place. This process-- transferring social ills onto those who by way of their political, moral or social marginality/insubstantiality are most vulnerable-- is seen also in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, where the masculine characters are represented as projecting all of their own feelings of guilt and inadequacy onto the feminine.

In *Never Let Me Go*, 'normal' people project feelings of guilt and disgust-- generated from partaking of that exploitative social setup-- onto the clones, treating them like untouchables and thereby justifying their exploitation both for themselves and for the system at large. This is illustrated by the figure of Madame in her behaviour towards the clone children in Hailsham School:

---

[21] Rushdie 19

[22] Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 346.

As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face-- as did the others I'm sure. And I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her.[23]

Madame works closely with the system, which makes it difficult for her to treat the clone children as any other group of children, at the same time as being complicit in a system that is set up to abuse their bodies. She has to keep this distinction between 'normal' children and clone children alive to continue supporting the system within which she functions.

In *Shame* those who knowingly or unknowingly fail to follow values implicit within that masculinist society are made to suffer shame for all those around them. And the more they resist feeling everybody else's share of shame, the more they are pushed to the very margins of society. Therefore, even though Rani Harappa and Bilquis suffer greatly, because they do not flout conventions too brazenly they are allowed to get on with their 'normal' lives. On the other hand, the three sisters, Omar Shakil, and Sufiya Zinobia are the ones that find themselves at extreme angles with respect to social conventions and therefore their suffering is of another, more extreme, nature.

The sisters refuse to give in to the feeling of shame and therefore have to resort to intense isolation to protect themselves from social censure. Omar Khayyam Shakil, having been trained by his mothers, very rarely feels shame himself, and it is because of this shamelessness that he is doomed to remain outside of the mainstream world that he constantly tries very hard to occupy. And as for Sufiya Zinobia, shame becomes so oppressive for her that she changes her form and turns into an animalistic/monstrous creature far removed from ideas of shame and human decency. Nussbaum in *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (2004), argues that shame and disgust are problematic emotions

---

[23] Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005) 35.

which can be used as tools for subjugation, and therefore are an unreliable basis for ethical or legal judgement.[24] Feelings of shame and disgust are linked directly to the normative ethical behavioural codes upon which rest whole social structures; it is the feeling that people are expected to encourage in others and within themselves in case they fall short of the patriarchal standard. It is interesting that the text, in these ways, should provide some insight into issues of shame and feminine space, ideas that were, at the time of the publication of *Shame*, still emergent in the intellectual arena.

Nevertheless, Raza Hyder's death occurs at the hands of the three sisters. Raza Hyder is the most eminent patriarch of the state in the text, and the three sisters are most fierce in their turning away from the patriarchal world outside of their house Nishapur. They are so opposed to the patriarchal values of the social system outside that they name no fathers for their two sons. However, important as the idea of the feminine force that the sisters create in opposition to the system outside is, it is also important to keep in mind the fact that both their sons feel suffocated in and feel the need to run away from Nishapur.

> Omar Khayyam Shakil was afflicted, from his earliest days, by a sense of inversion, of a world turned upside-down. And by something worse: the fear that he was living at the edge of the world, so close that he might fall off at any moment.[25]

It is noteworthy that both Omar Shakil and their later son Babur find the extremely exclusive atmosphere of the house stifling. This space of complete female exclusion is depicted as miasmic and death-like. The closed nature of the house is suggestive of moral degeneracy, death and the womb all at once; thus, the atmosphere is equally revealing of the narrative's

---

[24] Nussbaum argues, '(…) A clear understanding of disgust's thought-content should make us skeptical about relying on it as a basis for law. That skepticism should grow greatly as we see how disgust has been used throughout history to exclude and marginalize groups or people who come to embody the dominant group's fear and loathing of its own animality and mortality.' Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 14.

[25] Rushdie 21

negative, almost misogynistic, stance towards these women.

However, I would argue that the criticism within the narrative, of the exclusive connection shared by the sisters, is not entirely without value; in fact it corroborates in many ways what the thesis has already been arguing regarding the separation of the female and the feminine. What happens in the situation of the three sisters is a taking over of the only 'other' space available in that environment exclusively by these women. It is, to my mind, the fact of that space belonging only to women that makes the environment of that house stifling. After all, Omar Shakil, like the sisters, quite frequently feels out of place within the outside world, and therefore should be able to find refuge in the house. Instead he finds the atmosphere of Nishapur too exclusive. 'Omar Khayyam, walled up in "Nishapur", had been excluded from human society by his mothers' strange resolve; and this, his mothers' three in oneness, redoubled that sense of exclusion (…)'.[26] He finds himself to be an outsider even inside the house, as he does outside of it. My argument is that an exclusively female space is as problematic as an exclusively male space, and therefore it becomes important to rethink and open up conceptions of femininity and masculinity.

The boys have not just one but three mothers to take care of them, but the mothers fail. This is another text in the thesis, like Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, where the question of motherhood is put under scrutiny. However, in this text the idea is comically dismissed rather than really engaged with.

> Now the three of them began, simultaneously, to thicken at the waist and in the breast; when one was sick in the morning, the other two began to puke in such perfectly synchronised sympathy that it was impossible to tell which stomach had heaved first. Identically, their wombs ballooned towards the pregnancy's full term. (...). In spite of the biological

---

[26] Rushdie 35

improbability, I am prepared to swear that so wholeheartedly did they wish to share the motherhood of their sibling-- to transform the public shame of unwedlocked conception into the private triumph of the longed-for group baby-- that (...) twin phantom pregnancies accompanied the real one; while the simultaneity of their behaviour suggests the operation of some form of communal mind.[27]

Motherhood, like everything else associated with the three sisters, is treated with a lot of irony within the narrative. The above passage conveys contempt both for idealised notions of mystical female camaraderie as also for romanticised notions of motherhood.

Therefore, as in Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, the idea of the ideal mother-child relationship-- on which various ethical theories regarding attachment and care, including the ethics of care is seen to be based-- can be opened up for critical scrutiny by way of this text.[28] Where Tekin's narrative brings out serious flaws in the relationship between an over-caring, controlling mother and a defenceless child, Rushdie's text heavily satirizes the idea of maternal connection, by showing that in spite of having spent all their growing up years with the three mothers, the two sons feel nothing more than trapped and stifled in Nishapur. The criticism of the role of the mother in these texts also provides me with the opportunity to underline that my thesis views the ethics of care not simply as a theory that idealises relationships of care between one person and another, but interprets the care orientation as an alternative ethical system that has a caring/involved, as opposed to impartial and objective, approach to people and relationships.

The case of these three sisters is useful in illustrating the isolating essentialism that Gilligan's ethics of care can descend into if understood as being limited only to women. My

---

[27] Rushdie 20

[28] One such theory is the Attachment Theory, proposed by John Bowlby from the 1950s to the 1980s. Jeremy Holmes' *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* is a very informative work on the subject.

argument here is that it would be simplistic to claim that women by nature are a certain way as opposed to men. That kind of an essentialist ethical formulation would be limiting and even detrimental. And it is to avoid this that the care orientation needs to be inclusive of groups that have suffered and continue to suffer similar systematic sidelining by the normative patriarchal mainstream, and have thereby developed a different way of relating to people and their surroundings.

Be that as it may, where this exclusive connection between the sisters is portrayed as an almost degenerate space, the masculine world outside is not seen to be a more alluring setting in the narrative either.[29] That is evident in the sympathy with which the friendship between Rani Harappa and Bilquis, the wives of the two main political players, is described:

> Rani Humayun, who has landed one of the prize catches of the marriage season and will shortly leave this dormitory to wed the fair skinned, foreign educated, sensually full-lipped young millionaire Iskander Harappa, and who is, like Bilquis, eighteen years old, has befriended her cousin Raza's new bride. Bilquis enjoys (while pretending to be scandalized) Rani's malicious ruminations on the subject of the household sleeping arrangements. 'Imagine, in that darkness,' Rani giggles while the two of them grind the daily spices 'who would know if her real husband had come to her? (...) Bilquis blushes gracefully and covers Rani's mouth with a coriander-scented hand.[30]

The two are best friends till they are separated because of the political enmity between their husbands. It is because their relationship is represented in these compassionate terms that

---

[29] Aijaz Ahmed argues, '(…) we (…) find in *Shame* an actual portrayal of Pakistan-- and, in Rushdie's own words, 'more than Pakistan'-- as a space occupied so entirely by power that there is no space left for either resistance or its representation; whoever claims to resist is enmeshed already in the relations of power and in the logic of all-embracing violences.' His argument here succinctly summarises the issue of there not being any redemptive space within the text, whether they be called the space of the establishment/anti-establishment or the masculine/feminine.
Aijaz Ahmad, 'Rushdie's *Shame*: Postmodernism, Migrancy and Representation of Women,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 26.25 (Jun. 15, 1991): 1461-1471.
[30] Rushdie 73

their separation comes across as even more tragic and unjust. In this manner, like Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, Rushdie's text seems to be opening up a space for the questioning of both masculine and feminine ways of looking at the world and thereby bringing each into a kind of negative confrontation with the other.

Both these modes of functioning revolve, in the text, around the idea of shame; Nishapur's residents assert themselves by turning away from it completely, and the people outside either use it as an instrument of control or are seen to succumb to the power of shame.[31] Those who know how to manipulate the notion of shame use it in a superficial way, as a veil of respectability. For instance, Raza Hyder's gatta on the forehead is for him and his society entirely consistent with the massacres he effects in certain regions of the country. Likewise, Iskander Harappa's apparent turning away from his past life of debauchery to pursue politics is accepted at face value by those around him, and the fact that his new found piety is merely an act to further his career is not brought up as an issue in that social set up.

Iskander's wife, Rani Harappa, attempts to have her marginalised-- and thereby insightful-- voice heard. However, as it turns out, her revelations fall flat, simply because nobody is particularly surprised by them. They are seen as facts that need to be deliberately ignored and buried in the subconscious of the nation, for the 'normal' life of cut-throat competition to carry on. Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder's relationship to shame and respectability bring to mind Howard and Monty's relationship to beauty in Zadie Smith's text.

---

[31] Ayelet Ben-Yishai examines in interesting ways how the idea of shame is constructed within Rushdie's text. He argues, 'Opposing shame and shamelessness in this text is (…) an indication that the relationship between the two concepts is not one of opposites, but one of negation (subtraction) and hence a dialectic. The dialectic of shame in this novel is not with its opposite—honor, but with its lack—shamelessness. The antithesis is not distinct from the thesis, but rather inscribed within its production: shameless behavior produces shame.' Ayelet Ben-Yishai, 'The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the Meta Narrative of Salman Rushdie's *Shame*,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.1 (Spring, 2002): 194-215.

Just as Howard and Monty have functional relationships with these concepts, so do Iskander and Raza, and in this comparison again, the commonality of masculine attitudes across cultures and political boundaries becomes evident.

Iskandar Harappa's daughter Arjumand, is a woman who believes completely in the masculine ideals of her father.

> (...) Arjumand, has been shut away (...) along with a mother who looks like a grandmother and who will not accept her dead husband's divinity; then the daughter remembers, concentrating on details, telling herself the time will come for Iskander to be restored to history. His legend is in her care. Arjumand (...) eats like a bird and takes laxatives, empties herself of everything to make room for his memories. They fill her up, her bowels, her lungs, her nostrils; she's her father's epitaph, and she knows.[32]

Arjumand very deliberately readies herself after her father's death to take on the masculine mantle of Iskander's powerful stature, and distances herself from her mother and her experiences. It is noteworthy that although she is a woman, she is not made to feel undeserving of the power and political knowledge that her father passes on. She is teased by the media with the term 'virgin Ironpants', but her father accepts completely her masculine attitude to life. Arjumand's case serves as an example for the distinction that I am drawing in this thesis between the sex of individuals and masculine/feminine attitudes and sensibilities, which allows my argument to extend the idea of the feminine to encompass all marginalised groups.

Unlike Morrison's *Paradise* and Smith's *On Beauty*, no glimpse into the 'right' kind of ethical behaviour is offered in Rushdie's text, inasmuch as the world of feminine/female connection is depicted as being as degenerate as the masculine world of the mainstream, and

---

[32] Rushdie 178

therefore *Shame*'s narrative comes across as much bleaker than many others I have examined in the thesis.[33] The conclusion I draw from this analysis of the text is that both the standard (Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa) and the alternative (the three sisters) ethical frameworks are inadequate in so many crucial ways, that there is a need to move beyond both. And this movement beyond both is achieved in the text through the destruction caused by Sufiya Zinobia.[34] She is the extremely violent, mentally disturbed daughter of Raza Hyder, who gradually starts to be looked upon as a mad beast within the text. Through her is brought about a cleansing through destruction of that society. Sufiya Zinobia becomes a means through which the text carries out justice according to its own logic.

All the pessimism in the atmosphere of the text, and all the suppression of guilt and shame, erupts within Sufiya's character. All the shame collecting within her turns her into a beast which then goes on to destroy the irredeemably immoral social setup where nothing is above board. In her character can be seen glimpses of the mad woman in the attic, the one who takes upon herself all the fury generated through social injustices, and offers herself as sacrifice.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Sufiya as a beast recalls the figure of the werewolf. The werewolf is a creature that kills indiscriminately, and so does Sufiya. It is not the killing of evil to save all that is good; instead it is complete destruction, from which may emerge

---

[33] Samir Dayal discusses the '(…) ascription of aggressive, violent sexuality to women, (…) this ascription represents the *absorption* and diversion of the gaze from traditionally male aggression, *masculinist* national history making.' Samir Dayal, 'The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's "Shame",' *The Journal of the Midwest Modern* 31.2 (Winter 1998): 39-62.

[34] Nasser Hussain talks about Rushdie's complicated relationship with Pakistan as a country where his family chose to reside. Hussain provides evidence in his essay of the fact that Rushdie felt intense shame as regards the sociopolitical environment in Pakistan.'(…) A closure is effected by making the text the receptacle of a collective shame. Sufiya Zinobia, the protagonist of the novel, is born with the "disease" of compulsive blushing. As she absorbs the shame of those around her, a violence festers within, threatening to explode. A similar violence lurks in the subtext of Rushdie's fairy tale (…).'Nasser Hussain, 'Hyphenated Identity: Nationalistic Discourse, History, and the Anxiety of Criticism in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*,' *Qui Parle* 3.2 (Fall 1989): 1-8.

something new and uncorrupt. Omar Khayyam thinks to himself,

> On all fours, the calluses thick on her palms and soles. The black hair, once shorn by Bilquis Hyder, long now and matted around her face, enclosing it like fur; the pale skin of her *mohajir* ancestry burned and toughened by the sun, bearing like battle scars the lacerations of bushes, animals, her own itch-scratching nails. Fiery eyes and the stink of ordure and death. 'For the first time in her life'-- he shocked himself by the sympathy in the thought-- 'that girl is free.'[35]

Both in her deportment here and in her purpose, Sufiya is evocative of the figure of goddess Kali who symbolises just such an indiscriminate destructive force. According to later interpretations of the Kali mythology, she too, like Sufiya, is full of shame, and therefore she is always depicted with her tongue hanging out.[36] Similar to the angry Kali, the figure of the beast in Rushdie's novel is a symbol of anger brought about by extreme shame.

Because she has this cleansing role, it seems significant to me that Sufiya Zinobia should be married to the other agent of justice in the text, Omar Khayyam Shakil. It is significant also, that both these characters are entirely unaware of their crucial roles within the text. Sufiya Zinobia is an innocent, autistic girl, whose transformation into a beast is made even more tragic because of her obliviousness regarding it; and Omar Shakil is a debauched man who seems to want nothing more than to hobnob with the cream of the same society that refuses to accept him. Both are sacrificial in the narrative inasmuch as neither is in any way on a conscious mission to change the world around them.

It is significant that both of them are used as sacrifices in the text and at the same time emerge from the margins of society; as René Girard argues regarding sacrificial victims,

---

[35] Rushdie 254

[36] Kali is the fierce form of goddess Durga. She is generally described as a nude, dark figure with four arms, in one of which she carries the head of a slain demon. She wears a necklace of skulls and a girdle made of dead demon hands. Her tongue protrudes from her mouth and her eyes are shown to be blood red.

We notice at first glance beings who are either outside or on the fringes of society: prisoners of war, slaves (…). What we are dealing with, therefore, are exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants.[37]

The act of sacrifice, according to René Girard, results in the redirection of violence to protect the community. In Sufiya's case, however, there is a sort of implosion that threatens to destroy that community itself. The sacrifice here, therefore, seems not to have been offered by that society. Instead, the sacrifice seems to have been made by the narrative, to wreak destruction over a society that has frustrated any other-- masculine (male: Iskander Harappa, Raza Hyder) or feminine (female: the three sisters, Rani and Bilquis)-- means of narrative redemption. This conclusion is crucial for the argument of my thesis which extends the ethics of care beyond traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity as related to male and female, and in doing so, provides a window for the articulation of a different kind of ethical system which is neither male nor female but is constructed according to very different principles.

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* throws an entirely different light on the ethics of care, by opening up for debate the act of caring itself. Unlike Rushdie, who had to be elusive in the setting of *Shame* in order to sidestep religious and national censure, Ishiguro does not need to feel any qualms about the setting of *Never Let Me Go* or fear of censure or censorship.[38] It presents an England in an imaginary and alternative futurist world (though the novel is not actually set in the future according to its date) where clone technology has been perfected to

---

[37] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (The Athlone Press: London, 1995) 12.

[38] As Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff in the essay 'Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*,' put it, 'The choice of England as a setting does not merely put to use the author's profound knowledge of English culture; it highlights the contrast between the *internal* and *external* frames of reference (…). It is also a safe choice: as Robert Conquest has recently noted with sad irony, in the days of political correctness, Anglophobia is "the only permissible xenophobia" (238). Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff, 'Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*,' *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6.1 (January, 2008): 163-180.

the point that human clones are not farmed produce but inhabit a separate community in their own right. This community however is deprived of its human rights in this imaginary English welfare state of the 1990s. Kathy H, the narrator of the text, and a clone and a carer, starts out by introducing herself.

> My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years. (…) My donors have always tended to do much better than expected. (…) and hardly any of them have been classified as 'agitated', even before fourth donation.'[39]

The text examines the possibility of the act of caring being professionalised in a capitalist economy, where the notion of 'service' has been turned into a profit-making enterprise. Instead of being a spontaneous expression of love or compassion, therefore, the act of caring becomes a manipulative and lucrative profession. In other words, care is turned into a commodity for exchange, so that care is given in exchange for other profits, money for instance, and in this text, bodily organs; all of which nurture the established system. In doing so, the idea of care and sympathy-- put forward by the ethics of care as seminal for a potentially effective feminine system of ethical values-- is made to serve the interests of the normative. In this way, the notion of care loses its credence; in fact it turns into an even more sinister tool in the hands of the social and economic establishment inasmuch as it makes deception easier.

The text explores an environment where the duty of caring for minority groups-- in this case human clones created for medical donations-- is performed by people whose *job* it is to care. Nevertheless, because the carers themselves are from the clone community, they do build relationships with the donors that go beyond the professional role assigned to them.[40]

---

[39] Ishiguro 3

[40] Anne Whitehead argues, 'Kathy's opening remarks locate the word within discourses of professionalism and competency. Looking back over her eleven years as a carer, she considers that she has been good at her job, both

Never Let Me Go deals with the kind of connections that might be formed and the shapes that relationships might take, between people belonging to a group without a political voice, exploited for the benefit of a majority who are of course in turn used, as consumers for instance, for the benefit of bigger corporations and money making enterprises.

There are two issues that are raised in analysing Ishiguro's text. The first one is regarding the nature of relationships that might be forged within an exploited community, and the similarity that these relationships might have to the kind of feminine connection that I have been analysing in other texts thus far. The second issue that needs to be explored for the benefit of this thesis is, as mentioned earlier, the more insidious form that the idea of care may take on. Once the act of caring enters the arena of profit and exchange, it is easy to imagine how this ethical concept, because of its inherent qualities of empathy and understanding, might be exploited to serve entirely different ends.

Taking into consideration the former issue first, the connections that are established in such oppressive circumstances, the text seems to suggest, run deeper due to the prior knowledge of their inevitable demise or destruction, than those developed when people are allowed to forget the limits that extraneous forces such as time impose on human relationships. Going by my argument regarding the politically advantaged (masculine) and the politically disadvantaged (feminine), the community of clones can clearly be identified as feminine. The friendship between the main protagonist Kathy and her best friend Ruth is a

---

in her own judgment and in the eyes of her employers, who are designated simply as "them." Her abilities are measured by her charges (or "donors") achieving swift recovery times, and through her capacity to prevent them from becoming "agitated." Although she acknowledges that there are inconsistencies in the professional system ("I can think of one carer at least who went on for all of fourteen years despite being a complete waste of space"), she nevertheless regards her own extended term of employment as a deserved reward for her "great record" (3). As Kathy proceeds, however, the occupational discourse begins to give way to a more affective register. She acknowledges that where she has been able to exercise choice, she has acted as carer for "[her] own kind" (…) (4). The novel therefore opens not only by calling attention to the word itself, but also by drawing out the inherent tensions and ambivalences that reside within it, between discourses of competency and professionalism, on the one hand, and languages of affect and feeling, on the other. Anne Whitehead, 'Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*,' *Contemporary Literature* 52.1 (2011): 54-83.

good illustration of the femininity of this community. Despite their obvious rivalry, they both give precedence to their friendship. Unlike in the other examined narratives-- which are situated in masculinist environments-- in this text, narrated entirely from the feminine point of view, competition and rivalry hardly ever take precedence over connection and friendship.

These friendships might not always be long-lasting or may even seem unfulfilling, but they are rooted in some common sympathy. This sympathy of course originates, among other things, from a shared history, and this shared history then naturally warrants a different set of principles through which to forge ties and relationships: in other words, it warrants a different ethical standpoint. The friendship between Bilquis and Rani Harappa in Rushdie's *Shame,* for instance, is of a similar kind. Rani and Bilquis's relationship is far less harmful and much more harmonious than the relationship between Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, and yet, it is the friendship between these two women that is sacrificed at the altar of masculine political ambitions in that text.

Conversely, all the relationships looked at in Ishiguro's narrative are of the kind that Bilquis and Rani or Kiki and Carlene share. The narrative takes the reader directly into the world of the marginalised, where she is confronted with a different set of values, which privilege deep connections over relationships based purely on rivalry. For instance, the friendship between Ruth and Kathy has an element of competitiveness to it, but it is this feeling of rivalry that Ruth has to forego for some other real connections to be brought to light. Ruth ignores her jealousies and confesses to Kathy that, contrary to what she made her believe all along, it is in fact Kathy and Tommy, Ruth's former boyfriend, that truly love each other. ' "(…) I kept you and Tommy apart" (…) "That was the worst thing I did."'[41]

Ruth reveals the truth because she realises that all of these relationships will be

---

[41] Ishiguro 228

snuffed out before their time, which makes it important for truth to emerge sooner rather than later. This gesture by Ruth is an attempt to give real love-- and quite literally the lovers themselves-- a chance of survival. It is worth noting how relationships and feelings that in more usual situations would be kept hidden for convenience, are revealed for what they are within the environment of this text. Even Kathy and Tommy never articulate to themselves what Ruth spells out for them; a connection that was otherwise doomed to die unacknowledged is given a chance, above all others, to survive. This example illustrates my argument, that people with a different history from those that are politically privileged, are governed by a different sense of what is ethically right or wrong. And according to the ethical mindset of the clone community in this text, strong connections need to be prized over all other more 'legitimate' relationships.

Ishiguro's text is different from the others that have been examined in that one kind of experience is not pitted against the other-- mainstream versus marginal or masculine versus feminine-- instead, we are immersed from the start in the world of the exploited, narrated as the story is through a clone herself. Mainstream society remains at the margins of the text, and therefore the text manages to generate more sympathy, by way of identification, for the characters that belong to this group that I call feminine.

These feminine/clone characters hold onto memories of their childhoods and acknowledge the profound effect that every association has had on their persons. In fact it is the recollection of their previous friendships and hatreds that seems to sustain and nurture them through their trials at the end of their lives. And if their own memories are too painful to be remembered then they borrow memories from others for comfort. Kathy remembers one of her patients,

At first I thought this was just the drugs, but then I realised his mind was clear enough. What

he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood. He knew he was close to completing and so that's what he was doing: getting me to describe things to him, so they'd really sink in, so that maybe during those sleepless nights, with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion, the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his.[42]

Memories are important to them because they lack a future. However, memories are also important because these characters, pressed for time and deeply oppressed, invest profoundly in every relationship formed and every moment lived. According to my argument, the feminine, because of their more vulnerable positions, get more emotionally involved within their relationships, and their ethical attitudes develop accordingly.

The biggest mistake in their scheme of things, therefore, is a denial of connection and the prevention of consummation, as happens in the case of the narrator, Kathy, when Ruth initially ignores the connection Kathy and Tommy share. The narrative suggests that according to this group of people it is more ethical to acknowledge and honour connections that develop between people, instead of a spurious sense of commitment.

One of the questions through which the text briefly indicates the difference in the ethical planes of the clone children and their guardians who are 'normals', is through the question of sex. The clone children realise that their guardians are confused because,

(...) for them, sex was for when you wanted babies, and even though they knew, intellectually, that *we* couldn't have babies, they still felt uneasy about us doing it because deep down they couldn't quite believe we wouldn't end up with babies.[43]

This again illustrates the idea that two different communities, because of their different

---

[42] Ishiguro 5
[43] Ishiguro 94-95

historical experiences, are bound to develop different ethical sensibilities; to homogenise and impose one rigid ethical conception onto diverse groups of people is then not only unjust but in so many ways unfeasible.

The other issue that the text raises, about the act of caring being turned into a professional obligation for the express purpose of culling profits from the cared-for, is a significant one. The text draws attention to this idea by way of the carers who are there in a professional capacity, to take care of the clones after they make their organ donations. These carers, who are also from the clone community, remain carers until they proceed to become donors themselves. The idea of profit is made physical and palpable by the fact that they are dealing in bodily organs. According to Kathy,

> (…) it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well, especially that bit about my donors staying 'calm'. I've developed a kind of instinct around donors. I know when to hang around and comfort them, when to leave them to themselves; when to listen to everything they have to say, and when just to shrug and tell them to snap out of it.[44]

Kathy's mentioning of 'instinct' is significant; it shows that, being feminine, she is able to develop spontaneous connections even within her professional capacity. One of the reasons that the carers feel the need to take their professions seriously is that they know they could, by performing their jobs well, extend their life spans by donating later than the other clones.

The danger in the incorporation of care within the capitalistic/masculinist discourse is that it turns into another impersonalised and abstract idea-- like religion and beauty and shame-- that can be objectified and manipulated for the benefit of the extant system.[45] The

---

[44] Ishiguro 3

[45] Shameen Black in the essay, 'Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics', explores the ways in which Ishiguro's narrative portrays the naturalization of injustice due to which none of the clones are able to actively oppose the fate assigned to them. 'Why is it that the characters in the novel fail to stage a rebellion, protest their fate, or move to France? In keeping with his past novels that center on repression, Ishiguro never suggests explicitly how the

text, by presenting the act of caring as bolstering a system that eventually kills the cared-for by extracting one useful organ after another from her body, is illustrative of the ways in which advertising for capitalistic corporations work, whereby ideas such as care are turned into spurious discourses that help to foster commerce.

Besides the professional carers, even the school that the clone children go to, Hailsham, is, in a different way, an example of this kind of exploitation, made easier through the discourse of care/nurture. Hailsham is the only school for clone children in the text that provides them with a good and nourishing environment and thereby, in many ways, 'fooling' them by not informing them explicitly about their roles as adults.[46] Care is rendered highly suspicious in this case because by simply withholding information about the real duties assigned to them by society, the school does not help to avert their preordained fates.

What Hailsham does manage to do, however, is to lull them into believing that they are well taken care of, and thereby lessen the feeling of dissatisfaction which might have in fact sharpened their abilities to react and actively protest. Hailsham school is in fact a microcosm of a welfare state in many ways, it is as Bruce Robbins argues,

> (…) what makes action unthinkable. In this novel, the primary answer to that question seems to be not the ideology of freedom but the ideology of the welfare state, which gives a grateful semblance of meaning and legitimacy to the stopgap efforts of everyday.[47]

The governing bodies in that social system do not recognise the value of the Hailsham ethic,

---

students accept their lives as carers and donors, even when they realize the inequality of their situation. Hailsham offers no heroic or theological ideology to comfort the students; no elevating talk of sacrifice infiltrates Ishiguro's prose. "I was pretty much ready when I became a donor," a student named Ruth says. "It felt right. After all, it's what we're *supposed* to be doing, isn't it?" (227). Such ordinary and even banal language suffices to convince students to acquiesce to their own extraordinary demise.' Shameem Black, 'Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 55.4 (2009): 785-807.

[46] Ishiguro 263

[47] Bruce Robbins, 'Cruelty is bad: banality and proximity in *Never Let me Go,' Novel* 40.3 (Summer 2007) 289-302.

and despite their efforts the Hailsham staff fails to inspire other institutions and the government to follow their model of care, but what the school is really doing is to serve them in very important ways by rendering the clone children too complacent and trusting of the system ever to question it.

Although the argument of the guardians at Hailsham, about rescuing childhoods by not telling the children everything, might seem noble, however, in the larger scheme of things it is in fact a sinister and insidious practice.

> You wouldn't be who you are today if we'd not protected you. You wouldn't have become absorbed in your lessons, you wouldn't have lost yourself in your art and your writing. Why should you have done, knowing what lay in store for each of you? You would have told us it was all pointless, and how could *we* have argued with *you*? (…).[48]

This is how Miss Emily seeks to pacify Kathy and Tommy. The speech shows Miss Emily as sincere in her efforts, nonetheless, the fact that she set them up as 'you' as against the 'we' of the 'normals' in the speech, reveals the limitations of her empathy and compassion. It also hints at the fact that the socio-politically advantaged and the disadvantaged-- masculine and feminine in my thesis-- do view each other as differently situated.

Through an analysis of *Never Let Me Go*, it becomes clear to me that it is essential to stress the context when discussing the efficacy of the care orientation. It is important to stress the distinction between care as part of an exploitative capitalistic discourse and care as an emancipatory ethical ideal. Also, because in its professionalised version care can be as homogenising a discourse as any other, I would argue regarding care as Elaine Scarry would argue regarding beauty, that it is only when it is made personal that it can be, in any way, effective. Likewise, besides examining the context of its usage, it is also important to

---

[48] Ishiguro 263

examine the motivation behind the act of caring. As was seen in Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, the complication in Atiye's relationship with Dirmit stemmed from the fact that the motivation behind her care was a need to make sure that her daughter conformed to standards of behaviour dictated by her society.

If there has to be a productive ethical system based on the principle of care, it is important to clearly distinguish this kind of care from the kind that corporate marketing campaigns or welfare institutions promote. Besides the fact of it being simply unfair to impose any kind of inflexible discourse on people as a whole, without taking into account their differences and situations, these impersonalised versions of care or beauty also have a lot of scope for manipulation for those who are in a position to exploit them. The judge's father in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a perfect example: he dreams of his son becoming a judge so that they can together slyly negotiate the system to their advantage.

Ishiguro's text explores the destructive aspects of care, the kind that does not in any way moderate the life-sucking effects of pure profit making, but the kind that seeks to deprive the *cared-for* of the will to complain. All subversive potential in the idea of care is then emptied out. The ethics of care, conversely, is a system which connects, instead of homogenising, different kinds of people and aligns them through a network of personal and empathetic involvement instead of objectivity and impersonality.

Both texts enter into debates that are rife in their particular temporal and spatial locations, and each also throws light on the issues raised in the other. *Shame*'s narrative has an ambiguous response to the idea of feminine space. It represents the feminine space as being threatening in powerful ways, but also as being an essentialised and thereby a stifling proposition. To illustrate this the text portrays the three sisters who, on the one hand, succeed in destroying the most eminent patriarch of their land, but on the other, inhabit an exclusive

and miasmic space which is oppressive even to their own sons.

> He watched them for a dozen years, and, yes, it must be said, he hated them for their closeness, for the way they sat with arms entwined on their swinging, creaking seat, for their tendency to lapse giggling into the private languages of their girlhood, for their way of hugging each other, of putting their three heads together and whispering about whoknowswhat, of finishing one another's sentences.[49]

The three mothers in the text come across as vampires, afraid to come out in the sun. This kind of attitude seems very much to be of its time in its passionate (even if comical) condemnation of the feminine space. However, in so many ways it does make sense in that an exclusive female space does not significantly disrupt an exclusive male space, but in fact provides a sustaining alternative to it. It is for this reason that in my interpretation of the ethics of care, it looks to dismantle and then recreate the very notion of masculine and feminine.

Never Let Me Go, on the other hand, responds to the concept of feminine care and connection from a very different angle. The idea of care is rendered ineffectual in Ishiguro's text due to its incorporation by institutions of the established system. The text, by foregrounding the minority culture here does not render them more privileged in any way or gesture towards an immanent revolution, instead it only engenders sympathy within its reader, and this sympathy is born out of the pathos in their story of exploitation. Ishiguro's text raises important questions regarding the concept of care within a welfare state. Rushdie's text opens up areas of reflection for an ethic proposing to deal with the 'feminine' experience, and stringently critiques essentialising discourses that further separate and entrench the binary spheres that men and women have traditionally occupied.

---

[49] Rushdie 35

Therefore, in these texts written by male writers as well, the masculinist states are set up in relation to the most exploited, or the feminine within those states. It is important to note that these two narratives from disparate parts of the world have states and social systems that are not too different from each other; they are both patriarchal systems which benefit one section of society and oppress/sideline the other. The states are represented as either entirely corrupt or as insidiously exploitative. However, the feminine universe in both texts is either too powerless to present any revolutionary challenge or too oppressive itself to bring about any positive change. Nevertheless, even though the texts do not provide any solutions to the questions raised, the questions themselves are powerful enough to take the thesis forward.

Chapter 4: Political Crises

For this chapter I will be examining scenarios of stress and political struggle within contemporary fiction, as I believe that a lot can be revealed regarding people and situations when structures that held things in place start to collapse. I have chosen to examine Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* because both writers speak from perspectives of intense political strife within their own countries-- Pakistan and Nigeria respectively. While *Burnt Shadows* is about strained relations between various nation-states, only one of which is Pakistan, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is about the Nigerian civil war; other countries are referred to in Adichie's text, but only in the context of the situation in Nigeria.

Analyses of the texts work well together as a chapter as both texts reveal various ways in which people and organisations, mainstream or rebelious, are made vulnerable in times of stress. Each text revolves around a moment of collapse and exposes hypocricies and vulnerabilities which otherwise may have remained hidden. Accordingly, the texts, in their different ways, also problematise questions of masculinity and femininity, so that it becomes apparent that those who seem conventionally masculine-- strong-- may in fact prove to be weak, whereas the feminine may emerge as stronger and most resilient. The texts together help to delve deeper into these questions by presenting situations where all kinds of hypocritical masks are wrenched by force, in order that many truths about people and situations may emerge.

Kamila Shamsie; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Kamila Shamsie from Pakistan and Chimamanda Adichie from Nigeria, deal with the issue of political conflicts in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) respectively. Adichie is part of a long tradition of Anglophone Nigerian writers. Joseph McLaren in his essay, 'The Nigerian Novel in English: Trends and Prospects,' says,

> Nigerian novelists have contributed to the stylistics of the African novel by using Western structures as well as devices from the oral tradition and so-called magic realism. For reasons related to literary production-- maintaining audience, publishing opportunities, and censorship-- these writers have often had to choose between remaining at home and voluntary or forced exile in the West.[1]

Shamsie, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of South Asian writers in English who have to deal with issues of authenticity of voice and experience, as has been discussed in Salman Rushdie's case. Adichie and Shamsie both write from a postcolonial perspective and their narratives reflect the complexity inherent in that perspective.

Before these novels, Shamsie published *Broken Verses* in 2005 and Adichie published *Purple Hibiscus* in 2003, both of which received very good reviews and won many awards. Where Shamsie, in *Burnt Shadows*, writes about how various conflicts around the world, and in different eras, are connected in the minds of those who are witness to them, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is about the Nigeria/Biafra civil war. Being Igbo herself, Adichie's narrative focuses

---

[1] Joseph McLaren, 'The Nigerian Novel in English: Trends and Prospects,' Cheryl B. Mwaria, Silvia Federici and Joseph McLaren ed., *African Visions: Literary Images, Political Change, and Social Struggle in Contemporary Africa* (London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 233.

on the ways in which various sections of Igbo society suffered and dealt with the civil war of 1967-70.

Be that as it may, both novels trace their narratives to British imperialism and its aftermath-- which ended in 1947 in India and 1960 in Nigeria-- and both use English language to comment, criticise and find connections between the British Empire and American neo-imperialist enterprises. The issue of using English language in narratives emerging from former colonies is important for my argument regarding cosmopolitanism, as it demonstrates the complex ways in which different cultures have historically come together. Adichie in her text quite explicitly problematises the usage of English in a colonial and postcolonial scenario. By representing the servant figures as speaking broken English and the master figures as speaking fluent British-style English, Adichie represents the complicated relationship that the once colonised nations have with the language of the coloniser. The fact that Adichie is able to maintain, in her narrative, a distance from the language in which she writes is significant for substantiating my argument regarding the creation of critical space within texts written in English.

Likewise, although Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* tells a cosmopolitan story about characters whose lives span various continents, she is able to stand back and critically comment on the United States foreign policy-- which outwardly upholds just such global interactions, but in reality promotes very rigid and strictly controlled power relations with other nation-states. Where *Burnt Shadows* addresses the issue of cosmopolitanism directly, which I relate to femininity in my argument, *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals more about its characters and its environment by putting them through situations of stress.

In these ways, Kamila Shamsie and Chimamanda Adichie's novels together help to examine my argument regarding masculinity and femininity in situations of stress. These situations reveal, among other things, that many attitudes and even ideas that seem revolutionary are seen to be cosmetic when tested, whereas attitudes that may otherwise seem 'weak' are in fact the most resilient. These texts help to explore many issues, including cosmopolitanism as related to femininity, as will be demonstrated in the following analysis.

Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*: A feminine cosmopolitanism

In this chapter I will examine novels that deal with political conflicts and the effects these conflicts have on the private lives of people. These novels will help to explore the ways in which masculine and feminine sensibilities are revealed and played out through the various responses that wars generate. Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* brings together within its scheme three generations and five countries. It is interesting to see how these characters connected to each other through generations of family ties, negotiate with and respond to situations that unfold around them on the global political stage, from the bombing of Nagasaki, 9 August, 1945, to the explosion of the world trade centres of New York, 11 September, 2001.

The characters are related to each other by way of family friendships, but these friendships are themselves a result of the political struggles and alliances between their countries. These political events are seen by people as being connected, and because of that they are able to

make sense of their own positions within these struggles.[2] It is because the narrative and the characters within the narrative-- with backgrounds ranging from Japan to the United States-- are able to see the connection between world events that this is an inherently cosmopolitan novel.

At the heart of the book is a Japanese woman, Hiroko Tanaka, whose life is initially depicted as being relatively contained in the small, conservative city of Nagasaki. After the bomb, however, she goes through the process of re-examining everything about her life; having lost all that had previously defined her she feels the need to start again from scratch. The text unfolds even as Hiroko's life unravels for the reader. The unobtrusive narrative voice weaves together the stories of all those who come into contact with Hiroko, and these characters gradually come alive and develop their own relationships with the reader. As the text progresses, the narrative voice jumps from one character and location to another, giving no one story line the dominant space; as a result the reader finds herself/himself moving from one country to the

---

[2] Michael Rothberg in his book, *Multidirectional Memory*, argues that collective memory is not linear, but instead a dialogic process that helps communities to understand historical events by viewing them in relation to each other. In the light of Rothberg's argument, it makes sense that Shamsie's narrative brings together all these past and present events to show that they are not isolated but profoundly related, not only politically, but also in the lives of those who live through them. Rothberg argues, '(…) I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative. (…) interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory.' Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) 3. In her article in *The Guardian*, Kamila Shamsie talks about the fraught relations between America and Pakistan, and the repetition of events like stories throughout her childhood: '(...) I discovered it wasn't just the story of my half-written novel from which I had come adrift, but also another story – one I had grown up with, held on to, repeated with conviction across several continents: the story of America and Pakistan.' Kamila Shamsie, 'Pakistan, America and the Pitfalls of Plotting,' *Guardian* 23 March 2010.

other, in the space of just a few pages. This process gains speed as the narrative nears its end, so that the reader experiences the lives of the last two remaining characters-- Kim and Raza-- simultaneously.

Among other things, what Shamsie achieves here, by bringing fictional experiences from different parts of the world within the scope of one text, is the representation of the kind of cosmopolitanism, resulting in productive cultural exchanges, which Kwame Appiah discusses. According to him, 'Cosmopolitans suppose that all cultures have enough overlap in their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation. But they don't suppose, like some universalists, that we could all come to agreement if only we had the same vocabulary.'[3] A lot of the characters in the novel move from nation to nation, very often because they are unhappy, for various reasons, in their native countries. All these diverse places naturally have their own peculiar cultures and traditions, which however, do not get in the way of the building of connections between these nomadic characters and the people they encounter.

Critics of the notion of cosmopolitanism might argue that such an assortment and amalgamation of cultures within the nomadic characters, and thereby within the novel itself, renders the text 'inauthentic' in some essential way.[4] What such a criticism ignores is the reality

---

[3] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) 57.

[4] Timothy Brennan argues against the discourse of globalism, 'The underlying logic linking globalization theory and postcolonial studies has, in at least one respect, a perverse cast. The mutual hostility of both to the national form (particularly as nation-*state*) is projected as irrepressible ultramodernism. (…). The cast is "perverse" because in accordance with such a logic one is forced contemptuously to revile, even while resonating with, a specific and conjunctural national-statist project (that of the United States) that in a vigorously broadcast system of images and slogans embraces the same hybridity, modernity, and mobility of globalization theory. Like that theory, it depicts the world as having moved *past* colonialism and imperialism.' Timothy Brennan, 'Postcolonial studies and Globalization Theory,' Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley ed., *The Postcolonial and the Global*

and authenticity of just such a culturally mixed experience, when technology along with capitalism has made it next to impossible for people and nations in general, to remain in any way isolated from the rest of the world. Writers like Rushdie, for instance, may be justifiably criticised for many other reasons, but to dismiss their work en masse because of a spurious sense of cultural authenticity would mean being blind to a whole ambit of complex human experiences.[5] These mixed experiences, among other things, would-- due to an exposure to other cultural practices-- enrich rather than take away from a particular culture. Accordingly, to imagine that Rushdie does not know what he is talking about only because he is, despite his origins, just a Westernised individual, with the West as his only point of reference, would be reductive and simplistic.

The very discourse of cultural and ethnic purity or authenticity is obviously suspect in a world in which invasions and migrations have shaped and altered through generations the very fabric of most nations; the mongrel-- a concept that, for me, describes not only a person of mixed

---

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 49. Brennan's criticism of the United States version of the 'global mindset' rings true. However, if this argument is employed to dismiss all works that represent a culturally mixed experience, then it can be a narrow and limited view not only because it homogenises experiences and scholarships arising out of multiple national and mixed backgrounds, but also because it does not account for the creation of critical space within seemingly 'Western-centric' creative and scholarly work. *Burnt Shadows* is able to achieve just this critical distance even while functioning within the Western publishing market.

[5] In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie discusses the common criticism regarding 'inauthenticity' meted out to all those who are in anyway at an angle as regards the dominant ideology of a particular culture. Be it those scholars or writers from different or mixed cultural backgrounds writing in English, or those within India who might not understand Sanskrit, 'One distinguished novelist began his contribution by reciting a Sanskrit *sloka*. Then, instead of translating the verse, he declared: 'Every educated Indian will understand what I've just said.' (…). In the room were Indian writers and scholars of every conceivable background—Christian, Parsi, Muslim, Sikh. None of us had been raised in a Sanskritic tradition. We were all reasonably 'educated' however; so what were we being told? Perhaps that we weren't really 'Indian'?' Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books in association with Penguin, 1992) 2.

'race', but also a coming together of various cultures in the makeup of one individual-- then, is far from a recent phenomenon. Moreover, as demonstrated in this novel, war and war-like situations and even natural disasters have always coerced people to move from one nation to another for refuge and shelter. In this novel, a lot of the characters that can be identified as mongrels have moved from 'home' because of war and other such political tensions; for instance, the initial impulse to go away for Hiroko Tanaka-- who moves from Japan to India to Pakistan and then America-- was the bombing of Nagasaki.

A positive understanding of cosmopolitanism is important for my own project in this thesis, of trying to trace some kind of similarity in and continuity of feminine ethical experience in various texts from diverse parts of the world. It is an attempt to come to a more inclusive understanding of the ethics of care, to explore whether it can be opened up in such a way as to be made more sensitive to different kinds of situations and experiences. The endeavour in this thesis is to examine whether the ethics of care can be interpreted in a manner that makes it comprehensive enough to take into account different kinds of marginal positions, instead of the experience of women as a general category.

Besides Shamsie, this act of reaching out to, as well as living and narrating across various cultures, and thereby starting a dialogue between them, is illustrated in almost all of the other writers that have been examined in the thesis; for instance, Rushdie, Ishiguro, and Desai. This coming together of cultures is viewed in this thesis as a productive endeavour because it occasions the kind of 'conversation' between cultures that tries to do away with limiting and unnecessary, and sometimes imaginary, divisions.[6] However, this kind of a confluence of

---

[6] Appiah 57

cultures can of course not come at the cost of a genuine respect for various cultural positions. Arguing about what might universally be considered a just or a 'good' action, Appiah asserts, '(...) our political coexistence, as subjects or citizens, depends on being able to agree about practices while disagreeing about their justification.'[7] An inability to coexist, very often caused by divisive political positions and a lack of the aforementioned 'conversation', generates war or war-like situations. And this inability to live together can be because of various kinds of divisive stances: be it religious fundamentalism or nationalistic fanaticism or divisions arising within the same socio-political and religious system with regard to gender, sexuality, class and so on.

There is of course a flip side to this entire argument: the fact that cosmopolitanism is frequently seen to give rise to half-baked, Western centric knowledge of and curiosity about cultures that are perceived to be 'other' to the established centre. Thereby, often economic and socio-political structures of power are unquestioningly assumed, even while 'other' cultures are paid token acknowledgements. According to critics, what contributes to this Western centrism and pseudo internationalism is the pervasive use of the English language in such scholarship and fiction.[8] I would argue, however, that although it is true that an English education inevitably

---

[7] Appiah 70

[8] For example, Timothy Brennan argues, 'The term *globalization* is marked by a fundamental ambiguity. On the one hand, it holds out hope for the creation of new communities and unforeseen solidarities; on the other hand, it appears merely to euphemize corporatization and imperial expansion.' (Brennan 39) This the major concern for the critics of cosmopolitanism as well. However some other critics argue in opposition to this. For example, Inderpal Grewal argues, '(...) Brennan's search for the authentic subaltern underlies his view of cosmopolitanism both as "selling out" and as a form of homogenization into an imperial American popular culture. In Brennan's account, writers who write in English and who participate in the global publishing industry are the postcolonial cosmopolitans with a false consciousness that allies them with colonial power structures. Although Brennan's charge about postcolonial cosmopolitans as elites is not without some merit, his account relies on an idea of subjects as homogeneous and whole, unchanging and static, as well as without histories. Why some postcolonial subjects could more easily participate in cosmopolitan circuits of knowledge is a question that needs to be answered with some attention to specific historical formations.' Inderpal Grewal, 'Amitav Ghosh: Cosmopolitanisms, Literature, Transnationalisms,'

gives rise to a somewhat more westernised sensibility, it also has to be acknowledged that for this very reason-- of a now inescapable, widespread and global use of English-- such a criticism, dismissing all the work carried out in the English language as merely Western centric, is narrow and limiting. This reasoning homogenises a particular kind of lived experience and scholarship, and the irony is that it, at the same time, accuses cosmopolitan writers and scholars of homogenising and stereotyping 'other' cultures. In further analysing *Burnt Shadows*, I will demonstrate how this most blatantly 'cosmopolitan' novel, avoids such Western-centrism by engaging in an insightful critique of the United States of America-- the most 'cosmopolitan' of all nations.

As demonstrated in the text, a calamity created by war can either give rise to jingoistic patriotism, xenophobia and paranoia, or a rethinking of everything that is otherwise taken for granted, including the integrity of the concept of a nation state. All the characters in the novel, mired in war-related crises, find themselves to be stripped of more superficially accepting stances, and are characterised by these two-- chauvinistic or tolerant-- responses. And these responses, which are evidence of either a flexible and tolerant bent of mind or a more parochial and jingoistic attitude towards the various narratives of nation-state or religion, can also be seen to correspond to and constitute masculine and feminine sensibilities as set up in the thesis in terms of the politically advantaged and the politically disadvantaged.

I make the above connection between the cosmopolitan, the feminine and the politically disadvantaged because, according to the way the idea of the feminine is reconstructed in the

---

Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley ed., *The Postcolonial and the Global* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 179-180.

thesis, it is the feminine that is marginal within a rigid, masculinist societal structure, and the one that is marginal is by definition politically disadvantaged in that structure. Taking the argument further, therefore, the one that is politically disadvantaged in a given culture, will find it easier to adapt to or be accepting of other cultures; in other words, the politically disadvantaged will be for that reason more cosmopolitan. As a result, it is no accident in the novel that Konrad Weiss, Hiroko Tanaka, Elizabeth Burton, Raza Ashraf, and in a more complex way, Henry Burton, are all at the same time and for different reasons, marginal in their particular surroundings, and simultaneously open to other cultures and influences. This is not to say of course that the spirit of cosmopolitanism has necessarily to be accompanied by some kind of deep-seated dissatisfaction with one's place in society; having said that, the state of being marginal is more readily conducive to an unrestricted sensibility, and this is evidenced in the text through the above mentioned characters.

As discussed earlier therefore, Hiroko Tanaka's reaction to the bomb could be considered, according to this logic, the more feminine reaction to war and loss. 'She had not thought of destination so much as departure, wheeling through the world with the awful freedom of someone with no one to answer to'.[9] The loss she suffers because of the bomb is enormous, but the dislocation that follows it is turned into something almost positive by her; she takes this opportunity to step out of life as she had known it and start afresh. And because she remains entirely apathetic to the politics of nation-states, she has no qualms interacting with and seeking

---

[9] Kamila Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009) 48.

the help of the Americans that she encounters in Japan, wishing only for Truman though that 'someone dropped a bomb on him'.[10]

Elizabeth Burton or Ilse is also identified as being feminine in her outlook; she too, like Hiroko Tanaka, lacks anchoring and a definite sense of belonging. She is shown constantly to try and distance herself from her German ancestry-- in the post war context-- so much so that her brother Konrad feels disconnected from her. However, she appears to be a much misunderstood woman in the text-- she comes across as both aloof and a snob-- but her dissatisfaction is revealed instead to be a result of her position as a mindless colonial wife in the India of the British raj. Contrary to what is believed of her, she confesses to Hiroko much later, ''(...) when you first came to our house, before I saw you, there was a moment when I thought it was Konrad. And it was (...). A joy so deep I know nothing about its origins.''[11] This of course is evidence of her genuine, though hesitant, love for her brother.

The two feminine characters, Hiroko and Elizabeth, develop a strong friendship which resonates with other such feminine relationships explored in the thesis, for example, Kiki and Carlene in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Rani and Bilquis in Rushdie's *Shame*. Quite like these other relationships, Hiroko and Elizabeth too are separated for a while. However, they do get together towards the end, but interestingly, only after Elizabeth divorces her masculine husband, James, and Hiroko's husband, Sajjad, dies. It is significant also, that while Hiroko and Elizabeth develop a friendship on an equal footing, their husbands, James and Sajjad are very much master and servant within an unequal social setting.

---

[10] Shamsie 49

[11] Shamsie 69

Hiroko and Elizabeth's interactions are very revealing in terms of the feminine attitudes and relationships that the thesis examines. In Hiroko, Elizabeth finds a confidant.

> Elizabeth didn't smoke, but took a certain pleasure seeing Hiroko doing so in front of James's stuffy clients, just as she took pleasure in the eyebrows of officialdom that raised themselves over the stylishly cut trousers Hiroko had brought with her from Tokyo.[12]

She cherishes Hiroko's free spirit and feels inspired by her. It is only after befriending Hiroko that she finds the courage to leave her husband and free herself from the role of a colonial wife, a symbol in a subjugated country of all that English culture stands for. Her stiffness is presumably a result of the false lady-like deportment imposed on her, which made even wearing trousers in the late 1940s an act of defiance. Hiroko, for Elizabeth, becomes an indirect source of rebellion against the patriarchal and ultra masculine imperial setup into which she is thrust by virtue of having married James. James, on the other hand, is shown to have such an unproblematic relationship with the system in place that he has no depth of character, instead he comes across as something of a cardboard cut out.

Elizabeth constantly tries to distance herself from her German ancestry in the wake of the war, not only because German identity in itself is abhorrent to her, but because, to my mind, she is not comfortable participating in a system where she would necessarily be in the position of the oppressor as a colonial, and the oppressed as a woman. To Hiroko she admits, ''I'll tell you something that I've never told anyone, not even James, the British Empire makes me feel so ...' She glanced at Hiroko as though considering how much she could be trusted, and then admitted,

---

[12] Shamsie 68

'German.''[13] The British Empire is for her another symbol of repression. And as mentioned earlier, being the masculine system that the raj was, the repression was not limited to the colonial subjects but was extended to the white colonial wife as well. It is significant that both the woman and the colonial subjects were controlled through a process of 'feminization'.

Elizabeth eventually leaves her English husband and goes to live with her German cousin in New York. It is important to note here that the cousin is homosexual and therefore, presumably, feels as much of an outsider as she does,

> Willie-- Cousin Wilhelm-- was the only one of her German relatives who had ever truly felt like family to her. Perhaps (...) it was because he understood-- with his penchant for younger, beautifully dressed men-- what it felt to be an outsider (...).[14]

It is interesting how the woman here feels connected to another person who is, for different reasons, marginal within the established system. Both the woman and the marginalised man, then, find themselves allied because of the common ground they share as 'others' to the system, and by this logic, it seems reasonable to infer that they could share a common ethical ground too. It is likely that both, being politically disempowered, would have developed a different way of relating to the people they interact with; having been excluded from the system in place, they would have developed more caring and understanding ethical sensibilities for engaging with those around them. Consequently, as Gilligan implied in the case of women, their weakness-- political disempowerment due to a lack of representation in masculinist ethical thought--

---

[13] Shamsie 68

[14] Shamsie 71

becomes their strength; the development of a different, more relational kind of ethic, which could counter the masculinist ethic that privileges detachment and impartiality.[15]

It is interesting, likewise, that both Wilhelm and Elizabeth feel the need to move out of their 'home' environments and to make other countries their homes instead-- in this case New York, a state of immigrants-- illustrating, in this way, the point that those who are marginalised in a given culture would find it difficult to be tied down to that culture and would for that reason be more cosmopolitan. Both Wilhelm's caring ethical attitude and his acceptance of different kinds of people as a cosmopolitan person are evidenced by the courage he displays during Nazi Germany, '(...) he'd been working with the underground in Germany, helping Jews and homosexuals to escape the Nazis, and (...) at the end of the war he'd migrated to New York.'[16] This quote again attests to the idea that when pressured, two marginalised groups-- in this case the Jews and the homosexuals in Nazi Germany-- tend to identify with each other. It is evident in this case, how Wilhelm as a homosexual feels connected to the Jews in Nazi Germany, and later Elizabeth as a woman also feels connected to Wilhelm. All three marginalised groups, therefore, women, Jews and homosexuals, are seen to reach out for each other in the ultra-masculinist Nazi Germany.

---

[15] Gilligan envisioned the ethics of care as being applicable only to women. However, in keeping with the argument of this thesis, which seeks to extend the idea of the feminine to other groups of people who feel out of place in an overarching patriarchal system, her theory can be applied to the kind of people that are termed 'feminine' in the thesis. According to Gilligan, '(…) in all of the women's descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care. Similarly, morality is seen by these women as arising from the experience of connection and conceived as a problem of inclusion rather than one of balancing claims.' Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982) 160.

[16] Shamsie 71-72

It is the aforementioned feminine and rudderless state that Hiroko and Elizabeth recognise in each other as well, and therefore form a lifelong friendship, which spans continents and generations. Both find themselves living in many different countries throughout their lives. It is significant, as mentioned earlier, that Hiroko and Elizabeth relocate and move from one country to another more than any other characters in the novel. This is not to suggest that all those who travel have to be feminine in attitude or that those who do not travel have to be masculine; Hiroko and Elizabeth's example only helps to illustrate an accepting feminine sensibility.

Both of these women make a home of wherever they feel most contented, instead of where they were born, or where their political affiliations ought to lie; they don't subscribe to the political frontiers already drawn out for them. In fact, both seem to recognise from the beginning that theirs is a very limited part in the fight between nations that is playing out around them, inasmuch as the principles that organise and define these territories and powers have not been laid out keeping them in mind. It is, among other things, Hiroko and Elizabeth's friendship, transgressing the boundaries of race, class and nation, which keeps their families connected through generations and through political differences.

Although, initially, Elizabeth is shown to mind the fact that Sajjad Ashraf-- with whom Hiroko falls in love and later marries in India-- was her own husband's subordinate during the British raj, it is she, not her husband-- despite his paternalistic affection for Sajjad-- who is able to establish an equal and lifelong friendship with Hiroko. Echoing Carlene and Kiki's relationship in Smith's text, Elizabeth says to Hiroko, 'Let's leave the grand gestures to men,' as

Hiroko attempts to refuse a diamond set that Elizabeth gives her.[17] And it is with this set that Sajjad and Hiroko later buy a house in Pakistan. This gesture is evocative of those feminine relationships examined in the thesis in which an exchange of a precious gift is a spiritually and materially an uplifting gesture, for the receiver of the gift but also for the giver. This was seen between Carlene and Kiki in their exchange of the painting, as also between Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret in their exchange of the house in *Howards End*.

The other feminine character in the text is the shadowy figure of Konrad Weiss. He is the one who can be credited for having spawned, as it were, the association which lasts for generations between these families. He brings together, by way of his death in Nagasaki, Hiroko, his fiancée from Japan, and Elizabeth, his sister in India. Konrad as well, like them, seems unrestrained by political or ethnic boundaries. He is, after all, a German living in Japan during the final stages of the Second World War, about to marry a Japanese woman from a conservative background.

Konrad's efforts towards learning the different languages of the various places and cultures he visits-- Urdu in Delhi and Japanese in Japan-- seem to be his way of rebelling against divisive politics and the notion at that time of white supremacy. Sajjad, while reminiscing about Konrad says, "'In just the few days we were here together he taught me how to look at things differently. How to notice the world. He was so conscious of beauty.'"[18] The consciousness of beauty has been seen in my thesis to be an important quality of the feminine/caring sensibility, as was evidenced in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*. As Elaine Scarry argues, the recognition of beauty

---

[17] Shamsie 123

[18] Shamsie 76

wakes the beholder to the injustices and inequalities of the world.[19] In the context of beauty and care, then, it is significant that Konrad is portrayed in the text as an artist.

In addition, an interest in a variety of languages is seen to be a general characteristic in Shamsie's text of all those accepting characters that are identified in my analysis as feminine. It is characteristic of those who do not recoil from, but in fact embrace, cultural differences amongst people. For example, Konrad and Hiroko attempt to learn Urdu, and Hiroko's son Raza is shown to be extremely proficient in various languages.

> 'Anything exciting going on out there?' Raza called up in Pashto-- it was the only one of his languages that Hiroko hadn't taught him; he learnt it instead during all the years he'd gone to and from school in a van driven by a sweet-natured Pathan who had insisted that Raza sit up front with him ever since the boy, at the age of six, first expressed an interest in learning the driver's first language.[20]

Most of the characters who have been termed feminine in this argument, therefore, are the ones who have an urge to understand and learn of other cultures, and for that reason they are cosmopolitan, as willing to begin a 'conversation.'

In fact these feminine characters are so open to the other cultures they encounter that their own identities, in terms of belonging to either this or that culture and community, are rendered fluid in the process. This is most palpably illustrated by Raza passing himself off as a Hazara Afghan, because of his fluency in the Pashto language. 'For months now, Raza had been living two lives. In one, he was plain Raza Ashraff (...) In the other, he was Raza Hazara, the

---

[19] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (London: 2000, Duckbacks-Duckworth Media Group, 2001).

[20] Shamsie 163-164

man (...) of significance to the CIA (...).'[21] Raza's case is particularly significant also because of his mixed background. As a child of the Japanese Hiroko and the Indian/Pakistani Sajjad, he is shown to feel unaccepted and very uncomfortable with himself being a person of mixed race in Pakistan.

Interestingly, Raza's discomfort here recalls that of the cosmopolitan scholar or writer who can never truly 'belong', according to critics who emphasise authenticity.

> (...) It was inescapable: he didn't fit this neighbourhood. (...) a bomb marked mongrel. (...) Raza Konrad Ashraf. Konrad. (...) He wanted to reach into his own name and rip out the man whose death was a foreign body wedged beneath the two Pakistani wings of his name.[22]

Raza's discomfort at his ancestry is extremely intense of course, which, coupled with his adolescence, makes his experience of it even more severe and pushes him to commit mistakes that he ends up regretting all his life. Be that as it may, his character illustrates most apparently all the traits of the feminine, cosmopolitan personality discussed in this piece, and in the thesis at large: ambiguity regarding established ideas of identity and belonging, and an eagerness to step out of what might otherwise be considered the 'comfort zone' of one's own language and culture.

Henry Burton-- James and Elizabeth's son-- productively complicates the distinction between masculine and feminine that has been drawn so far, inasmuch as he could be seen as occupying the middle territory. His sense of self is shown as having been shaken as a child; as a result, although he is feminine in his attitude, his profession as a CIA agent is very revealing of

---

[21] Shamsie 207

[22] Shamsie 191

his inner turmoil. Having been born in India and having had spent his childhood there, he is shown to feel most at home as an Indian; but when, because of this very reason, he is moved to England by his parents, his sense of identity and belonging get destabilised. He is closest to Sajjad Ashraf as a child in India, and goes back to him later as an older man, bringing about drastic changes in Sajjad's life. Sajjad, angry with the Burtons for remaining indifferent and having sent young Henry away from India and back to England, asks,

> 'Why have the English remained so English? Throughout India's history conquerors have come from elsewhere, and all of them- Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol, Persian- have become Indian. If (...) this Pakistan happens, those Muslims who leave Delhi (...) will be leaving their homes. But when the English leave, they'll be going home.' (...) 'Henry thinks of India as home,' Elizabeth said, (...) 'Yes.' There was a tightening of Sajjad's voice. 'He does.' And you sent him away because of it, he wanted to say (...).[23]

In this passage, British insularity and lack of cosmopolitanism is made evident by Sajjad, and it also hints at the reasons why young Henry, having been brought up in a heterogeneous environment such as India, finds it difficult in England, and why he later accepts the American myth of 'internationalism' so readily.

The above passage also takes me back to the point that cosmopolitanism and a mixing of cultures are in no way new ideas. And if the question of authenticity and purity of ethnicity and culture is rigorously taken into account, a lot of people in the world would have to forego the right to talk about what they consider their own cultures. Be that as it may, the question of turning 'Indian' as Sajjad mentions in his speech may seem like an equally problematic idea,

---

[23] Shamsie 82-83

because after all to have to turn Indian could be as nationalistic a notion as remaining staunchly British. However, the fluid sense of being Indian that Sajjad is referring to in the above passage, is different in important ways, inasmuch as the modern and rigid notion of the nation-state had not yet emerged in India when the Turks, Arabs and other Muslim rulers arrived in the country and made it their home. What Sajjad is referring to is a particular kind of cosmopolitan culture within which those who arrived as invaders were easily assimilated. And what he criticises when he asks, 'Why have the English remained so English?' is the insularity and homogeneity of the modern idea of the nation-state which is a British legacy to India.

Much of the tragedy in Henry's life, therefore, has to do with having been displaced from the varied environment of the Indian landscape to the more 'modern' and rigid England. Accordingly, when he goes to the United States as a young boy, he feels most comfortable in what he tells himself is a country of immigrants, people who have gotten together from all over the world to forge a new identity for themselves.

> (...) Harry watched not only himself but also the other sons of immigrants as they made their way through the school year, and understood that America allowed- no, insisted on- migrants as part of its national fabric in a way no other country had ever done. All you had to do was show yourself willing to be American (...).[24]

His stance towards America here is similar to Appiah's, who praises American inclusivity by asserting that, 'Americans tend to have, in sum, a broadly liberal reaction when they *do* hear about their fellow citizens doing something that they would not do themselves (...). And as a

---

[24] Shamsie 171

general rule, their shared American-ness matters to them (...).'[25] As is seen in both these quotes, Henry Burton's character and Appiah in his commentary acknowledge that although it is a country formed through a coming together of immigrants, America's policies are still very much centred on rigid ideas regarding what it means to be American, and that any other ethnic affiliation would necessarily have to be subordinated to this sense of 'American-ness'.

This, perhaps, has also to do with the way the United States of America came into existence. It was a colony that established itself through a displacement of the indigenous people of North America. Therefore, although a coming together of immigrants, the United States from its very inception was a modern nation-state, tolerant towards assimilation but never respectful of difference. However, this acknowledgement of the idea of American-ness when discussing American internationalism does not lead to the realisation in either Henry's character or in Appiah that its principles are, for this very reason, as masculine and non-cosmopolitan as any other nation.

This raises the issue that, at a time when boundaries have been rigidified and border policies are strictly controlled, it is perhaps not even possible for whole nations to be truly cosmopolitan in the way the idea is described in this thesis-- based as the very idea of a modern nation-state is on rigid frontiers and homogeneity. It is perhaps only individuals and non-political entities in such a scenario that can make an effort towards being more inclusive and cosmopolitan. Keeping this in mind, a tying together of cosmopolitanism with the idea of the feminine and the ethics of care, is a radical and promising proposition.

---

[25] Appiah 71

The very requirement of having to turn 'American', admitted to by both Henry's character and Appiah, is based on the same ideas of nation-states and rigid political identities that Henry imagined he had left behind when he arrived in New York. It is in cases such as these that Graham Huggan's critical enquiry into the concept of the cosmopolitan and the marginal is seen to become most pertinent. According to him, 'Cosmopolitanism (...) for its critics, conceals as much as it reveals, operating as a cover for new forms of ethnocentricism or as a mystification of the continuing asymmetries of power within inclusive conceptions of global culture.'[26] However, I would argue that an all-out dismissal of the idea of cosmopolitanism because of its incorporation by the Western mainstream market and academia, or, as mentioned earlier, a simplistic rejection of any attempts at the representation of marginal voices on the grounds of authenticity, is equally limiting and unfair.[27] I would argue that disregarding all such voices unthinkingly on the same grounds would be as homogenising a discourse as any other, as Huggan suggests with respect to similar criticism meted out to postcolonial academics, 'The problem with this argument (...) is that it repeatedly lapses into a tirade against the collective body of postcolonial intellectuals (...).'[28] Importantly, this particular novel by Shamsie avoids Western-centrism by critiquing American notions of inclusivity and its policies, in the way

---

[26] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001) 11.

[27] Graham Huggan, although generally cautious of the postcolonial enterprise, nonetheless argues, 'Postcolonial writers/thinkers, it could be said, are (…) aware of (…) their interpellation as marginal spokespersons, institutionalized cultural commentators and representative (iconic) figures. What is more, they make their *readers* aware of the constructedness of such cultural categories; their texts are metacommentaries on the politics of translation, on the power relations that inform cross-cultural perception and representation.' (Huggan 26) Likewise, my argument here is that it is simplistic not to recognise the critical space that can be, and quite often is, created within writings dismissed as pandering to the Western market.

[28] Huggan 8

demonstrated in this analysis. Shamsie thereby avoids having the West as the ultimate point of reference-- the sweeping charge brought against cosmopolitan writers.

In *Burnt Shadows*, the notion of being fanatically American is shown to be as dangerous as any other kind of national, cultural or religious bigotry, as is demonstrated by Kim, Henry's daughter. Kim fits the bill perfectly when it comes to the question of American-ness. Kim as a young girl visiting Islamabad is shown to be inherently American in her unquestioning belief in strict, written down *laws* that keep a modern, masculine nation and its people together.

> The fifteen- year- old American girl held out the pirated video to the man behind the counter (...) 'Not appropriate,' he said, whisking the video into a cubbyhole beneath his desk. He offered her another video. (...) 'If there is a law against me taking that other movie, fine. But "appropriateness" is not something you get to decide about.' He almost laughed at this strange hierarchy which placed the law above advice by an elder (...).[29]

This passage is illustrative of that difference between a modern state and an older sense of community and culture, where authority is vested with the elder of the community rather than laws laid out by abstract state machineries. This example has not been cited to show that one is necessarily better than the other, inasmuch as there are many examples in this thesis that demonstrate how oppressive both masculinist small communities and masculinist larger national structures can be towards the section of its population which does not fall in line-- the feminine. The above example has been cited rather to show the difference in sensibilities between people situated within older, local communities and those situated within the more modern nation-state, and to emphasise the fact that Kim belongs very firmly in the latter group.

---

[29] Shamsie 167

Henry's relief as a young man, at what he imagines to be American inclusivity, is so great that he becomes-- as his profession as a CIA agent suggests-- a partisan. However, at the height of his career we do see in him a fleeting realisation of the truth of the American brand of internationalism.

> Harry couldn't help enjoying the idea of Pakistan, India and Israel working together in America's war (...) internationalism, powered by capitalism. (...) With a mix of satisfaction, irony and despair he raised his glass to the ghost of Konrad Weiss.[30]

Henry feels both 'irony' and 'despair' inasmuch as although America, as he hoped, succeeds in bringing countries together, its success is not because of its cosmopolitan ideals, but because of its economic and political clout. The passage also highlights the difference between the cosmopolitanism of a Japan before the war, celebrated by an idealistic Konrad Weiss in his burnt down research work, and the capital driven internationalism of America.

> (...) Notebooks of research and observation about the cosmopolitan world that had briefly existed within a square mile of where he now lives (...). Yoshi Watanabe made clear to him when Germany's surrender started to seem imminent. *You write about a Nagasaki filled with foreigners. You write about it longingly. That's one step away from cheering on an American occupation*. And so, the night Germany surrendered, Konrad constructed a mobile of strong wire and hung each of his eight purple-leather notebooks from it. He climbed over the wall to the vacant property that adjoined his own, and attached the mobile to a tree. The wind twirled the purple-winged birds in the moonlight.[31]

---

[30] Shamsie 204

[31] Shamsie 9

It is Konrad's work on a cosmopolitan pre-war Japan-- his purple notebooks-- which symbolise everything that the text and my argument stand for. It is the cosmopolitan spirit that Henry vainly searches for all his life. The narrative tone in this description-- 'The wind twirled the purple-winged birds in the moonlight'-- is that of loss; in referring to the books in terms of birds and flight, the tone suggests that the dream of a cosmopolitan world is, perhaps, too vulnerable to be easily realised. And it does not in fact prove easy in the end: not only are Konrad's notebooks destroyed eventually, but Henry's dream of a cosmopolitan United States is revealed to be too naive.

It is for its deceptive inclusivity that Henry suggests that Raza Ashraf should move to America. However, Raza's relationship with the American government post the 9/11 attacks, exposes the United States of America-- a coming together of immigrants-- for what it actually is as a political entity. Henry's quest for a political nation that will allow a looser sense of identity is shown in the end to be completely illusory. All nations, the text seems to suggest, are ineluctably caught in the politics of identity, and exhibit forms of xenophobia whenever threatened, and America-- even more apparently so after the world trade centre attacks-- is no exception.

Harry is told by his colleague in the CIA,

'You're an idiot to hire all these Third Country Nationals. Economically, sure, I see the sense. But stop recruiting them from Pakistan and Bangladesh. You're acting like this is a territorial war

and they're neutral parties. Go with the guys from Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Philippenes. Indians are OK, so long as they're not Muslim.'[32]

The discrimination here is seen to be on the grounds of religion, resulting from a so-called 'Islamic' attack on the World Trade Centres. Religion, looked at in these terms, of a clash of civilisations, takes on a politically rigid aspect, quite like the idea of the nation-state. Religion in this form has, for generations, been implicated in fixed and divisive identity formations.[33] It is this kind of impersonalised and homogenising fixity of masculine discourses that I have discussed thoughout the thesis, against which is pitted a more particular and personalised ethical value system: the ethics of care.

However, this discrimination within America and its military forces overseas, resulting partly from state-sponsored fear mongering, obviously does not remain limited to 'religious terrorists' for the general public, because the idea of an 'Islamic terrorist' generates images, and the hatred is passed on to anybody who fits that visual idea. As it happens in the text, one of the unwitting victims of this 'war on terror' is Sajjad Ashraf, a Muslim from India-- who moves to Pakistan-- considered by Henry to be his mentor. Sajjad gets killed accidentally because of

---

[32] Shamsie 280

[33] Amartya Sen argues, 'Increasing reliance on religion-based classification of the people of the world (…) tends to make the Western response to global terrorism and conflict peculiarly ham-handed. Respect for "other people" is shown in praising their religious books, rather than by taking note of the many sided involvements and achievements, in non-religious as well as religious fields, of different people in a globally interactive world. In confronting what is called "Islamic terrorism," in the muddled vocabulary of contemporary global politics, the intellectual force of Western policy is aimed quite substantially at trying to define—or redefine—Islam.' Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Destiny of Illusion* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006) 12.

Henry and the CIA. The other victim is Sajjad's son, Raza, the boy whom Henry mentors. Raza is captured by the American government under the false charge of Henry's murder.

As a result, all of the characters that suffer in the text in the name of Islamic terrorism, are actually innocent people, and are even heroic in their suffering. Sajjad gets killed during his search for his son Raza, while Raza gives himself up to the American authorities to save an Afghan friend who would have been caught instead. Moments before Raza is taken away by the police, with Kim-- because of whose mistake he gets arrested-- too mystified to prevent it, he thinks to himself,

> All he needed to do was allow her to say what she had been about to say when he stopped her. She had only to say, 'That's not him.' And they would let him go (...). But he would not do that to Abdullah. Not this Raza Konrad Ahraf (...). Every chance, every second, he could give Abdullah he would.[34]

Raza having led most of his life with an apathetic attitude decides to repay all of his mistakes in that one moment. The United States authorities, on the other hand, incarcerate an innocent man due to its paranoia regarding the demonised outsider.

Thus, Hiroko's Nagasaki is bombed by the American government (1940s), and, completing a full circle, the text ends with Hiroko's son being victimised by a similar American authority. Henry in the end, therefore, is revealed to be misguided about his country's open-mindedness, which he had celebrated so unquestioningly as a young man. In fact, ironically, all those close to Henry suffer in the end at the hands of the American state. As mentioned earlier,

---

[34] Shamsie 356

even his daughter, Kim, displays a racist paranoia. Kim Burton-- categorised in this argument as a masculine character-- plays an instrumental role in the American government's capture of Raza Ashraf, whom they falsely charge with Henry Burton's murder.

Kim's character is in fact reminiscent of her grandfather and Elizabeth's ex-husband, James Burton. Both Kim and James are masculine. James Burton is portrayed as being so self-satisfied in his Englishness that he completely vanishes from the dynamics of the latter half of the text. This is illustrated by Hiroko's first visit to the Burton House in New Delhi:

> (...) Hiroko Tanaka (...) walked into his house (...) she saw the vibrant oil painting on the wall calculated to create a first impression (...) she saw immediately what the painter had captured so perfectly: the complacency of James Burton. And then she understood why Konrad would have had nothing to say to, or about, him.[35]

It is because of his complete self assurance and complacency as an Englishman, and his absolute faith in England's institutions, including the Empire, that his wife suffers even more, in that she is required by him to remain as unquestioning of her role as he is. It is in her complete faith in her nation state that Kim Burton recalls James. Both of these masculine characters find security within their respective, abstract state machinery.

Sajjad, on the other hand, like Henry, is a conflicted individual whose biggest tragedy is also a displacement from the mixed environment of India to a more religiously homogeneous environment of Pakistan. Being a Muslim in Delhi, Sajjad's location as an Indian comes into question after the partition of India and Pakistan. He is a poet and could be understood as being

---

[35] Shamsie 42

feminine in his appreciation of beauty. He is also open-minded enough to marry a Japanese woman despite being from an orthodox background; however, he does at a deeper level feel that he has compromised with life, 'Sajjad brushed her hair for her and said no, of course he didn't wish it were longer, never mind that no woman in his moholla had hair as short as a boy's.'[36] Accordingly, his reluctance in accepting certain things, including his unconventional marriage to Hiroko, coupled with his traditional expectations for his son Raza, complicate his character. He remains hesitant about leaving Delhi, but considering the state of the Muslims in Delhi during the partition unrest, moving to Pakistan seems for him to be the only way out. About the communitarian riots raging in India, he says,

> It is the most contagious of all the madnesses. I don't want to know which of my childhood friends have become murderers in the time we've been away. (...) No I don't want to be there. But it feels like a betrayal, all the same.[37]

This speech is another example of Sajjad's ambiguous attitude. Although he is appalled by the raging religious violence in the country and appreciates the cosmopolitanism of the Indian environment, he tries to build with that cosmopolitan environment a relationship that is contrary to its spirit. He humanises India, and is not only profoundly saddened by the state of the country, but considers it a 'betrayal' to move to a different one.

Even after moving to Pakistan, he persists in thinking of himself as Indian. He continues to think of himself as a dilliwala from Delhi. And although he is equally at ease in Karachi, he admits to having made a special effort to love the city. Therefore, Sajjad's attitude is not

---

[36] Shamsie 124

[37] Shamsie 125

represented as being entirely different from the British attitude in India that he had so volubly criticised. It is for all these reasons that his character, although very conflicted, veers towards what has been classified as masculine in the argument of this thesis. Most of this conflict gets reflected in Sajjad's relationship with Raza. He hopes to fulfil all the conventional dreams he has for himself through his son. Despite having been a rebel himself and having married somebody from a different country, he does not allow his son the space to make similarly unconventional choices in life. As Henry wonders when he meets the awkward Raza for the first time in Pakistan,

> How was it possible, Harry thought, to have such a man as this as your father and grow up as uncertain of your place in the world as Raza appeared to be. If you were Sajjad Ashraf's son, how could you fail to regard the world as your oyster, regardless of whether you saw yourself as gemstone or mollusc?[38]

Henry does not realise, however, the complexity and conflict in Sajjad's mind, and therefore doesn't recognise the burden of expectations that Raza carries with him. Also, Henry is blind to the different class and global relations involved in his own and Raza's boyhood. Henry here fails to see the problems Raza has to face due to his mixed ancestry, and also forgets that he was the son of the people Sajjad served, and their relationship was defined accordingly.

Sajjad pushes his son to the point that Raza seeks release through unusually reckless behaviour. Sajjad is not portrayed as an imperious father; however, it is clear to the reader that his expectations are more implicit than explicit. It is because of the implicit nature of his expectations that Raza cannot take the easier route of open rebellion, but instead feels an anxious

---

[38] Shamsie 163

need to impress his father and to make him happy. Raza, in his need to get away, joins an Afghan mujahideen organisation,

> While Raza Ashraf's greatest pride came from the joy with which his father turned on his new cassette-player from Sohrab Goth every evening after work, Raza Hazara learnt to measure pride in the decreasing number of seconds it took him to take down and reassemble an AK-47. Raza Ashraf spent more and more time alone, locked in a world of books and dreams, while Raza Hazara was greeted with cries of delight each time he entered the slums of Sohrab Goth (...) Raza Hazara never had to duck his head forward so his hair would hide his features.[39]

Raza is shown here living a double life with two different identities; this is the psychological effect that social rejection has on him. He is also revealed to be extremely uncertain as to his role in the world. Although feminine in his marginality, as also in his taste for books and dreams, he is drawn to the masculine world of guns and war in his desperate search for identity. Due to his feeling of unbelonging coupled with his subtly oppressive relationship with his father, Raza makes the biggest mistake of his life by going away with the militant organisation, an incident that culminates in his father's death.

All three masculine characters, James Burton, Sajjad Ashraf and Kim Burton appear to have a strong sense of identity; they are shown to possess very rigid ideas regarding who they are and where they belong. Kim's character is so masculine in her outlook that her one motivation to work as a structural engineer is in order to be able to build huge reliable structures that will endure any threatening winds of uncertainty-- something perhaps alsolinked to the breakdown of

---

[39] Shamsie 207

her parents' marriage. She talks to Henry about her career choice and refers to the World Trade Center, saying,

> 'The thing about structural engineers, Dad, is that we know right away. Switched on the television, saw the flames, and knew the building would fall. The rest of the country had a few minutes' grace, but we were the Cassandras standing in front of the first images, saying it's coming down, all of it. And then the second one. From that moment, I haven't wanted to be anywhere except back here.' She looked around fiercely. 'We'll keep building.'[40]

However, this constant fight for security and against uncertainty does not prevent a lot of the masculine characters' decisions in the text from being either self destructive or harmful to others around them.

James Burton misses out on what could have been a great friendship with Sajjad, owing to his heightened awareness of his class position and his Englishness. Sajjad Ashraf is not able to understand his son's dilemma and instead pushes him to fulfil his own dreams, to the point that Raza runs away from home. Kim Burton's is the final mistake in the text; she-- because of her paranoia after the World Trade Center attacks, regarding brown men with beards-- ends up helping the American police to unjustly take into custody Raza Ashraf, who is both her grandmother and her own dearest friend, Hiroko's son. In the end, Hiroko says to Kim,

> 'In the big picture of threats to America, what is one Afghan? Expendable. Maybe he's guilty, maybe not. Why risk it? Kim, you are the kindest, most generous woman I know. But right now,

---

[40] Shamsie 270

because of you, I understand for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb.'[41]

This is *Burnt Shadows*' final denunciation of the United States' foreign policy. It also summarises the implicit but rigid hierarchies within world politics. People from one part of the world are considered absolutely irrelevant when compared to the more wealthy and powerful, so that thousands of people dying everyday in war-torn areas like Kashmir, or regions of Africa, are deemed insignificant compared to the death of one American or British soldier in Afghanistan.

The characters in *Burnt Shadows*-- like other texts examined in my thesis-- function according to similar patterns. The more accepting and flexible group of characters are those that are also at the margins of their societies. They are pitted in the narrative against those who are comfortable with a rigid knowledge of their particular place in the system. The latter set of characters is represented as having an unquestioning faith in their state machineries; these characters are also the ones that are at the centre of their particular socio-political systems. In my argument, they have been categorised as feminine and masculine respectively. In bringing together many different countries within the scope of its narrative-- Japan, England, India, Pakistan, United States, Afghanistan-- and connecting them through globally relevant political ideologies and events, Shamsie's text helps to make a very strong argument for a cosmopolitan ethical orientation. The text in this way illustrates the similarity of feminine experience in all of these various scenarios, and thereby makes a compelling case for the articulation of an ethical system that takes into account these similarities. My attempt in this thesis is to argue for a loosely universal ethical orientation directed towards the feminine experience. Shamsie's text

---

[41] Shamsie 362

reveals that inasmuch as there is a similar masculine ideology working across various national political systems, there has to be, for that reason, some space to come to an understanding of feminine/marginal ways of thinking and responding across cultural and political boundaries.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*: War and revelations

From an examination of various kinds of political tensions and power struggles erupting over generations between more and less powerful nation states in Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, the argument in this piece goes on to examine conflicts that erupt in societies organised in ways that predate the modern nation-state.[42] Adichie's novel represents the difficulties emerging between various much smaller social groups that do not cope well with being clubbed together as one nation. The novel deals with the Nigerian civil war which went on for more than two years, from 1967 to the beginning of 1970, when the Igbo people were compelled to secede, and form a separate state of Biafra, as a result of the resentment unleashed on them by other Nigerian tribes.

Like Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows,* this novel also contends with the issue of using English language to describe and deal with cultures and languages that have a connection with England mostly because of a past colonial experience, and because of the relationship that the people of the cultures in question developed, through

---

[42] Susan Strehle argues, 'Adichie's novel depicts the inevitable failure of the nation created by British colonialism and grounded in the Western myth of the nation as a single family of those born (natio) to a homogeneous clan. The violations of the social contract in Nigeria, made vivid in sanctioned genocidal murders of the Igbo minority, fracture the nation (...).' Susan Strehle, 'Producing Exile: Diasporic Vision in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 57.4 (Winter 2011): 650-672.

generations, with the language of the coloniser.[43] However, as I have argued in this thesis, the fact that the novel is written in English is not tantamount to it being a narrative written from a 'Western' perspective in any sense. It is not merely a neo-colonial appropriation of a culture and its events either; the story, to my mind, is no less Nigerian for being written in English. Having said that, the West, and England in particular, is brought into the narrative in significant ways, mostly to highlight its social apathy and political complicity regarding the events unfolding in Nigeria at that time. The one English character among the main protagonists gives the reader a clearer understanding of the complex relationship between the people of Nigeria and the English 'white man'.

The novel depicts the suffering of the Igbo tribe, and revolves around two sisters, Olanna and Kainene, and the people in their lives. It traces the trajectory of these girls from an upper middle class Igbo family, from affluence to penury, caused by the war between Nigeria and the Igbo secessionist state of Biafra. Even as the novel commences-- with a boy from a small village, Ugwu, going to work in Odenigbo's house as his houseboy-- it establishes the difference in life style between the rich and poor.[44]

---

[43] The debate between Timothy Brennan and Inderpal Grewal is very revealing as regards the issue of the usage of English language by postcolonial writers. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley ed. *The Postcolonial and the Global* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

[44] Susan Z. Andrade places Adichie within the tradition of Achebe. She argues that Ugwu's '(…) servant's vantage, in proper Hegelian fashion, offers the most honest and clear-sighted view of relations within the Odenigbo household.' Susan Z. Andrade, 'Adichie's Genealogies: National and Feminine Novels,' *Research in African Literatures* 42.2 (Summer 2011): 91-101.

> They were standing before the glass door. Ugwu held back from reaching out to touch the cement wall, to see how different it would feel from the mud walls of his mother's hut that still bore the faint patterns of moulding fingers.[45]

Ugwu is shown here as marvelling at the relatively modest lodgings of Odenigbo, a rising academic. This makes clear the vast gap between the truly wealthy people of the country and the most poverty stricken. It is important to note at this stage that much of the discontent in Nigeria towards the Igbo people was also related to the fact that they were the most prosperous.[46]

The novel depicts the relationship between the rich and the poor, emphasising the more or less paternalistic attitude that the rich have towards the poor. This attitude is illustrated within the novel through the previously mentioned relationship between Odenigbo and his houseboy, Ugwu; as also in the relationship between the wealthy Olanna and her much poorer cousins.

> (…) Olanna braced herself to stand firmly, so Arize's excited hug would not knock her down. (…). When Aunty Ifeka's eyes began to dart around the yard, she knew it was in search of a suitable chicken. Aunty Ifeka always killed one when she visited, even if it was the last she owned (…). Olanna no longer protested about the chicken, just as she no longer protested when Uncle Mbaezi and Aunty Ifeka slept on mats (…) so that she could have their bed.[47]

---

[45] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (London: Fourth Estate, 2006) 4.

[46] The Igbos were at the forefront in the fight for independence from British rule in the 1940s and 1950s. They, as a community, were not only relatively more prosperous but also more mobile throughout Nigeria. The Igbos had wanted an independent Nigeria to be divided into smaller parts because of the rivalry between various communities. However, the British and the Northerners insisted on Nigeria being divided into three clear parts: the north, the west and the east. Being part of one country, the resentment towards a much smaller but more prosperous Igbo community grew. This resentment became one of the major reasons for the civil war, which lasted from 1967 to 1970.

[47] Adichie 39-40

As is evident in this scene, there are hierarchies based on wealth even within the same family. For a self-aware participant, embarrassment is an inescapable part of these transactions; patronising sympathy on the one side and a need to ingratiate oneself on the other.

The narrative helps to explore the relationship between the English language and colonised people. Nigerian people's relationship with English, the language of the coloniser, is a way in which their different class positions are made evident in the text. English is shown to be the language of the elite. Olanna is portrayed as speaking English with an English accent; in fact, she, on various desperate occasions, is shown explicitly to use her command over the language to her advantage:

> The dim hospital corridor smelt of urine and penicillin. Women were sitting with babies on their hips, and chatter mixed with crying. Olanna remembered Dr. Nwala from the wedding. (…) She told the nurses that she was an old colleague of his. (…) 'It's terribly urgent,' she said, and kept her English accent crisp and her head held high. A nurse showed her into his office promptly. One of the women sitting in the corridor cursed. '*Tufiakwa!* We have been waiting since dawn! Is it because we don't talk through our noses like white people?'[48]

The passage illustrates how tensions carried over from a colonial past become manifested in the way the once-colonised use the language of the coloniser. To know the language remains a marker of social status even after political independence. English spoken by the poor people instead, who try to ingratiate themselves to their rich and well educated masters, is represented as being broken and comical.

---

[48] Adichie 263

(…) Harrison turned out to be a small, stooped stick of a man, middle-aged, wearing an oversized white shirt that stopped below his knees. He bowed extravagantly at the beginning of each conversation. (…). 'I am making very good beet salad,' (…).[49]

The servants in the narrative are not unproblematically presented as bumbling characters with broken English; the text is in fact very aware and self-reflexive as regards these power-structures. And this awareness within the text demonstrates my argument that even though narratives written in English might be understood as being implicated within the capitalistic, hegemonic mainstream, as Timothy Brennan argues, novels such as this one and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* demonstrate that it is possible to stand back and be critical of that very system. Be that as it may, the narrative, through the characters' relationships to the English language, firmly establishes within the text the hierarchical structures of that society, as also the relative positions of these various characters.

However, as the story progresses and the civil war erupts, these hierarchies seem to be almost completely erased within the Igbo community. Owing to the indiscriminate devastation and loss resulting from the tribal conflict, almost all structures crumble and the most unlikely people live next to each other, crammed together in buildings. These characters have to live alongside each other and cope with the war together, and those that still possess a little more than the others, give, not out of paternalistic pity, but an onerous sense of a shared humanity and responsibility. It is interesting to see the way the lives and personalities of the characters emerge more clearly as the war progresses. As John C Howley argues,

---

[49] Adichie 72

(...) one characteristic of *Half of a Yellow Sun* that immediately strikes the reader is the strong light that shines on the book's principal players, rather than on the politics and strategies that shaped the war. Recalling (…) Lukácsian observations (…) one might say that Adichie allows the emerging context to incubate and to "birth" the politics of her characters (…).[50]

This democratisation is a positive effect of the war, and the novel seems to suggest-- by thrusting the reader right away into the midst of these unequal relationships-- that this bulldozing of class and wealth based hierarchies was much needed in that society. As seen in the analysis of the Gorkha movement in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, war-like situations lead to the demolishing of-- or at least create fissures in-- various structures of power that had otherwise been taken for granted, like those of class, nation and ethnicity.

One of the interesting aspects of the novel is the ways in which the text very deliberately creates these representative hierarchies and then subjects them to a representative breakdown; it portrays the process of deconstruction as it were.[51] It is, likewise, important to see how the characters in the text are shown to deal with this kind of breakdown and political pressure. As noted in the examination of other novels, it is only when the characters are stripped of all superficiality and posturing because of emotional, political or social stress that it becomes possible to see them for what they are.

---

[50] John C Hawley, 'Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu, and Iweala,' *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (Summer 2008): 12-15.

[51] Jane Bryce argues that African women writers reinterpret and challenge identities as passed down through generations by bringing together the realist and non-realist modes of writing. 'We learn from them that identity is far from being a given, that older identities are more of a hindrance than a help to negotiating a postcolonial reality. That women's determination to negotiate this reality through fiction is unstoppable (...). Rather than contesting or opposing this definition, they enter into a dialogue that allows them to redefine it (…).' Jane Bryce, 'Half and Half Children: Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel,' *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (Summer 2008): 49-67.

I will be analysing these characters and categorising them as masculine or feminine-- in terms of the politically more visible and therefore more certain of their stances and positions, and the politically less visible and therefore more flexible and ambiguous regarding where they belong, respectively-- mostly according to how each of them copes with the war. As was seen in both Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, times of genuine national and political crisis, like war and other hostile situations, provide the best setting for the examination of these attitudes-- ranging from xenophobic and rigid to accepting and flexible-- which can otherwise remain concealed under false appearances of political correctness.

However, although the hierarchies within the Igbo community seem to disappear because of the war, it is significant that this levelling of unequal relations occurs due to forced and extraneous circumstances. Therefore, even though the process is interesting, there is no doubt in the mind of the reader that these disparities will resurface once the pressure of survival passes. Accordingly, it is important to note that these two categories of masculine and feminine, constituting the powerful and the marginalised, do not completely disappear in the micro structures of societies, even when a particular society or community, the Igbo people in this case, is, as a whole, being oppressed and threatened by those who are fighting for more political and social power at a macro level. For instance, Ugwu's subordination within Odenigbo and Olanna's household remains more or less the same.

> 'Welcome Sah. Nno.' Ugwu stood up. Master was unsteady on his feet, swaying ever so slightly to the left. Ugwu hurried forward and placed his arm around him and supported him. They had just stepped inside the room when Master doubled over with a fierce jerk and threw up. (…). Master sat down on the bed. Ugwu brought a rag and some water and, while he cleaned, he listened to Master's uneven breathing.

'Don't tell any of this to your Madam,' Master said.

'Yes, Sah.'[52]

In the desperate situation of war, Odenigbo, Olanna and Ugwu move from Odenigbo's house into one small room where they all stay together. Yet, not only the way they address each other, but also their body language make clear their status in that hierarchical relationship. Ugwu remains the servant, no matter in how close a proximity they exist. The category of the dominant and the subjugated remains intact, even when it is slightly shaken due to external pressures, and hierarchies like that of master and servant never completely dissolve-- even when a different kind of inequality, at a national or ethnic level, is being challenged.

This leads back to the basic argument of the thesis, which is that for any real step forward towards equality in societies, either global or particular, there needs to be an attempt towards the articulation of the needs and desires of people who find themselves on the margins of these societies, be it because of class, sexuality, ethnic background, gender and so on. If the formulation of a different kind of ethical system for women by Gilligan is extended to include various other marginalised groups, it will open a window towards a more coherent and inclusive articulation of the sensibility of the marginalised. It is a useful ethical conception because it is not created by the powerful and for the powerful, but is a bottom up approach instead.

Returning to the issue of masculine and feminine, Odenigbo, the Nigerian academic, could be looked upon as the most masculine of all the protagonists in Adichie's text because of his staunch political beliefs. Moreover, his effortless fitting in with his intellectual colleagues,

---

[52] Adichie 355

entails some amount of posturing with which he feels comfortable. For the purpose of the thesis, all the other characters can be measured against him and understood in terms of masculinity and femininity as I define the categories. This will help to understand these categories further and to advance my examination of the ethics of care.

Richard Churchill, the one character from England who is fully sketched out in the text, becomes a way for the novel to complicate the otherwise villainous picture of Britain, which emerges when seen through the events of, and leading up to, the war. Richard's character represents the more humane side of the people of Britain, and he stands in opposition to the British government. He does not have any great attachment to or nationalistic feeling for his country; in fact, in course of time, he starts to identify himself more with the people of Biafra than with those of Britain. However, along with having no nationalistic feelings of his own, he is also shown as being over eager to please the Nigerians he comes across. He seems almost pitiful and misguided in his bumbling enthusiasm for Nigeria.[53]

> 'Hello,' Richard said. Kainene was silent for too long (…) so he ran his hand through his hair and mumbled, 'I'm no relation of Sir Winston's, I'm afraid, or I might have turned out a little cleverer.' She exhaled before she said, 'How funny.' (…). Her skin was the colour of Belgian

---

[53] Richard's character embodies both naivety and hope for a more just and globalised world, where another culture can be truly appreciated by a cosmopolitan world order. Chima Anyadike argues, 'In a world with so much mingling between peoples, it is not surprising that Richard had come to Nigeria ready to learn from the situation he encounters, believing that men and women have the same strengths and weaknesses all over the world. And yet Adichie portrays Richard as more of an exception among his fellow whites. So that if we ask, will Igboland and Africa have many Richards who will help reshape the nature and direction of globalization, our answer will (…) be, maybe.' Chima Anyadike, 'The Global North in Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*,' *The Global South* 2.2 (Fall 2008): 139-149.

chocolate. He spread his legs a little wider and pressed his feet down firmly, because he feared

that if he didn't he might find himself reeling, colliding with her.[54]

The above paragraph is an example of his anxiety to please, impress and be accepted by the Nigerians around him. In fact, Richard appears to have taken upon himself the guilt of past generations. He embodies the other extreme of English character in that-- like many English people who feel uncomfortable regarding England's imperial history-- he is shown to want to distance himself from his country's colonial and racist past, to the degree that he prefers to completely turn away from those of his own culture in order not to be identified with their common history.

Susan, who is another English person in Nigeria, and is Richard's girlfriend for a brief period, could be regarded as his foil given that she considers the people of Nigeria beneath her. In this, her character is representative of the opposite extreme of the English character, the kind of privileged English sensibility which has a celebratory, even nostalgic, attitude to the British history of Empire and subjugation, and revels in the false sense of superiority it affords. Her character in its simplistic celebration of England parallels James Burton's in *Burnt Shadows*. The social gatherings to which Susan takes Richard are full of British people with the same attitude towards the Nigerians. He is warned by them about African people in these terms:

The people were bloody beggars, be prepared for their body odours and the way they will stand

and stare at you on the roads, never believe a hard-luck story, never show weakness to domestic

staff. There were jokes to illustrate each African trait.[55]

---

[54] Adichie 57

[55] Adichie 53-54

The British people that Richard encounters have no doubts regarding their superiority over the African people around them, illustrating in the text, the repetitive and spiralling nature of subjugation and injustice-- from micro to macro, as mentioned before. We see prejudice within the Igbo community between man and woman or between rich and poor, whereas at the national level, there is discrimination directed towards the Igbo people by other Nigerian tribes. The above passage is an illustration of an even greater, international racial prejudice, that of the British people towards all Nigerians, even Africans in general. Then there is the complicated matter of religion, explored only in passing in the text through Mohammad, a Nigerian Muslim. Religion, although a major aspect of the clash between Nigerian people, is not examined in an obvious way in the text. [56]

Be that as it may, understood through the argument of this thesis, Richard could be characterised as feminine-- fluid and lacking a political voice-- and powerless in the face of the ultra-masculine-- politically powerful and Machiavellian-- British government, and those like Susan, who place their trust within it. Susan works as Richard's foil since she is a masculine character who is very decided about her identity as an Englishwoman. Richard, on the other hand, becomes almost physically 'feminine' when he cannot perform sexually with Kainene, who is, as will be revealed later in this piece, only seemingly masculine.

---

[56] Lily Mabura examines the evolution of the gothic mode in African literature, and also helps decode the ways in which Adichie's text represents the discrimination of Igbo people, and how religion is an essential part of this discrimination. 'The largely Islamic Northerners (…) refuse to admit Igbo children into Kano schools, forcing the Igbo Union to construct an Igbo Union Grammar School (38). When the Biafra War erupts, the Igbo lose thousands of lives and their property and bank accounts are confiscated or destroyed. The Ozobias, for instance, lose their family house in the predominantly Yoruba capital city of Lagos, and after the fall of Port Harcourt, Kainene's house. During the war, the Igbo are beaten back to interior Igbo towns like Abba, Odenigbo's hometown, where he and Olanna seek refuge from advancing government forces.' Lily Mabura, 'Breaking Gods: An African Postcolonial Gothic Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*,' *Research in African Literatures* 39.1 (Spring 2008): 203-222.

His naked body was pressed to hers and yet he was limp. He explored the angles of her collarbones and her hips, all the time willing his body and his mind to work better together, willing his desire to bypass his anxiety. But he did not become hard. He could feel the flaccid weight between his legs.[57]

Kainene is not represented here as a stereotypical woman; in depicting her body as angular instead of curvy, the text seems to set her up 'masculine'. Later in the text, his reaction to the physically 'feminine' Olanna is very different. '(...) the pleasure he had found in her curvy body, her moving with him, her taking as much as she gave. He had never been so firm, never lasted so long as he had with her.'[58] These descriptions set up the characters very viscerally and sexually as either masculine or feminine; however, as the novel progresses, it is revealed to the reader that these distinctions between the characters are not as simple as they are made out to be. Sexual imagery is used in very significant ways in Adichie's text. It reveals a lot about the various characters, and sets them up in intimate ways that show how they deal with various situations within that environment, including the war.[59]

Characters are established in a particular, stereotypical and traditional way in the text, only to be disturbed by the war. The sexual and stereotypical associations of masculinity and femininity are broken down in the course of the war, and the new categories that are formed are

---

[57] Adichie 63

[58] Adichie 235

[59] Zoe Norridge argues, 'Adichie offers sensual and detailed accounts of sexual desire and intercourse between her principle adult characters and a tender and yet disturbing description of the houseboy Ugwu's awakening sexuality. (…) such descriptions (…) function in terms of plot, group identity, and political protest. (…) descriptions of intercourse create new aesthetic languages that are mobilized to probe the extremes of bodily sensation and explore the sensuality of loss.' Zoe Norridge, 'Sex as Synecdoche: Intimate Languages of Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*,' *Research in African Literatures* 43.2 (Summer 2012):18-39.

seen to be in agreement with the way the ideas of masculine and feminine have been constructed in my thesis. As mentioned earlier, the war reveals the characters for what they really are. Nevertheless, the masculine Susan and the feminine Richard together, the novel suggests, typify English responses to the sensitive issue of Empire and political subjugation, and everything that has followed it.

It is productive to compare Richard's character with that of Odenigbo. Both are partners respectively of the sisters Kainene and Olanna. Odenigbo, who is an academic with revolutionary ideas, is shown to be extremely sure of his political standing and beliefs; his radicalism inspires awe within his colleagues. Olanna, thinking of her first meeting with him, reminisces:

> It was what had first attracted her to him that June day two years ago in Ibadan (…). She might have never noticed him if a white man with silver hair had not stood behind her and if the ticket seller had not signalled to the white man to come forwards. (…) She was surprised at the outburst that followed, from a man wearing a brown safari suit and clutching a book: Odenigbo. He (…) escorted the white man back into the queue and then shouted at the ticket seller. 'You miserable ignoramus! You see a white fellow and he looks better than your own people? You must apologise to everybody in this queue! Right now!'[60]

Odenigbo's stance, as seen in the above passage, is that of a left-oriented, radical intellectual. Here he intervenes to combat the legacies of colonialism. He is an idealistic man who, as will be revealed in the analysis of the novel, is not able to live up to his intellectual pretensions and

---

[60] Adichie 28-29

idealisms. As the pressures mount, he is shown not to be able to shake off unreasonable prejudices and his love for his people quickly turns into almost jingoistic nationalism.

Through the novel Odenigbo comes across as somebody who is self-assured and unambiguous about his stance with respect to complicated Nigerian politics-- it is significant that his self-assurance is similar to Susan's, who, likewise, is very decided regarding her own position as a superior English woman. Odenigbo is identified in this argument as a very masculine character who, despite his seemingly revolutionary attitude, later fails to face the challenges posed by the war. He drowns himself in alcohol and relies on Olanna to see him through the crisis. Richard, on the other hand, is almost pathetic in his lack of the qualities considered macho in that society. This absence of machismo in him and its presence in Odenigbo is again emphasised by Olanna in very physical terms,

> She placed the wine bottle on the floor and sat next to him and touched the hair that lay on his skin and thought how fair and soft it was, not assertively brittle like Odenigbo's, nothing like Odenigbo at all. (...) she felt his mouth limply enclose her nipple. It was nothing like Odenigbo's bites and sucks, nothing like those shocks of pleasure.[61]

Although Odenigbo is shown to be more 'virile' than Richard, it is revealed in the end that his virility does not translate into strength of character. As has so far been argued in the thesis, it is the feminine characters in the text that are shown to be stronger and more resilient owing to their adaptability; even perhaps to have a stronger survival instinct due to their marginality.

---

[61] Adichie 235

Richard is also shown to be very fluid regarding his national identity, as mentioned earlier. Preferring to identify with the suffering Igbo people, he thinks of himself as Biafran instead of British. However, despite his sexual, social and political 'weaknesses', it is Richard who is able to contribute to Biafra's cause by writing favourable articles about it. It is a cause that Odenigbo had ardently believed in, until he is faced with the reality of war and secession. Odenigbo's defeat is not merely a result of the discomfort he has to endure, with his wife and child, in dwellings that are no better than refugee camps. His depression does not have to do with the fact that he has to share the same dilapidated living quarters with other starving Biafrans, but arises from the sudden realisation of his vulnerabilities, as also the severity of the reality of war. He finds it difficult to step down from his world of idealistic abstractions and takes refuge in alcohol instead. It is interesting to note in this text as well, that where the masculine character feels reassured by rigid abstractions, feeling completely lost without the rules and regulations that keep the structure in place, the feminine character delves into the chaos of the particular, and emerges stronger for that. For instance, Olanna says to him,

> 'I think you should go and see Ezeka. Ask him to move you somewhere else. (...).' (...) 'I won't ask Ezeka.' She recognized his expression: He was disappointed. She had forgotten that they had high ideals. They were people of principle; they did not ask favours of highly placed friends. 'You can serve Biafra better if you work somewhere else where you can use your brain and talent,' she said. (...) They slept with their backs turned to each other. (...) She would go and see Ezeka herself.[62]

---

[62] Adichie 336-337

The distinction drawn earlier between masculine and feminine is played out in this scene. Where Odenigbo feels any compromises to be below him, Olanna realises the fact that the greatest strength in their situation is an ability to adapt. She, unlike Odenigbo, therefore, is prepared to take contingent action.

Odenigbo deteriorates rapidly over time. He becomes increasingly isolated and has an affair with a neighbour in the war-stricken building. Later, Olanna confides in Kainene,

> 'I want this war to end so that he can come back. He has become somebody else.' (…) 'We are all in this war, and it is up to us to decide to become somebody else or not,' Kainene said. (…) 'He just drinks and drinks cheap *kai-kai*. The few times they pay him, the money goes quickly. I think he slept with Alice, that Asaba woman in our yard. I can't stand him. I can't stand him close to me.'[63]

The notion in this passage, of becoming 'somebody else', takes the argument back to my point that in such situations of political crisis people 'change', but this change, as I have argued before, is not a transformation so much as a stripping off of the facade which helps to hide the truth about them. The real strengths and weaknesses of people come to the fore in such situations, and Kainene herself comes to the realisation that she and Olanna are not opposites-- masculine and feminine-- as she had imagined; the suffering she sees around her rather wakes her up to the similarities between her sister and herself.

It is ironic then that initially every one around Odenigbo looks upon him and his ideas as radical and revolutionary; in fact Kainene, who can see more clearly than most others in the novel, nicknames him 'the revolutionary'. And the fact that she refers to him as that only

---

[63] Adichie 388

ironically, is of course very telling in the light of the way things turn out later in the narrative. Just as his colleagues are taken in by him, Olanna, his partner and later wife, is also attracted to him because she perceives a revolutionary fervour in him. However, his political conviction is too abstract and too brittle to be able to stand the test of reality.

That Kainene calls him 'the revolutionary' is relevant also because it points at how the text starts by establishing the characters and their situations as almost archetypal, which makes the dissolution of these archetypes in the end even more difficult, as well as revealing. Not only are they very clearly differentiated in accordance with their sex initially, but their positions in their society are also very typical. The novel begins with the impoverished and innocent Ugwu's entry as a houseboy into the radical academic Odenigbo's house. From there it moves to the beautiful Olanna and the troubled Kainene's wealthy but unhappy family life, and then to the overly sympathetic Richard and the snobbish Susan's lives as British people in Nigeria.

The text, in this way, provides the reader with vignettes of the characters' disparate but very predictable contexts, which help to understand and complicate their behaviours, as also to situate these characters very representatively, within the hierarchical society. As war threatens to break out, the societal structure in the text, as also the positions of these characters within that structure, becomes significantly destabilised. The text, like *The Inheritance of Loss*, traces this dissolution, and the characters and their immediate lives become reflective of the larger social and political change taking effect around them.

Olanna is a feminine character from a wealthy background, and like all feminine characters examined in the thesis, she displays both vulnerability and flexibility throughout the novel, and during the war she exhibits unrelenting courage and resilience. Before the war, she is

looked down upon by those in Odenigbo's academic circle for her lack of strong convictions, and even during the initial period of the war, she does not join in an unthinking celebration of Biafra as readily as Odenigbo does. [64]Around the initial phases of the war, Odenigbo is filled not only with optimism but a heady chauvinism regarding a triumphant Biafra:

> 'Our anti-aircraft fire was wonderful! *O di egwu!'* somebody said. 'Biafra win the war!' Special Julius started the song and soon most of the people on the street had gathered to join in. (...). Olanna watched as Odenigbo sang lustily, and she tried to sing too, but the words lay stale on her tongue. There was a sharp pain in her knee; she took Baby's hand and went indoors.[65]

Olanna here sees the irony of celebrating the kind of aggression within oneself that in others has been expressed in the form of air raids. Perhaps she can see that countering the jingoism of one nation-state with the jingoism of another nation-state cannot bring about any long-lasting peace. Therefore, replacing one system with another similar system cannot be the answer; an oppressive ethical system can be overturned only by the articulation of another ethical system that emerges from the position of the 'other' or the downtrodden.

Despite her pessimism, as the war progresses, it becomes evident that Olanna's feminine nature helps her to survive the hardships involved, as opposed to the weak response of Odenigbo, who feels shattered and fragmented when he witnesses the ideals that he had so rigidly believed

---

[64] We see here how Olanna and Odenigbo's reactions and responses are representative; they gesture towards something larger, outside of them. John Marx discusses the trend in postcolonial writings of representing private lives as reflections of the larger political sphere. He argues, 'In (...) *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the domain once called "private life" is the place for politics, as demonstrated by the story of Odenigbo and Olanna, husband and wife as well as educators in the fields of mathematics and sociology, respectively. The air raid interrupting their wedding reception exemplifies a motif: throughout the novel, the couple's romantic turmoil directly parallels Nigeria's defining postcolonial crisis, as well as being punctuated by it (...).' John Marx, 'Failed-State Fiction,' *Contemporary Literature* 49.4 (Winter 2008): 597-633.

[65] Adichie 275

in, fall flat. Quite like Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, in this novel too, the more malleable feminine characters have a better chance of surviving than the masculine characters, who are exposed as being too dependent on the structures that support them. Odenigbo finds it in himself to openly acknowledge Olanna's fortitude only once, close to the end of the war and their struggles, '(...) he propped himself on his elbow and watched her. 'You're so strong, *nkem*'. (...) He looked old; there was a wetness in his eyes, a crumpled defeat in his face, that made him look older.'[66] As I have been arguing, therefore, even though the novel started out by making conventional distinctions between the characters, the traditional notion of the masculine being stronger than the feminine is completely overturned in the latter half of the novel. And it is the overturning of these categories that makes the novel interesting for my thesis.

Moving on therefore; looked at from the outside, it seems apt to place Kainene and Olanna opposite each other, to see Olanna as the 'caring' and more pliable one among the sisters, and to see Kainene as the one who is more rebellious and hard headed: 'Kainene had always been the withdrawn child, the sullen and often acerbic teenager, the one who, because she did not try to please their parents, left Olanna with that duty.'[67] Accordingly, if the categories of masculine and feminine were applied simplistically, in the sense of the masculine being more outwardly tough and the feminine more apparently soft and emotionally vulnerable, then Olanna would seem more feminine and Kainene more masculine. For example, her father says of her, 'Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two (...). He glanced at Kainene and Kainene looked

---

[66] Adichie 392

[67] Adichie 36

away, as if the pride on his face did not matter (...).'[68] Kainene, then, is clearly portrayed as the tough and masculine one of the two sisters.

However, in this case as well, as the story progresses, Olanna shatters the myth of her being 'good' or 'caring' in any simplistic way. One of the instances in the text where this is evidenced is the scene in which she allows herself to sleep with Richard, her sister's partner, in a moment of selfishness and drunkenness. In fact it almost seems that Olanna, through that illicit sexual experience, is reacting against just these traditionally imposed notions of virtuous femininity.

> Everything changed when he was inside her. She raised her hips, moving with him, matching his thrusts, and it was as if she was throwing shackles off her wrists, extracting pins from her skin, freeing herself with the loud, loud cries that burst out of her mouth. Afterwards, she felt filled with a sense of well-being, with something close to grace.[69]

This act of sexual promiscuity on Olanna's part is the point from which cracks start appearing in all the binary oppositions created through the narrative to depict the social landscape. And what becomes clear, as the story unfolds, is that the sisters are not in fact at opposite ends of a spectrum; they are very much on the same side. Just as Olanna is not as 'caring' as she seems, in the same way, there is a sense in the text that Kainene is not as tough as she seems either.

In fact, because Kainene finds it difficult to trust, and considers her vulnerabilities to be weaknesses to be hidden from those around her, she loses out on the external support she may otherwise have received, and is, in her loneliness, even more defenceless than Olanna. After she

---

[68] Adichie 31-32

[69] Adichie 234

learns of what happened between Richard and Olanna she tries to turn her grief into the more masculine anger,

> Richard sat opposite her, unsure of what to do (...) 'Kainene,' he said, 'can we speak, please?' (...). She looked up, and he noticed, first, that her eyes were swollen and raw, and then he saw the wounded rage in them. 'We will talk when I want to talk, Richard.'[70]

Kainene's outer tough demeanour is, presumably, a result of having had to take care of herself as a child, because unlike her sister, she wasn't the beautiful, chosen one for her parents.

> 'Why were you always so keen to please Mum and Dad?' Kainene asked. Olanna held her hands to her face, silent for a while. 'I don't know. I think I felt sorry for them.' 'You have always felt sorry for people who don't need you to feel sorry for them.'[71]

Olanna's caring attitude then, as revealed in the above exchange, is no more than an attempt to hide or compensate for the real distaste she feels. This reveals an entirely different aspect of care, related to pity, charity and disgust. It is not care, then, but a much more selfish need to free oneself from guilt. It is, therefore, obviously not the kind of care that Gilligan theorises. By revealing this spurious aspect of traditional notions of femininity, the text clarifies the difference between care as an attitude imposed on a person, and the kind of caring sensibility that may result in a network of empathy and camaraderie.

According to my argument, both Olanna and Kainene are feminine because, for one, neither of them has rigid and parochial notions regarding where they 'belong', in terms of

---

[70] Adichie 257

[71] Adichie 389

national and political identities. There are various instances in the text that attest to their relative disinterest in the political and national standpoints that are imposed on people as a whole. Kainene enters into a relationship with a white British man despite the derision of her peers, including her closest friends. Moreover, Kainene does not see anything wrong in making as much profit as she can from the war, and when needed, in trying to get aid from Nigeria for the starving Biafrans.

> '(...) I was an army contractor, and I had a license to import stockfish. I'm in Orlu now. I'm in charge of a refugee camp there.' 'Oh.' 'Are you silently condemning me for profiteering from the war? Somebody had to import stockfish you know.' Kainene raised her eyebrows; they were pencilled in, thin, fluid arcs. 'Many contractors were paid and didn't deliver. At least I did.'[72]

The other feminine trait that Kainene evidences in this speech is that of adaptability and resilience-- it is interesting that she should be described as having 'thin, fluid' eyebrows, gesturing perhaps at the newly discovered fluidity within herself. She, like Olanna when she tries to convince Odenigbo to talk to Ezeke, does not set stock by abstract idealism when she sees the many starving people in need of money and help because of the war; and it is revealed in the end that she is directly involved in the running of a life-saving refugee camp.

Likewise, Olanna is shocked by and disagrees with Odenigbo's negative reaction to a letter from Mohammad, a Nigerian Muslim and Olanna's ex-boyfriend, expressing concern for their suffering caused by the war. She fails to comprehend why Odenigbo gets annoyed by the letter sent in a spirit of consideration, even if their political affiliations ought to lie on the opposite sides of the struggle. Both sisters turn out to be much stronger than the men around

---

[72] Adichie 343

them. It is clear, therefore, that it is not because of simple vulnerability or a simplistically caring attitude that these characters are categorised as feminine in my argument. The care orientation as interpreted in this thesis is not merely about trying to please people. These characters are categorised as feminine because they are more flexible and resilient, owing to their already peripheral positions in societies.

Femininity according to this thesis, then, is not related to sex, and neither is it about traditional notions regarding 'feminine virtues' of being 'good' and compassionate, in any way. It instead has to do with a particular person's position in a masculinist society, which shapes his or her stance in relation to rigid and homogenising discourses such as those of nation states, religion, race, sexuality, class position, and so on. In short, femininity has to do with a particular political and social location in society, which might inspire within the subject a looser sense of a political identity and thereby, greater levels of acceptance. It is the position of the 'outsider' and the 'other' as regards a masculinist society, and this outsider or other could be in that position because of various forms of difference.

In the same way, masculinity, as understood in my argument, has nothing to do with toughness and strength; it again has to do with the socio-political positioning of a subject. It is connected to a belief in the rigid and patriarchal structures of power; a belief which will be created and strengthened only if one has a relatively comfortable economic and social position in that patriarchal society. It is because of their comfortable situation in a particular social system that the masculine characters, in all the novels that have been examined, are shown to crumble when the social organisation shows signs of falling apart. And almost as if to illustrate this, the novel in the latter half makes evident that Olanna, Kainene and Richard are in fact stronger than

the masculine Odenigbo, and are able to survive even when the world around them breaks down. One of the reasons for this is precisely that their relationship with the crumbling structures was never so strong or fixed to start with.

Odenigbo, on the other hand, finds it hard to hold himself together. In a similar way as in *The Inheritance of Loss*-- where Biju in the end is forced to wear a woman's night gown-- the message in Adichie's text, as seen through this argument, is also that in a world where all kinds of structures are being opened up for questioning, it is the feminine that has the best chance of survival. And that is because the feminine-- those who are marginalised in a given structure-- are for that reason, least dependent on those structures.

Ugwu is the other important character in the text. He arrives in the city initially to work for Odenigbo, and once Olanna joins the household, Ugwu serves both of them as a unit. Ugwu's association with them, even though apparently unconventional in its relative informality, hints at a very rigidly hierarchical equation between the rich and the poor and the master and the servant. And although Odenigbo professes to be a left-wing academic, and both he and Olanna try to do their best for Ugwu by giving him an education, none of them is seen really to challenge the dynamics of their relationship. Their association is a significant illustration, in the text, of the unequal/rigidly masculinist structure of the Nigerian society at that time.

Be that as it may, because of the traditionally imposed nature of the master-servant hierarchy, it would be simplistic, to my mind, to view Odenigbo and Olanna's acceptance of the inequality inherent in that relationship merely as a personal failing. Instead, they are represented as doing what they can within the limited framework of that relationship. Accordingly, the text suggests that their paternalistic attitude is in fact the only practical way in which Ugwu may be

helped because of the boundaries inherent in the master-servant dynamics, erected through generations of inequality.

Ugwu's character is a difficult case when it comes to classifying him as either masculine or feminine, not least because he is presented as being at the pubescent stage of possibilities still trying to understand his own responses and the responses of those around him. His mindset is not examined in any depth through this period, and he is shown as only taking in and absorbing all that surrounds him. The reader is not given any real glimpse into his life and psyche after his character attains maturity either, as he taken away to fight the war. The only way that Ugwu comes into the narrative as a grown man is through the excerpts of the book written by him, and incorporated in the novel.

These excerpts work to deepen the readers' understanding of the context of the narrative. The two voices-- the adolescent Ugwu, and the adult Ugwu who authored the book-- are quite radically different. For example,

> '(...) Master poured himself a glass of palm wine. 'Did you listen to the news?' (...). He turned to Ugwu. 'Do you know what a bunker is, my good man?'
>
> 'Yes, sah,' Ugwu said. 'Like the one Hitler had.'
>
> 'Well, yes, I suppose.'
>
> 'But, sah, people are saying that bunkers are mass graves,' Ugwu said.
>
> 'Absolute nonsense. Bunkers are safer than lying in a cassava patch.'[73]

---

[73] Adichie 204

This conversation in the text, where Ugwu is shown to be learning about and still grappling with ideas, is followed almost immediately by an excerpt from Ugwu's book, *The World Was Silent When We Died*,

> '(...) Nigeria did not have an economy until independence. The colonial state was authoritarian. A benignly brutal dictatorship designed to benefit Britain. (...). But the new Nigerian leaders were too optimistic, too ambitious with development projects that would win their people's credibility, too naive in accepting exploitative foreign loans, and too interested in aping the British (...).'[74]

The curious Ugwu's perspective is then followed by a glimpse, through the book, into a mind, that is developed enough to understand sophisticated political histories. Although the reader never gets to really see the adult Ugwu, his adolescent voice alternating with his adult voice-- both voices almost merging in the end-- makes his character the most complex one in the novel. However, to my mind even though Ugwu leans towards the feminine, it is more productive to see both masculine and feminine perspectives playing out, one after the other, within his character.

Ugwu's is a very interesting character then, precisely because of the unformed territory-- in terms of the masculine and the feminine-- that he occupies. I see the first half of his life as feminine, not because he performs the 'feminine' chores of cooking and cleaning at Odenigbo's house, but because, quite like Olanna, although he is awed by Odenigbo and his self-assurance, yet, he is shown to question in his mind the ideas he hears through Odenigbo and his colleagues. Ugwu views Odenigbo's actions with the curiosity and the clarity of an outsider. He seems to be able to maintain a mental distance, rather than blindly putting his faith in those ideas that

---

[74] Adichie 204

Odenigbo so volubly and unyieldingly professes. And therefore, Ugwu does not suffer like Odenigbo later, when those ideals are proved to be illusory or simply flawed.

In fact there are instances in the text when Ugwu's loyalty seems to lean more towards Olanna. He feels very protective of Olanna when Odenigbo's mother visits, ''Eh! My son wastes money on these expensive things,' she said. (...).' 'Those belong to my madam, Mama. She brought many things from Lagos,' Ugwu said. It irritated him: her assuming that everything belonged to Master (...).'[75] His relationship to Odenigbo's child, Baby, likewise highlights the feminine attributes of his personality because it can be seen to be connected to the idea of care, essential-- as Carol Gilligan, among others argues-- between a parent figure and a child, for the healthy development of a child.[76]

> On the radio, the voice had become firmer. (…) *We promise every law-abiding citizen the*
>
> *freedom from all forms of oppression* (…) *We promise that you will no more be ashamed to say*
>
> *that you are a Nigerian*. (…) Baby called from the bathroom. 'Mummy Ola!' (…) Ugwu went
>
> back to the bathroom and dried Baby with a towel and then hugged her, blew against her neck.

---

[75] Adichie 95

[76] The issue of defining the experiences of women and men through object-relations theory, according to which men and women are differently socialised as children through the relationships they develop with those around them, especially their parents, is a controversial one. Although Gilligan's ethics of care harks back to that theory, this thesis interprets it differently. In my thesis the masculine and feminine attitudes are not confined to men and women, masculine and feminine instead are seen as attitudes that develop according to the socio-political positioning of the privileged and the marginalised. Susan J. Hekman argues, 'In object-relations theory the opposition between *the* experience of men and *the* experience of women is the centerpiece of the theory. (…). Object-relations theory (…) defines women's difference in traditional, pacific, even conservative terms: women are peaceful, caring, relational, and nurturing, as opposed to men, who are aggressive and autonomous.' Susan J. Hekman, *The Future of Differences: Truth and Method in Feminist Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) 33.

(…) 'Baby chicken!' he said, tickling her. Her plaits were wet, the ends tightened in a curly kink, and Ugwu smoothed them and marvelled again at how much she looked like her father (…).[77]

The masculine realm of violence intrudes by way of the radio into the feminine realm of Odenigbo's house; and the femininity of this realm is emphasised through the above scene between Ugwu and Baby. Ugwu in this phase of his life is shown to be closer to Olanna and Baby than to the masculine Odenigbo. Therefore, his love for Baby and Olanna, makes his later act of cruelty as a soldier-- the rape of a woman serving in a bar-- seem an even more appalling act of betrayal.

In the second half of the text, when he is taken away and conscripted to fight as a soldier for the Biafran cause, Ugwu is shown to try, against his personality, to look at things with a more masculine perspective. As a young soldier in the Biafran army he is goaded by the other boys to accept, unquestioningly, the war and all the destruction that comes with it. The soldiers are told to kill for their country, and that's what they do, blindly believing in the sanctity of their cause. At the same time and without seeing it as a contradiction, they feel it to be their right to harass all civilians, even if they are on the side of Biafra. The gravest mistake Ugwu commits in trying to prove his masculinity is when he joins his fellow soldiers in the rape of a bar girl, afraid of being considered too feminine if he objects.

All these characters, Olanna, Kainene, Richard, and initially even Ugwu display feminine qualities which can be measured against the masculinity of Odenigbo. It is significant then that it is only Odenigbo who believes in the Biafran cause with a nationalistic fervour, at least till he realises the defeat of his ideals and takes refuge in alcohol. All the other characters are not only

---

[77] Adichie 124

marginal in that society-- Olanna and Kainene being women, whose parents are willing to marry them off for monetary and political gain, Richard being a white Englishman and therefore automatically an 'outsider' in that society, and Ugwu being a poor houseboy who does not see issues of national and political significance effecting him personally-- but also most accepting of people from other backgrounds, illustrated through Olanna's relationship with Mohammad, as also Kainene's relationship with Richard.

In the end, Kainene disappears as she goes to Nigeria to trade across volatile borders. The novel ends with the reader, and the rest of the characters, not knowing whether Kainene survived or was killed in hostile territory. Kainene, like Ugwu, is very interesting because due to a lifetime of self-denial, she is as difficult to place as either masculine or feminine until the end of the novel. All through the text she prefers to show herself as a tough, masculine person, unfazed by problems and insecurities, and it is only in the latter half of the narrative that she, along with the reader, starts to understand her character better. Her disappearance works to represent her as the martyr figure in the text, she could even be seen as the moral centre of the text as it were. It is significant for my argument then that a character who comes to recognise herself as feminine, proves to be the one who risks her life for the ethically noble cause of finding food for the starving Biafrans in her care. Her character stands in heroic contrast to Odenigbo who withdraws within himself to avoid the realities of war.

Odenigbo, because of his almost tragic, failure, is seen to be bidding farewell to the masculine idealism that defined his life, as also to the rigid sense of himself onto which he had always held. In this, Adichie's novel is again reminiscent of *The Inheritance of Loss*, where the figure of the judge is the lonely and defeated character, who, through his defeat, is seen to be

giving way to a different way of life. The war, devastating as it is shown to be-- like the Gorkha rebellion in Desai's text-- is also a force for regeneration, inasmuch as it not only significantly destabilises class hierarchies, but also signals the crumbling of other masculinist structures, including the nation-state.

Like *Burnt Shadows*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* shows that political conflicts reveal a lot about how people respond to each other and their surroundings-- Shamsie's text demonstrated how the collective 'cosmopolitan' consciousness of American society is revealed to be xenophobic and paranoid, and Adichie's text demonstrates how traditional associations of femininity and masculinity-- weak and strong-- are overturned in situations of stress.

The feminine/marginal in Adichie's narrative-- like the others that have been examined-- are seen to survive by virtue of their marginality, which gives them a more flexible sense of identity that can be moulded according to changing circumstances. As argued by Gilligan, their 'weakness'-- their relational attitude to those around them and their emotionality-- can be transformed into their strength by the articulation of an ethic based on that very 'weakness': an ethic based on relationality, care, and flexibility leading to greater capacity for resilience. The feminine then, do not adhere to boundaries drawn out according to masculinist political and social agendas, and it is for this reason that the feminine characters prove to be more accepting and less parochial. Both, cosmopolitanism and Gilligan's ethics of care, come together in the thesis to shape a theorisation of the kind of femininity that contemporary fictional texts, like this one by Adichie, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Desai and *Burnt Shadows* by Shamsie, among others, endorse as being more progressive than masculinist formulations regarding impersonality and objectivity.

Chapter 5: Disability and Alienation

In this last chapter I will discuss two novels by the same author. Both these texts--*The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*, by Doris Lessing, complete the same story that revolves around Ben. I have paired these texts together for my last chapter in order that the issues of disability and alienation, thrown up by both texts, can be discussed and understood in some detail. Another reason for looking at only one story in this chapter is so that the question of disability, which is integral to a discussion of alienation in a masculinist society, may be dealt with separately from the rest of the thesis.

Furthermore, because these texts foreground the issue of motherhood, a discussion of these texts at the end of my thesis will help me to return to questions that have been raised earlier in the project. The issue of motherhood has been raised before with the analysis of Toni Morrison's *Paradise* and Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, among others. Therefore, an examination of these problems again, and in the context of disability and alienation, will provide another angle from which to approach these issues, and help to understand them better.

Doris Lessing

Lessing published *The Fifth Child* in 1988 and as a sequel to that she came out with *Ben, in the World*, in 2000. Ben, the protagonist of both novels is a mysterious being who appears to encapsulate within himself some radically contradictory and ambiguous ideas and tropes and is, therefore, neither definitively this nor that. In other words, Lessing ensures that the text cannot be read as a simple or reductionist allegory. To see Ben as standing for one particular group of people seems reductive, as Lessing has asserted, 'To the very end, I wanted to tell a story which neither political positions nor sociological analyses were capable of exhausting. That would be the case with all my books, including *The Fifth Child* (…)'.[1] And because Ben is difficult to place exactly, I have interpreted his character in ways that are most suited for my project.

Both narratives employ the techniques of fantasy and science fiction spliced together with realism in their stories. According to Roberta Rubenstein,

> The genres of science fiction and fantasy lend themselves to the kind of category-straddling that Lessing enjoys because they offer opportunities to traverse boundaries in both thematic and structural senses. (...) fantastic narratives in particular are, by their very nature, boundary-straddling texts that complicate our notions of genre. These narratives must be distinguished from the 'fabulous' or the 'marvellous' by the unique demands they make on their readers: when events, characters or other details in an apparently mimetic narrative seem to violate assumptions about consensus reality, readers necessarily hesitate between natural and supernatural explanations.[2]

---

[1] Jean-Maurice de Montremy, 'A writer is not a Professor,' Earl G. Ingersoll ed., *Doris Lessing: Conversations* (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 193.

[2] Roberta Rubenstein, 'Doris Lessing's fantastic Children,' Susan Watkins and Alice Redout ed., *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (London: Continuum, 2009) 61-62.

Although Lessing's fantastical narrative ensures that Ben is not read simplistically, there are hints throughout the two texts as to the ways in which Ben could best be understood. I have linked his character to disability because there are some clear parallels in the narrative between Ben and his little cousin who suffers from Down's syndrome.

The one definite characteristic witnessed in Ben is that of isolation; accordingly, Ben could be seen as signalling isolation and alienation arising from various different situations. I have examined Ben as standing, at different times, for both disability and the situation of a refugee or an exile.

Ben's relationship with his mother is also a significant issue in the novels. The problematisation of motherhood is important to my thesis as it helps to separate the notion of care from the womanly role of the mother. As Ruth Robbins argues about the representation of the mother in Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2003)

> (...) The writers investigate and negotiate the 'problem' of maternity. Using narrative structures which unsettle the reader, their texts imply that neither version of the maternal institution as ideologically constructed ideal nor the real experience of motherhood (neither the transcendent narrative nor the blood and guts of another kind of narrative of the process of birth, nor yet the birth narrative focused on the product of reproduction, neither the cherub nor the monster) are adequate representations. The mother/child story, when it is told from the mother's point of view rather than the father's, offers a corrective vision that modifies the cultural ideal. It breaks the frame, crosses generic boundaries; it messes with genre, with 'mess' perhaps being the operative word.[3]

---

[3] Ruth Robbins, '(Not Such) Great Expectations: Unmaking Maternal Ideals in *The Fifth Child* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin*,' Susan Watkins and Alice Redout ed., *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (London: Continuum, 2009) 95.

Not only is the mother revealed to suffer herself, but is also shown, in certain instances, to be particularly cruel to the child, which makes it difficult to blame either.[4]

All of these complex questions regarding isolation, motherhood and the sense of alienation between the mother and the child, come together to make the texts very interesting as the final analysis of my thesis.

Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*:

Motherhood, disability, alienation

Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) and *Ben, in the World* (2000) relate directly to the argument of this thesis, and help to take it further in this final analysis. The former novel can be seen as a significant commentary on the relationship between a mother and a child, a relationship that Carol Gilligan deemed essential for the development of a morally fit human being. As has been mentioned throughout the thesis, Gilligan draws on object-relations theory to articulate the difference between a feminine and a masculine sensibility. She argues that the difference in their moral attitudes: men being more 'objective' and autonomous and women being more oriented towards family and relationships, has its foundation, among other things-- for instance their disparate socio-political histories-- in the way they are taught to interact with people and things around them as children.[5] This question of the role of

---

[4] '(…) The mother's narrative does not tell the whole story either (…) we must beware of trusting the mothers in these tales too much. The child in these novels-- and neither child speaks unmediated on its own behalf-- is at least unpredictable, and possibly monstrous (…).' (Robbins 95)

[5] Susan J. Hekman argues that Carol Gilligan in *In a Different Voice* '(…) defines a self that is formed through relational patterns with others, particularly in the early years of childhood. Following the psychological approach of object-relations theory, she describes the way in which girls, because they are not encouraged to separate from their mothers, develop a sense of self in which relationships are primary. Boys, by contrast, because they succeed in separating from their mothers, develop a sense of self as separate and autonomous. Thus, as a result of their different relationships with their mothers, girls develop relational skills and find

parents (especially the mother) in a child's development is a controversial one, and is productively problematised in *The Fifth Child*, where a 'monster' is born to a resentful mother.[6] This chapter will, in part, be dealing with the issue of motherhood, and among other things, it will seek to defend the ethics of care as interpreted in my thesis from any simplistic understanding of relationships based on care.

Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* was published in 1982 and Lessing's *The Fifth Child* emerged six years later in 1988. This was a time when issues regarding mothers and families were being debated in England, because the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and her government insisted that families needed to be self-sufficient. Her government suggested, according to some leaked documents, that rather than relying on society and government to help with state sponsored nurseries and institutions, families needed to look within to sort out their problems. This drive, by implication, pushed mothers into a rigid domestic role, and also increased their culpability.

> (...) There were plenty of leaked documents and reports (...) interpreted as indicating a future
>
> assault on the welfare state. (...) from the Government's Family Policy Group which aimed at

---

autonomy problematic, while boys fear relationships but develop autonomy skills.' Susan J. Hekman, *Moral Voices, Moral Selves: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) 6. However, my argument in this thesis is that a reliance on the relationship between the mother and child is problematic as it, by implication, pushes mothers into a rigidly defined role of the nurturer; and Lessing's texts, through Harriet and Ben's relationship, help to problematise such assumptions. The other important reason why this theory gets problematised within my thesis is because the thesis attempts to open up the categories of the masculine and the feminine beyond men and women, which necessarily does away with the assumption that men and women necessarily behave a certain way because of their relationships with their mothers.

[6] Marie Hélène Huet recalls, 'In his *Essays*, Montaigne relates (…) 'We know by experience that women transmit marks of their fancies to the bodies of children they carry in their womb....' The idea of the Monster is a loaded one, in that it not only brings to mind the ways in which the birth of the monster is, through generations, made out to be the mother's fault, but also the ways in which the monstrous has been related to the feminine. And, thereby, even just by being born a monster, Ben already aligns himself with the feminine. Marie-Hélène Huet. 'Monstrous Imagination: Progeny as Art in French Classicism.' *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (Summer 1991): 718-737.

promoting family responsibility in fields of welfare. These aims were regarded with particular suspicion by many on the more doctrinaire Left.[7]

The mother/child issue is at the heart of conflicts in many other novels examined in the thesis. There is a continued fascination with the mother-child dynamic across cultural and historical contexts, and it has been politically constructed in a number of ways. *The Fifth Child* examines this relationship, and attempts to call into question stereotypical views by challenging straightforward realism.[8]

Lessing's *The Fifth Child* portrays a quintessential mother figure in the character of Harriet, whose aim in life is to rear and nurture a big and loving family; however, she fails miserably in the case of her fifth and last child, and as a result all her children emerge more or less scarred from the experience. This fifth child, Ben, is decidedly different from all her other children, but the text is ambivalent regarding the exact nature of Ben's abnormality. The reader has no concrete idea of Ben's condition except that he feels differently from the other children, and also looks much bigger than the others.

> The baby was put into her arms. Eleven pounds of him. The others had not been more than seven pounds. He was muscular, yellowish, long (...). He had a heavy-shouldered hunched look, as if he were crouching there as he lay.[9]

At his birth, Harriet and those around her think of Ben as a monster. As he grows older, he behaves like one, in accordance with what is expected of him.

---

[7] Alan Sked and Chris Cook, *Post-War Britain: A Political History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993) 350.

[8] By employing the fantastical mode, the narratives of Lessing's texts help to provide the requisite distance that mimetic modes of representation cannot as easily provide. This distance helps in an examination of the ways in which the role of the mother has traditionally been depicted in art and literature. The same distance afforded by fantastical modes of writing was very productively used for socio-political commentary in Rushdie's *Shame* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, as was seen in their analysis in this thesis.

[9] Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988) 48.

There is some suggestion in the novel that Harriet's resentment at the difficult pregnancy may in fact have turned an otherwise healthy foetus into an anomaly:

> If a dose of some sedative kept the enemy-- so she now thought of this savage thing inside her-- quiet for an hour, then she made most of the time, and slept (...) before she leaped out of bed as it woke with a heave and a stretch that made her feel sick.[10]

She constantly feels that those around her, including her husband, David, are judging her for having given birth to such a freak of nature, even as she herself subconsciously blames herself for Ben's condition, and in turn hates Ben all the more for it. There is no definite position that the narrative explicitly endorses, and it is thereby never spelt out whether the narrative considers it right or wrong to put all responsibility at the door of a beleaguered mother. Nevertheless, it is significant that the question is opened up in a way that makes it impossible to ignore the issue:

> Harriet felt that these two women, these two elderly, tough seasoned survivors, were condemning her, Harriet, out of their vast experience of life. She glanced at David, and saw he felt the same. Condemnation, and criticism, and dislike: Ben seemed to cause these emotions, bring them forth out of people into the light.... [11]

As seen in the above passage, Harriet feels that those around her are constantly reproaching her. However, in her paranoia, her own condemnation of herself, and her superstition regarding Ben's abnormality become apparent.

The ethics of care, seen through *The Fifth Child*, gives rise to valid questions regarding the position of the mother. It is important to consider whether the care orientation ends up placing too much emphasis on the maternal role (and the role of the 'carer'), to the

---

[10] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 40-41
[11] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 58-59

point of being as simplistically homogenising and oppressive as any other ethical orientation. It is helpful to quote Daryl Koehn again here, 'Our relations are not transparent (…) if what we mean by being a mother is debatable (…) then we are not entitled to treat the mother-child relation as if it were an uncontroversial, ethically exemplary relation.'[12] The mother becomes an easy target of blame in such a scenario, and it is deemed to be the mother's fault if the child does not fulfil conventional expectations, even if the condition seems to be beyond her control.

The ethics of care, in this case, seems to trap women back into a rigid role of nurturers, and in this it is reminiscent of John Bowlby's Attachment theory. The 1980s was not only a time when Carol Gilligan theorised the ethics of care, it was also the period when John Bowlby formulated his Attachment theory in the three volume treatise, *Attachment and Loss* (1969-1982). Bowlby was writing in the wake of the Second World War; his research was related to the trauma children went through because of the war, many of whom were orphaned. According to Bowlby's theory, it is absolutely essential for human beings as infants to be able to establish a relationship of attachment with a caregiver, especially the mother, for the sake of survival.[13] Theories such as these indirectly put pressure on the mother to retreat within the domestic sphere, which they had briefly left during the war on account of their husbands being engaged in fighting.

---

[12] Daryl Koehn *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust and Empathy* (London: Routledge, 1998) 14.

[13] According to Bowlby, 'Anyone who observes how a mother and her one- or two- year-old child behave over a period of time will see that each exhibits very many different patterns. Whilst some of the behavior of each partner has the effect of increasing or maintaining proximity between the pair, much of it is a completely other sort. Some is irrelevant to the question of proximity: mother cooks or sews; child plays with a ball or empties mother's handbag. Other behavior is antithetic to maintenance of proximity: mother goes to another room or child leaves to climb the stairs. Other behavior again may be a negation of proximity seeking (…). Nevertheless it is most unlikely that on an ordinary day distance between the two will ever exceed a certain maximum. Whenever it does so, either one or other member of the pair is likely soon to act in such a way that distance is reduced.' John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss,* vol 1. (London: Pimlico, 1997) 236. It is evident in the passage that Bowlby makes unproblematised assumptions regarding the role of the mother. The mother is pushed right back into the role of the nurturer, required to always keep her child as close to her as possible, and a lot of the responsibility of raising the child is placed squarely on her. It is for this reason that it becomes important to distinguish the ethics of care as interpreted in this thesis, from the Attachment theory.

(...) Governments welcomed the idea of maternal deprivation in that it appeared to let them off the hook of providing child care, pushing it back to the individual and family responsibility. Winnicot wrote to Bowlby warning him that his views were being used to close down much-needed residential nurseries.[14]

However, the ethics of care, as interpreted in this thesis, is distinct from these theories inasmuch as it seeks to articulate an altogether different ethical standpoint. The issue here is not merely about a mother and a child or a care giver and receiver, but about forming deeply connected societal networks, where care as an ethical value becomes the basic principle. Compassion here is not to be seen as an imposition between children and parents or one person and another, but as the fundamental force behind ethical judgement.

This argument about placing unjust expectations on the role of the mother is made even more complex in *The Fifth Child*. The text makes evident Harriet's resentment towards Ben, so that the narrative after all generates some sympathy for his condition in the mind of the reader.

Heavy bars were put in, and there Ben would stand on the sill, gripping the bars and shaking them, and surveying the outside world, letting out thick raucous cries. All the Christmas holidays he was kept in that room (...) Sometimes a yell from Ben loud enough to reach downstairs silenced a conversation.[15]

His plight here seems similar to Bertha Mason's in *Jane Eyre*, locked up in the attic because she reflected her society's limitations.[16] Similarly, Ben, like Bertha Mason, comes across as a

---

[14] Jeremy Holmes, *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993) 46.
[15] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 60

[16] Ben in his otherness is likened to Bertha Mason here; however, it is important to mention that unlike Bertha Mason, Ben's otherness is not racialised. Ben's otherness has to do with the fact that he looks different from those around him, not as a result of being from a different race but perhaps as a result of physical 'abnormalities' or disabilities. It is even more interesting, then, that Ben's situation is depicted in a similar

scapegoat, on whom all the repressed tension of his environment is projected. Also, this kind of animal imagery resonates throughout the two texts. Ben seems to inhabit a half human, half animal state of being, sometimes associated with the Gothic genre; for instance, Frankenstein's monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and its later adaptations.[17]

Although the reader ends up feeling sorry for Ben when he is treated cruelly, the text, at the same time, reveals the injustice of placing all the blame on Harriet, by exploring her character and her agony within the story in some depth.

> Her breasts were painful. Making more milk than they ever had had to do, her chest swelled into two bursting white globes long before the next feed was due. But Ben was already roaring for it, and she fed him, and he drained every drop in two or three minutes. She felt the milk being dragged in streams from her. Now he had begun something new: he had taken to interrupting the fierce sucking several times during a feed, and bringing his gums together in the hard grinding movement that made her cry out in pain. His small cold eyes seemed to her malevolent.[18]

By not providing any easy answers, the text productively complicates the idea of motherhood. The reader is forced to confront her own reactions to these ideas, inasmuch as the text does not relieve the reader of her uncertainties with respect to Harriet's role in Ben's life. She is at once the suffering mother and the punishing mother, just as it is hard to decide

---

manner, as it illustrates how various kinds of othering can in fact be understood together through the ethics of care.

[17] The Gothic genre has through the English literary tradition helped to articulate many human and socio-political conflicts. It became the preferred genre for a lot female writers in the nineteenth century, for the articulation of dissatisfactions and social injustices, for instance Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. According to Brendan Hennessy "*Frankenstein* expresses moral and political lessons as well as psychological truths (…) developed as a political message in the description of the monster's experience of society as a whole, and these are echoes of Godwin's socialistic theories. As the monster tries to adapt to society, he soon discovers that property is divided, and that there is 'immense wealth and squalid poverty", that man hates and repulses the poor and the wretched, and that poverty and isolation breed bitterness and crime.' Brendan Henessy, *The Gothic Novel*, ed. I. Scott-Kilvert (Harlow: Longman Group Ltd, 1978) 21.

[18] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 52

whether Ben is the cause of the all the tension around him, or the effect of it.[19] One nagging doubt through Lessing's text is whether the child would have in fact been healthier had Harriet not resented the pregnancy as much as she did.

Unlike in Morrison's *Paradise* where the convent girls were definitely shown to be suffering because their mothers had not 'cared' enough for them, the events in *The Fifth Child*, seen as they are through the mother herself, show in detail the trauma that she goes through, which makes it less easy to hold her accountable for all that goes wrong with Ben. Lessing's text is also reminiscent of, and is in important ways different from, Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, which again explores the relationship between a mother and a daughter. Unlike in *The Fifth Child*, the mother is a little too invested in caring for and thereby controlling her child in Tekin's text. In *Dear Shameless Death* the daughter, like Ben in Lessing's texts, is different from all the other children in her social surrounding, but instead of withdrawing herself from the child, as happens in *The Fifth Child*, the mother in Tekin's text becomes overly careful with her. However, in both cases the child gets pushed away.

Besides Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre*, Ben's character in *The Fifth Child* also brings to mind Sufiya Zinobia's character from Salman Rushdie's *Shame*. Harriet and David Lovatt, Ben's parents, dream of living an idyllic and pastoral life. They have the temerity to go ahead and act on their plans of having a large family in the country, with a constant stream of

---

[19] According to Roberta Rubinstein, Lessing's text puts great demands on the reader by raising many questions through Ben's birth, and through the relationship he shares with his mother, Harriet. 'Behind her effort to rationalize an arbitrary personal catastrophe is a widening wake of questions. Are we as readers meant to accept Harriet's fatalism, her culpability as she acknowledges Ben as the materialization of some repressed dimension of her psyche? Or is his existence the evidence of a larger social failure that the Lovatt family's breakdown signifies in miniature? Is Ben the proof of an even greater failure implicit in Western myths of civilization and cultural progress?' Roberta Rubinstein, 'Enfant Terrible,' *The Women's Review of Books* 5.10/11 (July 1988): 22.

relatives coming in and going out. Harriet and David try to be close to nature without really understanding the ways in which nature and the world work. Sufiya Zinobia, in Rushdie's text, is a monster borne out of the guilt and shame that her society generates and lives in, but tries to be blind to; in a similar way, in *The Fifth Child*, Ben seems to be nature's way of taking its revenge on Harriet and David's household.[20] Both refuse to acknowledge their limitations and do not pay heed to the warning signs of failure; therefore, Ben is unleashed on them to drag them down to the reality of their situation.[21]

However, there are important differences between Sufiya and Ben. Sufiya turns into a complete beast, an 'absolute other' as it were; she is much more like something out of horror movies. Ben, on the other hand, always retains qualities that may identify him as human, and his character is more immediately accessible to the reader by virtue of this identification. In this, Ben's character recalls the clones in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. The clones are very effective for the same reasons, they are human enough to generate sympathy, and at the same time, alien enough to effect defamiliarisation. Ben's is the realm of what Todorov called 'fantastic', Freud called the 'uncanny' and Kristeva called 'abject': it is the state between real and unreal or knowable and unknowable.[22]

---

[20] According to Susan Watkins, Lessing's suspicion of the idea of 'home', that which Harriet and David hope to create, is endemic to her fictional work. 'For Lessing the concept of "home" is always bound up with its other, exile. Home is not always a place of safety and familiarity but necessarily includes within it differences, resistances and dependencies that must be acknowledged and that cannot be excluded and positioned as exterior.' Susan Watkins, 'Remembering Home: Nation and Identity in the Recent Writing of Doris Lessing,' *Feminist Review* 85 (2007): 97-115.

[21] Harriet and David dream of a life close to nature. They dream of a self-sufficient lifestyle, relying on themselves to take care of their family-- the kind of lifestyle that Margaret Thatcher's government had endorsed. However, they ignore the practical problems that such a lifestyle generates and go on producing more children to fulfill their unrealistic dreams. Their extended families have to take constant care of them, both physically and economically, and therefore their hope of self-sufficiency is dashed from the beginning. The collapse of that dream culminates in the birth of Ben who seems to have appeared in their lives as punishment from the nature that they had unthinkingly sought to appropriate.

[22] Nicholas Royle's study of the uncanny is revelatory; according to him, 'The uncanny entails another thinking of beginning (…). The uncanny is ghostly. It is concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural. The uncanny invoves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. (…). The uncanny is a crisis of the

Besides that, Harriet and David's political standpoint-- seeking to nurture a large self-sufficient family untouched by the 'corruptions' of modernity-- is shown to be equally unfeasible. It is as if Ben, whom Harriet believes to be a throwback, is born to show them the errors of their own retrogressive ways. According to Emily Clarke,

> (...) Harriet's choices are (...) tied to a rejection of the 1960s and of the social changes that this decade inaugurated, specifically as related to the family, heterosexuality and maternity. Indeed she and David are themselves a kind of 'throwback'.[23]

Also, as mentioned before, Thatcher's government in the United Kingdom of the 1980s-- the period in which the story is set-- insisted that families had to go back to caring for themselves, and stop relying on entitlements from society and the government. Therefore, Harriet and David can be seen to be living out not just their own erroneous dreams, but also an unsustainable way of life advocated by their government, as mentioned by Jeremy Holmes in *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* and Alan Sked and Chris Cook in *Post War Britain: A Political History*.

Sufiya Zinobia and Ben Lovatt work as wake-up calls within the novels. In *The Fifth Child*, Ben jolts his parents out of their perfect world and reminds them, among other things, of their own emotional and imaginative limitations. Ben brings awareness of the fact that the love and joy in their lives will never be more than petty, because it is not all encompassing, it is limited and based very much on principles set by the very society they superficially seek to

---

proper: it entrails a critical disturbance of what is proper (…). It is a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature': one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world. But the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar.' Nicholas Royle, *The uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 1.

[23] Emily Clark, 'Rereading Horror Stories: Maternity, Disability and Narrative in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*,' *Feminist Review* 98 (2011): 173-189.

deny. This point leads to the idea that Ben might not be a 'monster' after all, but in fact a disabled child whom they are unable to appreciate and love.

The issue of disability is introduced explicitly in the text by way of Amy, Ben's little cousin who, the reader is told, suffers from Down's syndrome. 'Sarah's husband, William, was not at the table (...). He had left Sarah twice, and come home again. (...) the trouble was that he was distressed by physical disability, and his new daughter, the Down's syndrome baby, appalled him.'[24] There are comparisons drawn between Ben and Amy at various points in the novel. Therefore, although Ben's abnormality is not spelt out, many critics suggest that this abnormality is not supernatural, but a very real disability.

> (...) Many of the behaviours that Ben exhibits are actual characteristics of autism, a cognitive disability (...). Children with autism usually do not communicate 'normally' nor do they conform to typical social interactions and expectations, failing to understand or exhibit what is understood to be appropriate behaviour (...). [25]

Critics like Lennard Davies have argued for a considered inclusion of the perspective of disabled people, within multicultural studies. His argument is that this inclusion will problematise and productively destabilise many notions within these studies that are otherwise taken for granted.

> Measures can be taken analogous to the familiar steps taken before with other groups: highlighting narratives (...) and representations of disability in literature courses, teaching the politics of disability (...), making conscious efforts to include people with disabilities in media,

---

[24] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 24
[25] Clark 173-189.

and so on (...). This aspect of inclusion involves a reshaping of symbolic cultural productions and ideology.[26]

Lessing's texts are very important in this regard, as they help raise many questions about the nature and power of normalcy at the most basic level, within relations between a parent and a child. Questions, with respect to the influence of a masculinist normative societal structure are of course significant for differences of various kinds: gender, sexuality, the status of refugees, and what seems important in Ben's case, disability.

One of the problems with the Thatcher government's promotion of the individual and family taking care of themselves was that the state, being ever powerful, despite promoting individuality, defined very clearly the norms by which society needed to function. This is illustrated very well in the text by way of Harriet and David's family which seeks to be self-reliant but cannot allow any drastic divergence from what is acceptable in society. People around Ben give up on him because of his difference, and it is up to the reader to interpret the nature of this difference; however, the more important issue here is that everybody perceives this difference as something to be rectified.

Ben's family functions as the disciplining prison that Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). [27] The family does not work as an instrument for normalisation intentionally; it instead functions that way at a subliminal level to match up to the standards set by society. Lennard Davies argues, 'The hegemony of normalcy is, like other hegemonic

---

[26] Lennard Davies, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995) 159.

[27] According to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, '(…) Punitive methods are not simply (…) consequences of legislation or (…) indicators of social structures, but (…) techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power. (…) punishment as a political tactic.' Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977) 23.

practices, so effective because of its invisibility.'[28] And as mentioned earlier, this issue is played out in *The Fifth Child* in very revelatory ways:

> 'I'm going to put him on the bottle,' she said to Dorothy (...) 'Yes, you must, or you'll be ill.' A little later, watching Ben roar, and twist and fight, she remarked, 'They'll all be coming soon for the summer.' She spoke in a way new to her, as if listening to what she said and afraid of what she might say. Harriet recognised it, for this is how she felt saying anything at all. So do people speak whose thoughts are running along secretly in channels they would rather other people did not know about.[29]

Harriet, in this passage, does not want to acknowledge it to herself, but it is obvious that she is scared of social censure and judgement. None of the people around Ben actively acknowledge the root of their problems with him, which is in fact that he is too different from what is acceptable in society. And this is the same society which both Harriet and David had earlier enthusiastically disavowed.

In its exploration of Harriet's character in some depth, unlike any other character in the novel, *The Fifth Child* could be considered Harriet's story. It narrativises for the reader the experience of a mother who, despite herself, cannot love her child, and who withdraws spontaneous care from him. It shows her attempts at reaching out to Ben, as also her need to get away from him. The issue, as mentioned earlier, is whether a relationship based on care can at times be too difficult and demanding, for both the care giver and the receiver of care. Looked at simplistically, it seems unreasonable to *assume* a relationship of care between people, and Bowlby's Attachment theory is charged with just such oppressive assumptions regarding mothers and children.

---

[28] Davies 170

[29] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 53

The one time Harriet's compassion for Ben is made evident in the text is when she rescues him from the asylum to which he is sent. However, this incident raises an interesting issue which will clarify the above conundrum of whether her connection with Ben here is merely a result of her feeling obliged to take care of him or whether they do in fact share a deeper bond. This thesis has maintained that there is a definite distinction between care and duty. Relationships of care, when imposed or assumed, are detrimental to its positive effects, as is seen in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go--* where the idea of care is institutionalised, so that each clone who is mercilessly killed by human beings for her organs, is also appointed a personal 'carer' by the very society that kills her.

The ethics of care, in this thesis, is not about a simple giving and receiving of care, it is instead, a complex understanding of those who fall out of line within masculinist ethical formulations. As Aristotle pronounced regarding 'slaves and women', they have no place within the political goings on of nations; and that, according to Gilligan's theory, is not because they are naturally inferior, but because, having been systematically excluded from the mainstream, they would have developed alternative ways of relating to one another, an alternative ethical system.[30] According to Gilligan's theory, the ethics of care is a more involved ethical system, based on interpersonal relationships, not a simplistic formulation of the conferring and reception of care. Within the care orientation, therefore, Harriet's position would not be judged in accordance with an unthinking adherence to what is considered 'right or 'wrong', but would instead be awarded more depth, by taking into consideration her feelings towards those around her, and the pressures they put on her.

---

[30] Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 39. Besides Nussbaum, feminist thinkers like Susan J. Hekman have also talked about the Western tradition of sidelining the feminine, 'Western tradition has continued to preserve the moral sphere from the encroachments of the feminine; emotion, irrationality, and particularly have consistently been defined as enemies of the moral and political spheres. (Hekman 35)

Returning to the high point of their relationship: when Harriet rescues Ben from the horrific asylum which, as she finds out, is in reality a dumping ground for children that are 'deformed' and 'abnormal'.

> She was at the end of a long ward, which had any number of cots and beds along the walls. In the cots were-- monsters. (...) she was able to see that every bed or cot held an infant or small child in whom the human template had been wrenched out of pattern, sometimes horribly, sometimes slightly. (...) On the floor, on a green rubber mattress lay Ben. He was unconscious. He was naked, inside a straight jacket. His pale yellow tongue protruded from his mouth. (...). Everything-- walls, the floor, and Ben-- was smeared with excrement. A pool of dark yellow urine oozed from the pallet, which was soaked.[31]

Horrifying visceral descriptions such as this have helped critics classify the novel as a horror story. Lessing condemns institutionalised care in the above passage, and also ironises the tradition of representing disabilities as demonic.

Harriet's rescue of Ben from the asylum brings together the mother and the child in very resonant ways. 'The girl was looking curiously at Harriet, as if she were part of the same phenomenon that was Ben, of the same nature.'[32] The scene jolts the reader into acknowledging the real meaning behind the disapproving stares of family members after Ben's birth, which made Harriet feel guilty for having produced him. It wasn't so much paranoia on her part, as an instinctive recognition of the fact that her difference as a woman is allied to Ben's own difference as a disabled person or as a throwback. Ben as an outsider and Harriet as the other are seen to be 'of the same nature'. As Emily Clarke argues, '(...) the novel's co-implication of sexual difference and corporeal difference, of maternity and monstrosity, of mother and child, reinforces the connection between the female body and the

---

[31] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 81-82
[32] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 83

disabled body without allowing it to dissolve into sameness.'[33] And it is this connection-- as between the female and the disabled body in this case-- that the argument of this thesis recognises, so that various kinds of differences, at an angle with respect to dominant masculinist discourses, can be brought together to formulate an alternative ethical paradigm.

Although these various differences are seen to come together in the ethics of care as interpreted here, they cannot be conveniently glossed over and homogenised in this ethical orientation. Therefore, it is also in its respect for difference that the ethics of care can be seen as being distinct from Attachment theory: care cannot be offered simplistically or mechanically, inasmuch as in the ethics of care a respect for the difference in each person's particular situation is seminal for an understanding of people. Harriet would be condemned according to the Attachment theory for her lack of maternal feelings towards Ben; according to the ethics of care, on the other hand, her position would be seen as special and different from that of all other mothers, not because she is the mother of a 'freak' child, but because all mothers ought to be seen as working within very different socio-political networks and relationships.

The incident of the asylum in *The Fifth Child*, looks forward to what will happen to Ben in the sequel, *Ben, in the World*, where he is abducted and caged for his 'abnormality' by curious scientists. The difference between the two incidents is that he is taken away in *The Fifth Child* because those around him want to dispose of him, while in *Ben, in the World* he is taken away because he is considered valuable enough, as a specimen, to be studied and observed. These institutions and scientists in Lessing's texts are evocative of Adorno and Horkheimer's theory regarding science and capitalism working together to lull people into

---

[33] Clark 173-189.

subservience, depriving them of their right to difference and real freedom.[34] Ben cannot be co-opted, however, because being completely 'natural', almost animalistic, he is resistant to man-made techniques of subjugation.

In both cases, however, he is denied the right to belong in society. And the fact that he is physically different makes his unbelonging that much more immediate. Also, if he is looked upon as a throwback from another era and does not belong to the world around him, then his position is similar to that of a stateless refugee, for whom her difference makes her inassimilable. The disabled as the other and the refugee as the outsider come together in Ben's character. This also illustrates the previous point, that various kinds of difference can be aligned under one ethical formulation. Furthermore, the non-assimilability of the marginal is central for the thesis, inasmuch as it is the impulse behind formulations of new systems of thoughts and beliefs, Carol Gilligan's ethics of care being one such system.

All the same, *The Fifth Child* does not provide any insight into Ben's own mental state; it does not reveal to the reader the psychological processes that Ben undergoes to be able to endure the hatred of his family and alienation from his peers. Ben is only looked at from the outside in this text, mostly from the point of view of his mother, and thereby comes across as a cold and unfeeling brute.

> Ben (...) spent most of the night standing on his window-sill, staring into the garden, and if
>
> Harriet looked in on him, he would turn and give her a long stare, alien, chilling: in the half
>
> dark of the room he really did look like a little troll or a hobgoblin crouching there. If he was

---

[34] Horkheimer and Adorno discuss the impossibility of any real expression of discontent in the present capitalistic society. According to them, '(…) The dissolution of the last remnants of precapitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialization, have led to cultural chaos (being) disproved every day; for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. (…). Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system.' Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2000) 120.

> locked in during the day, he screamed and bellowed so that the whole house resounded with it (...).[35]

In all these descriptions, Ben is looked upon. His own consciousness is obliterated so that he comes across as both monstrous and pitiful at the same time. All the encounters with Ben in *The Fifth Child* are of this kind, which could be interpreted either way, as indication of some inner daemon within him, threatening to erupt, or simply illustrating his loneliness and misery. He is not given any explicit space in the text to be able to tell his side of the story.

The sequel, *Ben, in the World* is very important in this regard, since it looks at the world through Ben's eyes; in fact the latter text makes the world around him seem much more brutal and vicious than he is. Ben is celebrated in *Ben, in the World* as a blameless being, misunderstood and exploited by those around him.

> On either side of him were several young men and women with that glass in front of them. Some used instruments that clicked and chattered, some stared at screens where words appeared and went. Each of these noisy machines Ben knew was probably hostile to him. Now he moved slightly to one side, to get rid of the reflections in the glass that were bothering him, and preventing him from properly seeing this person who was angry with him.[36]

Ben's distance from those around him here is emphasised by the boundary created by the glass partition. And the fact that he can't see them clearly is also of course indicative of his befuddlement. In providing opposite perspectives, therefore, the two books complete each other, and raise very important questions regarding care, motherhood and various levels of alienation.

---

[35] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 62-63
[36] Doris Lessing, *Ben, in the World* (London: Flamingo, 2000) 2.

As mentioned earlier, besides throwing light on the concept of care as an ethical orientation, articulated first by Gilligan, both novels also help us to understand the position of the 'outsider'-- Ben as a throwback. Clarke's argument is pertinent, 'Ben is understood as an 'absolute' or 'ineffable other', (...) whose primary narrative function is to personify various racial, social or national others (...).'[37] Having been represented as half animal half human, Ben cannot belong to any fundamental social category.

Ben is a very interesting and rich character, therefore, who can be examined as a loose metaphor. If his character is interpreted as being disabled, then he is the other in his marginality/femininity; at the same time, if his emotional state is likened to that of a refugee because of his utter difference, then he could be looked at as an outsider. Both positions are vital for the central ideas in the thesis. As I have argued earlier in the project, the other and the outsider are related in very important ways, and the feminine will immediately align herself with the outsider as a result of her marginal positioning. It is noteworthy, therefore, that both standpoints can be seen to come together in Ben's character in such interesting ways.

Many different kinds of cosmopolitanism have been discussed in this thesis, and some versions have been seen to be more liberating than others. In these two texts, however, it is the more painful aspect of unbelonging-- the emotional condition of the refugee and the exile, as opposed to positions of emancipatory rootlessness-- that is explored, and that Ben's character helps to examine. Any reading of cosmopolitanism would naturally have to take into account both sides of the matter. I have argued earlier in the thesis that for a feminine sensibility-- borne out of marginalisation and repression-- rootlessness can translate into freedom from the bondage of conventionality and tradition, and for a masculine sensibility it would mostly mean a loss of identity. However, Ben in these two texts, like Raza's character

---

[37] Clark 173-189.

in Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, opens up another area of enquiry, where the outsiders and the feminine are deeply pained by their lack of a sense of belonging.

Ben in Lessing's texts and Raza in *Burnt Shadows*, suffer because they feel that they have no history to fall back on. Raza, the child of Pakistani and Japanese parents, feels bereft since according to his experience, there is no place where he can be completely at home. Ben, in a similar way, is shown to be in intense agony because he finds himself surrounded by a world that he does not at all comprehend.

> Ben was hungry. He had no money. There were some broken crusts on the ground, left for the pigeons. He gathered them up hastily, looking about him: he had been scolded for this before. Now an old man came to sit on the bench, and he gave Ben a long stare, (...).[38]

He is finally at peace only when he sees proof, in the form of ancient etchings on a rock, that a primitive race just like him did at one point exist, a race to which he 'belonged'. It is important to note, however, that this need for belonging in both Ben's and Raza's case is an emotional and social need, not a legal one, because they are in fact citizens of England and Pakistan respectively.

The ensuing question here is how Ben and Raza's experience of displacement relates to the notions of cosmopolitanism that this thesis views as being enabling. There is of course no easy resolution, although it seems fair to suggest that much of their suffering is caused because these feminine, rudderless characters see themselves as trapped within a very masculine set up in a way that makes it impossible for them to find more feminine support in their environments. In all the texts examined in this thesis, the feminine characters that are

---

[38] Lessing, *Ben, in the World* 4-5

able to establish a connected network of 'others' and 'outsiders' are the ones that have the best chance of experiencing the liberating aspects of cosmopolitanism. Morrison's *Paradise* is one example where this connection is clearly evidenced: all those that fall out of line within their societal structures, are seen in the novel to gather in one particular space called the convent.

A quote by the Austrian writer Stefan Zeig, in his memoir *The World of Yesterday* (1943), touches upon the pain of displacement:

> Often in my cosmopolitan reveries I had imagined how beautiful it would be, how truly in accord with my inmost thoughts, to be stateless, bound to no one country and for that reason undifferentiatedly attached to all. But once again I had to recognise the shortcomings of our moral imaginations (...).[39]

This quote again alludes to the isolation resulting from not being part of a community. It should be made clear at this stage that the cosmopolitanism that this thesis endorses does not assume that being part of a community and a cosmopolitan attitude are mutually exclusive. In fact, the attempt here is to understand and examine an ethical concept that would connect people, instead of dividing them or merely severing ties with existing communities. Moreover, it is the forging of ties between people that the ethics of care promotes. One of the basic premises of the care orientation is that people are interrelated and need to be seen as such, instead of aspiring to autonomy and objectivity, which has only resulted in people and their needs being homogenised and disregarded. Communities play a very important role in this ethical orientation, as it only works when people are looked at in relation to one another.

Ben and Raza, on the other hand, are both characters that have been isolated and abandoned, and therefore their suffering is greater. The emotional state of a refugee or an

---

[39] Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 1943) 307-308.

exile is similarly that of an abandoned human being, it is not a voluntary position in any way. The refugee's is a condition of having been rudely rejected, and Ben's situation is likened to a refugee's because Ben too has been rejected by society. 'He was so sad and lonely, but the dark was his home, night was his place, and people did not look at you so dangerously at night-- not, that is, if you weren't in the same room with them.'[40] This passage is one of the many instances in which Ben's isolation is highlighted in the text.

A refugee or an exile will have an almost mythical remembrance of a past when she was not in that abject position, as also a yearning to return to that past, and this again is like Ben's situation, since he too seems to have some kind of elemental remembrance of a primitive race to which he belonged. Therefore, besides having no supportive network of people like himself, as mentioned earlier, Ben's tragedy, like a refugee's, is also borne out by the fact that he believes that he would have been more comfortable in the ancient past from which he has involuntarily been wrenched out. At the end of *Ben, in the World*, Ben's loneliness overwhelms him, and the only time he feels some joy is when he sees the primitive etchings of a species that resembles him. He ends his life with the happy, if perhaps illusory, knowledge of having belonged to a community, even if a prehistoric one. He dies safe in the dubious belief that there had once been people like him, who would have accepted him and amongst whom he would have been at home.

This is, to my mind, a major aspect of the emotional complications of being a refugee: the belief that she would have 'belonged' completely in the community that she has had to leave behind, in a way that she cannot in the new one. In fact the stories told by refugees of their past lives are full of yearning for a glorious culture left behind, even though the realities of their situations might belie this myth of complete belonging. Where this kind of selective

---

[40] Lessing, *Ben, in the World* 26

remembering becomes a natural defence mechanism, it also traps the refugee in her grief with respect to her present state.

When seen together, therefore, *Ben, in the World* and *The Fifth Child* bring different and complementary issues to attention. *Ben, in the World* is the story of the rejected outsider, and Ben's position as an outsider is made even more immediate by the fact that he is rejected by his own mother in *The Fifth Child*. Issues regarding disability and displacement come together to present an inclusive picture of the pain of alienation.

Ben, in the World, both the title and the narrative, is obviously reminiscent of Heidegger's phenomenological approach to knowledge: 'being-in-the-world'-- where knowledge is produced through the interaction of the human subject with the world around her/him. The natural world, for Heidegger, and for Ben at a more animalistic level, is essential for the understanding of the all-encompassing Being.[41]

> Ben (...) went about the fields and woods, alone and free-- himself. He would catch and eat little animals, or a bird. He crouched behind a bush for hours to watch fox cubs playing. (...) Or he stood by the cow with his arms around her neck, nuzzling his face into her; and the warmth that came into him from her, and the hot sweet blasts of her breath on his arms and legs when she turned her head to sniff at him meant the safety of kindness. [42]

According to the phenomenological approach, nature has to be accepted in all its mystery, not merely exploited for selfish, scientific and economic gains. In the text, however, Ben is an oddity for people around him precisely because he is most in touch with his natural

---

[41] According to Dorothea Frede, '(…) Heidegger's holistic conception of human existence as "Dasein," that is, as being-in-a-world, or of "care" as the meaning of our existence, which comprises and unifies in its understanding all the different conceptions of what there is, let alone temporality as the transcendental horizon of the overall meaning of being as such.' Dorothea Frede, 'The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project,' *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guinon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 50-51.

[42] Lessing, *Ben, in the World* 18

self. Ben, therefore, could be seen as embodying Heidegger's notion of the Being. This ties in with the point made earlier, regarding Harriet and David's hubris with respect to nature: because they didn't understand it completely, and looked only to superficially gain from it, nature takes its revenge in the form of the ultra natural Ben.

Furthermore, Ben's character reveals to the reader the artificiality of the world that she takes for granted, and in this his character functions perfectly according to what Heidegger's hermeneutical school of thought would consider real art, that which acts as a catalyst for 'defamiliarization', thereby waking the reader to the world around her.[43] In fact Ben is so unnaturally natural that he is taken away by ruthless scientists-- those who, like Harriet and David, use the natural world merely for their advantage-- and caged for experimentation with the other animals that are already being brutally exploited.

> From cages monkeys stretched out their hands and their human eyes begged for help. Teresa saw nothing of all this. She was looking at Ben, kneeling on the floor of his cage, bang-banging his head on the wire. He had not been drugged: Professor Stephen wanted him uncontaminated. He was unclothed, this creature who had been clothed since he was born. In the corner of his cage was a pile of dung.[44]

Ben's difficult socialisation is rejected by the scientists and he is stripped down to his natural, animalistic self. However, nature here is not celebratory for Ben as it had otherwise been for him through the text, instead nature here, in the laboratory, is in captivity and thereby degraded-- 'In the corner of his cage was a pile of dung.'

---

[43] '(…) when the hammer breaks, when we cease to take it for granted, its familiarity is stripped from it and it yields up to us its authentic being. A broken hammer is more of a hammer than an unbroken one. Heidegger shares with the Formalists the belief that art is such a defamiliarisation (…). Indeed for the later Heidegger it is it is in art alone that such phenomenological truth is able to manifest itself (…).' Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 56.

[44] Lessing, *Ben in the World* 146

His connection with the natural world, as also with Heidegger's theory, reaches its culmination when he claims, by the end of the text, that he can hear the music of the stars, and dances to it. This is shortly before he kills himself, realising that although most natural, he would always be regarded as a freak of nature by those around him.

> (...) From Ben they heard a rough tuneless singing, and saw that he had begun to move-- he was dancing and singing to the stars. (...) He danced on, bending and bowing and stretching up his arms to the stars, stamping and kicking his feet, and whirling about and around, on and on, while the watchers shivered and held themselves in their blankets. [45]

We witness, in the text, a conflict between Ben and various societal forces, like family, that try to turn him into something that might seem more acceptable according to established standards. The idea recalls the concept of 'total institutions' in Erving Goffman's *Asylums* (1961), where the members of these 'total institutions', like jails, mental asylums or armies, are broken down as it were, so that their sense of themselves fall in line with the demands of those institutions. Goffman says, regarding the reshaping of people in these institutions,

> Leaving off (...) entails a dispossession of property (...). Perhaps the most significant of these possessions is not physical at all, one's full name; whatever one is thereafter called, loss of one's name can be a great curtailment of the self.[46]

What this quote implies is that for the creation of a new 'self', an older 'self' has to be broken down, which of course suggests that the 'self' that is broken down was also in fact artificially constructed; the only difference being that one self is created through societal and familial forces-- which might arguably be more benevolent-- and the other by the 'total institution'. It

---

[45] Lessing, *Ben, in the World* 173

[46] Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) 27-28.

makes evident the fact that even families function as institutions, wherein an individual is shaped according to the norms of a particular society. Thus, those who do not fall in line with the masculine establishment-- the outsiders and the others-- need to be straightened out, or discarded completely.

It makes sense then that the major problem that Ben's family goes through with him is in trying to construct within him a 'respectable' sense of self.

> She sat on the floor with building blocks and toys you could push about. She showed him colourful pictures. She sang him little rhymes. But Ben did not seem to connect with the toys, or the blocks. (...) Apparently it was not that he could not understand how this block fitted into that or how to make a pile of them, rather that he could not grasp the point of it all (...).[47]

As seen in the above passage, Ben proves to be extremely resistant to the behavioural patterns considered 'acceptable' to them and to the people around them.

As mentioned earlier, Foucault's theory regarding discipline and schooling to reinforce normalcy is played out by Ben's family in the text. To break him down, they use tactics described by Goffman in his book: they lock him up in a room to straighten him out, and they also punish 'bad' behaviour and reward 'good' behaviour to make sure he conforms.

> He ground his teeth at her, his eyes blazing. But he was afraid, too. She was going to have to control him through fear. (...) 'And now listen to me, Ben. You have to listen. You behave well and everything will be all right. You must eat properly. You must use the pot or go to the lavatory. And you mustn't scream and fight.' She was not sure he heard her. She repeated it. She went on repeating it.[48]

---

[47] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 67

[48] Lessing, *The Fifth Child* 89

Ben's character, read through Goffman's *Asylums*, brings to light the fact that homes and families function very much within the boundaries of social norms and conventions, and thereby are cardinal tools for the reinforcement and perpetration of ideologies. They reinforce conventional morality and traditional perceptions, so that those that steer away from the straight path like Ben, or Dirmit in Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, are made to suffer until they conform. However, as mentioned earlier, Dirmit in Tekin's text, Raza in Shamsie's text and Ben in Lessing's texts, all suffer because they are alone in their rebellion and their difference from mainstream, masculinist paradigms. This is where Gilligan's care orientation becomes very important, to forge connections, as also to articulate a unified and coherent feminist ethics.

Ben, in *Ben in the World*, embodies marginalisation: his difference from those around him is described as being congenital and that makes his condition more visceral and immediate.

> And that face! It was a broad face, with strongly delineated features, a mouth stretched in a grin-- what did he think was so bloody funny?-- a broad nose with flaring nostrils, eyes that were greenish, with sandy lashes, under bristly sandy brows. (...). His hair was yellow and seemed-- like his grin-- to shock and annoy, long, and falling forward in a slope (...).[49]

Like Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Lessing's text is a fantastical and semi-allegorical narrative that brings home the plight of the outsider by making his non-conformity physical.[50] He is also behaviourally different from those around him, and by way of his difference he exposes problems within that society. As mentioned earlier, in a similar way as Ishiguro's clones, Ben

---

[49] Lessing, *Ben, in the World* 1

[50] Both writers employ the fantastical mode and techniques of science-fiction to explore and comment on social problems. Ishiguro uses the trope of the clone to comment on the politics of the welfare state, and Lessing creates an almost supernatural being and addresses issues of social otherness.

embodies the 'uncanny'-- the familiar and the unfamiliar at the same time-- making those around him a little too aware of the mechanics of their own existence. Ben's situation as a genetic throwback is a modernised version of the archetypal alien as the degenerately biologised other or the monster. However, where the clones in Ishiguro's text were actively exploited, in that they were artificially created and harvested, Ben seems to have dropped into the world only to make the audience aware of its own prejudices, and is of no 'real' use, except for scientists who do not manage to get hold of him in the end. Ben's position is mostly that of a liability, and in this too his standpoint is the closest to that of a refugee: a drain on resources, and to be gotten rid of.

Ben, in the World presents for the reader the most painful aspects of being a foreigner, and a very physical sense of being alien and unanchored. He is, as mentioned earlier, reminiscent of other characters examined in the thesis. Raza's sense of alienation is almost as physical as Ben's, since, being the son of a Japanese mother and a Pakistani father he looks different from those around him. Raza's case could be considered even more desperate than Ben's in that, unlike Ben who kills himself with a happy knowledge of a prehistoric existence of his own people, Raza has no history, or remembrance of people like himself to fall back on. Nevertheless, *Ben, in the World* provides an opportunity to explore the tragedy and isolation associated with dislocation. Ben and the other suffering characters examined in the thesis are lonely in their difference and their difference is all the more painful because of this loneliness. There is no sense of belonging for Ben in *Ben, in the World*, but this nomadic existence does not afford him a sense of liberation or enrichment, instead, it pushes him to the brink so that he commits suicide in the end.

Many questions are raised in both texts but none of them are answered, and in that Lessing's texts are rich with the possibilities of interpretation. The novels reveal intricate

complexities and contradictions within issues, which sometimes are in danger of being ironed out and ignored for the sake of coherent arguments. In this the two texts do exactly what I have posited regarding novels in the beginning of the thesis: they help in a complicated examination of otherwise straightforward seeming ideas. For example, Harriet's is a very uncertain position in that she is a mother who is initially blamed for resenting and not caring enough for her child, and in the end when she rescues Ben, she is blamed for caring for him too much, and destroying the lives of her other children. Her character constructively problematises the concept of care. Ben, in a similar manner, reveals a lot about ideas regarding various forms of alienation-- questions of disability, as well as displacement. He calls into question any unthinking celebration of rootlessness. It is significant that he is a feminine character, in the way described in this thesis, but does not gain anything positive from that position.[51] All these questions are opened up in the two novels, and they help provide the central themes of the thesis with much more subtlety and depth.

---

[51] Feminine in my thesis has to do with socio-political marginality. I call Ben feminine because he is rendered almost invisible by his social environment. The fake passport that he carries in *Ben, in the World* is indicative also of his political invisibility.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the desire to examine how contemporary women creative-writers around the world are dealing with the question of gender in their works. I wanted to see whether the woman question is being dealt with differently in recent women's fiction in English, or whether the issue is still that of male dominance and female subordination. What I found in my analysis of these texts was that the environments in which these narratives are set are most certainly patriarchal, and that there definitely is conflict between two groups of people, but these rival groups aren't necessarily comprised of men on one side and women on the other. However, qualities that have traditionally been attributed to male and female-- in the sense of one being rational and the other being emotional-- are still present in the novels; the difference, though, is that in the texts that I examined, these qualities are not straightforwardly attributed to either sex. The texts, instead, portray another kind of distinction altogether: the debate is still basically between affect and reason, but the conflict is played out between those who are financially, racially, sexually and politically secure on the one hand and those that are disregarded for the same reasons on the other.

What I found, therefore, is that the societal structures represented in the novels function through, and are very much prejudiced in favour of, values that have been traditionally called masculine-- physical strength, reason over emotion, a sense of detachment, profit-making, need for a fixed identity (as belonging to this or that power structure) and so on. Those who stand in opposition to the establishment, on the other hand, are represented as possessing qualities that have, for generations, been called feminine-- emotionality, needing to develop connections, a sense of involvement, artistic sensibility, fluidity and acceptance. Going by that, I have called the group that is privileged in its socio-political structure,

masculine, and the group that stands in opposition to such patriarchal structures and are thereby rejected by them, feminine.

I have found Carol Gilligan's theory very helpful because in her formulation of the ethics of care she dealt with a similar distinction-- emotionality and involvement as opposed to detachment and objectivity. Gilligan articulated a system of ethics that she considered to be most suitable for women, who have otherwise had to rest content with second place as ethical beings because of their different response to the world. I feel-- and as has been illustrated through the texts that I have examined in the thesis-- that Gilligan's particular distinction between men and women does not necessarily hold true. The problem that I found with Gilligan's theory is that she posits a sense of innateness in these distinctions. As was illustrated in the texts that I analysed, the idea that there is some essential difference in the way men and women respond to situations does not always apply, and the discourses-- political, moral or legal-- that hold societies together do not always privilege one sex over the other but most definitely privilege certain values over others. My argument, therefore, is that it is the values that are masculinist-- in the way masculine has been traditionally defined-- people themselves can tend towards or occupy either, or be a mixture of both, depending on the various contexts of their lives.

Accordingly, the situation, as revealed in all these narratives, is that dominant and overarching, masculinist structures and discourses seem to require people to follow certain principles when responding to each other and to their surroundings. And all those who are able to get ahead by replicating in their responses these privileged values, are the ones that I call masculine in my thesis. On the other hand, those who cannot or choose not to work in accordance with these structures and discourses are marginalised within them; these 'other'

people, by not following masculine principles, relate to each other and the world around them in another way, and these other principles, I term feminine.

Gilligan's ethics of care, looking to establish a different ethical system for women is very constructive for my argument because, as the textual analyses in the thesis illustrate, the very principles that Gilligan applied to women, are seen to apply to what I interpret as the feminine: those who relate to people differently from the masculine normative. The basic difference between the two groups of masculine and feminine, as revealed in my analysis, is that the feminine personalise concepts, ideas and relationships and tend to conceive of their relations with others in intersubjective as opposed to objectivist terms. This need to personalise is linked to their need also to establish connections amongst each other; both of which, perhaps, have to do with the necessity to sustain themselves and each other in their marginalisation. The masculine, on the other hand, are represented as being more 'autonomous'. They are generally shown to build relationships of rivalry, mutual benefit or conquest. That they do not feel the need to interact with people around them at the level of emotions, and do not think it important to establish deep connections might again have to do with the fact of their centrality and thereby relative security within the masculinist structure within which they function.

Some of the novels examined in the thesis have quite directly thrown up interesting concepts and portrayed masculine and feminine responses to those concepts. These novels are: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Each of these texts puts forward one concept around which the entire text revolves: justice, beauty, shame and care respectively. These novels help in substantiating my assertion that the masculine and the feminine respond differently to the

same ideas. These novels also help to ascertain the ways in which the two categories differ from each other in their reactions.

Another set of novels problematise certain issues regarding feminine responses that my thesis endorses; these novels have helped to provide more depth to my understanding of these issues. Here again I would include Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, and the other novels in this category are Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death*, Doris Lessing's *Ben, in the World* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* help to illustrate more straightforwardly my definition of masculinity and femininity. Some of these novels bring up slightly different topics that are very important for my argument: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*. I will briefly discuss these texts in this order to be able to draw effective conclusions.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* puts forward the idea of justice. Feminine responses to that concept are very different from the masculine responses, embodied by the figure of the judge. The feminine in the text try to find justice within particular relationships, whereas the masculine depend on objective rules laid down externally, by an abstract authority. In fact the masculine characters are shown to find over-involvement threatening. In representing them in this way, Desai's text illustrates my point about the feminine needing to personalise ideas and concepts and to look to each other for redemption or condemnation. The masculine, conversely, at least in the beginning of the text, do not feel the need to be overly involved, so long as the external system of justice is on their side. The text of course ends with a breakdown of traditional narratives and the feminization of unbending masculine characters.

Smith's *On Beauty*, similarly, proposes one basic idea and assays people's reactions to that idea. In this text it is the relationship of the characters with the concept of beauty that helps to further understand this distinction between the masculine and the feminine. The feminine version of beauty in Smith's text is shown to lead to a compassionate (caring) understanding of the world. Beauty, unlike justice, is a concept that does not have the backing of the state to provide it masculine rigidity. However, it is a subtle idea that can be moulded to suit different agendas and sensibilities. As a result those with masculine principles, who find the intensely intimate version of beauty too threatening, are shown to objectify it. In the real world, this objective view of beauty helps to boost the beauty industry, which is another capitalistic/masculinist enterprise. Masculine objectification of beauty of course proves especially dangerous for the women in the text. The feminine on the other hand delve into the more intimate version of beauty and find themselves altered and enriched by it. They are portrayed as trying to find personal beauty in relationships and in art, which increases their capacity for empathy and generosity.

Rushdie's *Shame* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* present the ideas of shame and care respectively. These are both manipulable ideas that, quite like beauty, can be shaped according to different agendas. Shame is used by the masculinst and corrupt political state of Rushdie's text as an externalised concept that has little to do with genuine contrition but is, instead, a matter of superficial respectability. Shame is also used by the text's masculinist society as a controlling narrative to punish those that fall out of line. The result is that people who are able to reproduce these values by creating for themselves an appearance of respectability are free to indulge in heinous acts otherwise. The feminine, on the other hand, are represented as being affected in profound ways by the idea of shame. They, to their detriment, make the idea personal, so that the three feminine sisters in Rushdie's text isolate

themselves from the rest of the world to avoid being touched by shame. For the feminine, then, externalised shame becomes oppressive. The feminine Rani Harappa who tries to wake the world to her husband's personal shame is shown to fail within that social set-up. Shame finally becomes too much for the feminine Sufiya, who then unleashes her anger to destroy the entire social structure.

Never Let Me Go presents care in a similar manner. Care of course is a sensitive topic for my thesis and therefore Ishiguro's representation is extremely illuminating. By those on the right side of the system, care is turned into another idea with which to keep people in check. Hailsham School in *Never Let Me Go* is an illustration of the kinds of profits that can be garnered by using care as a deceptive narrative. The clone children remain blissfully unaware of the real purpose designated to them by the state, so that when the time comes to donate their organs, they are left wanting in the will to protest. Not just society, but the masculine state in Ishiguro's text uses the fluid concept of care to its advantage. The very obvious instance of that is the professional 'carer' that is appointed by the state to each donating clone. However, it is in the relationships that develop between the feminine clones, either as school friends or as carer and cared-for, that the feminine response to care is demonstrated. In the text then, the professionalised version of care, which helps to maximise profit is pitted against the more personal, more compassionate notion of caring between the clones. And this struggle is explicitly played out in Kathy's character, who, although a professional carer, is also a feminine clone, thereby she develops relationships of genuine care and empathy even within her professional capacity.

In the above four texts then, the feminine, men or women, are explicitly shown as living by way of very different criteria as opposed to the masculine. Where the masculine are seen constantly to be externalising concepts and maximising benefits, the feminine/marginal

in all these texts are revealed to be lacking in just that ability to impersonalise relationships and ideas. In some of these texts the feminine emerge victorious and in others they lose out, but what is undeniable is that, just as the masculine characters follow principles that have been concretised in political and ethical discourses, the feminine too live by way of principles that can in fact be articulated as coherently for the formation of very different political and ethical systems.

I will move on to that set of texts that helped me problematize and understand better concepts that I have identified in my argument as being feminine and enriching. Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*'s treatment of care helped me to understand ways in which the idea of care, central to the ethics of care and my thesis, can be incorporated by the masculine mainstream in such a way that care becomes detrimental rather than effective. The act of caring as played out by Hailsham is revealed to be harmful and misleading for the students who are left feeling entirely frustrated in their helplessness-- illustrated by the futility of Tommy's scream in the end. Moreover, the very term they employ to describe the state appointed nurses for the dying clones, ridicules the very notion of care being in anyway empowering. What this made clear for me is that the *reason* behind the act of caring is as, if not more, important than the idea of care itself. No matter how much care is showered on a human being, if a genuine need to understand a person's particular position is lacking, care can be as oppressively homogenising and controlling as any other ethical narrative.

Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* reveals similarly that a feminine and caring head of the family is not necessarily empowering. Even though Atiye is a feminine character in that she is shown to be at a complete angle to the community within which she functions-- being a foreigner and an assertive woman-- she does not consider it to be a good thing. She feels defective, and therefore, through her care and nurture she tries to make sure that her family,

especially her daughter, is accepted by the community that had rejected her own foreignness. In her anxiety, Atiye imposes oppressive codes of conduct upon Dirmit. This text reveals that the context within which care is being provided, and the individual attitudes of those identified as feminine is extremely important. Those who are uncomfortable in their femininity cannot engage in the network of care that has been endorsed as positive in my thesis.

Doris Lessing's *Ben, in the World* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* problematise the notion that femininity/marginality is necessarily celebratory. Like Atiye in Tekin's text, Ben in *Ben, in the World* and Raza in *Burnt Shadows* are very unhappy in their femininity. But where Atiye is able to moderate her attitude to suit her community, Ben and Raza are rendered irreparably and physically alien as they both look different from those around them. They bring up the issue of isolation, which is an inherent part of being different from the normative. Ben is almost an alien in his community, and Raza being of a mixed racial background also feels distanced from the people he is surrounded by. These characters feel the need to belong somewhere. My argument here is that it is because both these characters find themselves utterly surrounded by the masculinist standard and isolated in their difference, that they find their femininity even more oppressive. In Morrison's *Paradise* for instance, the feminine form communities that help to sustain them. As I mentioned earlier, the feminine need constantly to build deep connections to be able survive their marginality, so the tragedy of Ben and Raza's position is that they are not able to form these nurturing connections.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* help me to express more straightforwardly my arguments regarding the masculine and feminine, once in the beginning of the thesis with *Paradise* and once at the end with *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *Paradise,* right from the very start of the narrative makes clear the distinction

between the two categories. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, on the other hand, begins by establishing masculinity and femininity in very traditional ways, but gradually breaks down the categories and reconstructs them in ways that correspond directly with my argument in the thesis.

As mentioned earlier, some of these novels propose new topics that tie in very well with the argument in my thesis. One such topic is that of an accepting, cosmopolitan attitude, put forward in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. Both these texts present worlds that are in transition in many ways. These are worlds with an ever increasing mixing of cultures. The first reaction to this transition is shown to be an old fashioned masculinist reaction, which desperately tries to hold on to crumbling structures which have hitherto provided meaning to life. The second response to this breakdown is the cosmopolitan one, which is celebratory, accepting of new ways of living and eager to leave behind old structures. I call this attitude feminine because it fits exactly with one of the most important qualities that I associated with femininity in this thesis: fluidity of identity. Here the feminine and the cosmopolitan come together; this is seen not only in my argument but is clearly evidenced in the texts as well. These cosmopolitan characters exhibit all the qualities that I have identified as being feminine, including a loose sense of political identity.

However, there is a third response to these transitioning worlds of the two narratives. This response I would like to term the neo-masculine stance. The one political entity that both texts identify as displaying this stance is the ultra-capitalistic United States of America. This stance welcomes the world of changing relations and increasing international mobility as an opportunity for greater economic and political gain. This response works in insidious ways of incorporations and deceptions. Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* migrates to the United States believing that it would provide him with a better life in a 'globalised' world. What happens when he arrives in America, however, is that his life becomes more wretched than it was;

only now he finds himself surrounded by shiny buildings and wealthy life-styles beyond his reach. In *Burnt Shadows,* Henry realises, only too late, that his dream of a genuinely accepting America, keen on dialogues with other nations, is illusory. The nation shows itself to be as, if not more, xenophobic than most others; the only difference being that it has the wealth and the power to mobilise various other political entities to serve its own agendas.

In the last chapter, my analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and *Ben, in the World*, brings up a very important topic that is essential to a discussion of the position of marginality: disability. As I had mentioned in the beginning, the overarching discourses that seek to organise lives, in reality and in these texts, are almost universally masculinist in nature, therefore, one of the prized qualities in a human being, according to these discourses, is of course physical strength and wellbeing. The disabled person, accordingly, is out of harmony with these structures at a very basic level. Ben's condition is never definitively specified in either of these texts; however, there are some instances in the narratives that suggest parallels between Ben's condition and that of disability. The difficulties of the position of disability needs to be acknowledged and made more visible in discussions of marginality.

Another theme that has run through my readings of these texts is the question of the outsider and the other. I attempt to bring the two groups together in their opposition to particular social and political set ups. I define the other as the one who is from a particular community but is sidelined or 'othered' by it. The outsider is of course someone who is not allowed into the limits of the community at all, and if she is, then it is with much resentment and difficulty. I bring these groups together because they are shown in the texts that I analysed as reaching out for each other in moments of stress. In fact, in some cases the other and the outsider come together in one character-- for example Atiye in *Dear Shameless Death*,

Ben in *Ben, in the world* and Raza in *Burnt Shadows*-- thus emphasising further the commonality of their positions. Toni Morrison's *Paradise* illustrates explicitly how these two groups come together in voluble or tacit opposition to the masculinised world of the main community.

There are two main conclusions that can be drawn from my readings of these texts. The first one is that, as Gilligan had suggested in her articulation of the ethics of care, there definitely is a different feminine response as opposed to the masculine standard. I have broken down the masculine and feminine categories to show that Gilligan's basic argument about different ethical standards of judgement for people positioned differently in societies is a revolutionary and promising one. Therefore, if there is an almost universal masculine code of conduct, then there is definitely also an implicit feminine code which spans across cultures and political boundaries. My findings in these readings suggest that because there is an almost universal patriarchal value system, there is certainly a scope for the creation of a separate ethical code that is directed towards the margins instead of pandering to the privileged.

The second conclusion I draw is that although these feminine responses have revolutionary potential, there is always the danger that in changed situations they could be employed towards absolutely different ends. Insidious deceptions by what I term neo-masculinist forces like capitalism make any unthinking celebration of these responses, like care and beauty, problematic. This danger, however, is negated by the fact that the ethics of care anyway emphasises the need to get involved in the particulars of a situation to make a considered judgement. By stressing the context of ideas and relationships, the ethics of care helps to make the assertion that all empowering concepts discussed in my thesis, cannot be looked at without examining the context within which they are acted upon.

It has been revealed to me through the analyses I carried out in my thesis that although human nature is complex, people do respond to their surroundings according to where they are placed in those surroundings. The empowered do follow patterns of behaviour that are judged acceptable in their social setups, whereas the disempowered reach out for each other in a very different way. I call these responses masculine and feminine simply because they do correspond to the way the masculine and the feminine have been traditionally described-- perhaps because of the positions that men and women have historically occupied in various societies. Moreover, because the overarching structures support certain kinds of people over others, there needs to be some articulation of an understanding of the ethical responses of those that are disempowered in those structures. My argument is that it may be possible through an understanding of the underdog, to arrive at more equitable social and political structures.

Works Cited and Consulted

Adichie, ChimamandaNgozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun.* London: Fourth Estate, 2006.

Ahmad, Aijaz. 'Rushdie's *Shame*: Postmodernism, Migrancy and Representation of Women.' *Economic and Political Weekly* 26.25 (1991): 1461-1471.

Alam, Shawkat,Natalie Klein and Juliette Overland. *Globalisation and the Quest for Social and Environmental Justice: The Relevance of International Law in an Evolving World Order.*London: Routledge 2011.

Albritton, Laura. Rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. *Harvard Review* 32 (2007): 169-171.

Anderson,Melanie R. '"What Would Be on the Other Side?":Spectrality and Spirit Work in Toni Morrison's "Paradise".' *African American Review* 42.2 (2008): 307-321.

Andrade, Susan Z. 'Adichie's Genealogies: National and Feminine Novels.' *Research in African Literatures* 42.2 (2011): 91-101.

Anyadike**,** Chima. 'The Global North in Achebe's Arrow of God and Adichie's*Half of a Yellow Sun*.' *The Global South* 2.2 (2008): 139-149.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

Batra, Kanika. 'KIPPS, BELSEY, AND JEGEDE: Cosmopolitanism, Transnationalism, and Black Studies in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*.' *Callaloo* 33.4 (2010): 1079-1092.

Bell, Michael.*Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

Ben-Yishai, Ayelet. 'The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the Meta Narrative of Salman Rushdie's *Shame*.' *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.1 (2002): 194-215.

Black, Shameem. 'Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics.' *Modern Fiction Studies* 55.4 (2009): 785-807.

Bowlby, John. *Attachment and Loss.3 vols.* London: Pimlico, 1997.

Brennan, Timothy. 'Postcolonial studies and Globalization Theory.'*The Postcolonial and the Global*.Ed.RevathiKrishnaswamy and John C. Hawley.Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 49.

Brennan, Timothy. *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*.Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Bryce, Jane. 'Half and Half Children: Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel.' *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (2008): 49-67.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Chatman, Seymour Benjamin. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Clark, Emily. 'Rereading Horror Stories: Maternity, Disability and Narrative in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child.'Feminist Review* 98 (2011): 173-189.

Crowther, Paul. *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Davies, Lennard .*Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body.* London: Verso, 1995.

Dayal,Samir. 'The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's "Shame".' *The Journal of the Midwest Modern* 31.2 (1998): 39-62.

Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss.* New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006.

Deszcz, Justyna. 'Salman Rushdie's Attempt at a Feminist Fairytale Reconfiguration in *Shame*.' *Folklore* 115.1 (2004): 27-44.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Forster, E.M. *Howards End.* New York: Signet-Penguin Books, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Allen Lane, 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 1970.

Frede, Dorothea. 'The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project.'*The Cambridge Companion To Heidegger*. Ed. Charles B. Guinon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography, or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Trans.Mahadev Desai.Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1996.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar.*The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth–Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1979.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred.* The Athlone Press: London, 1995.

Glover, Jonathan and Martha C. Nussbaum,eds. *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities.* Oxford: Claredon Press, 1995.

Goffman, Erving . *Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961.

Grewal, Gurleen. *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle.* Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.

Grewal, Inderpal. 'AmitavGhosh: Cosmopolitanisms, Literature, Transnationalisms.' *The Postcolonial and the Global*.Ed.RevathiKrishnaswamy and John C. Hawley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.179-180.

Hart, David W. 'Making a Mockery of Mimicry: Salman Rushdie's *Shame.*' *Postcolonial Text* 4.4 (2008): 1-20.

Harvey, David.*Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom.*New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

---. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Hawley, John C. 'Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu, and Iweala.' *Research in African Literatures*39.2 (2008): 12-15.

Hekman, Susan J. *Moral Voices, Moral selves: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Moral Theory.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

---. *The Future of Differences: Truth and Method in Feminist Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.

Henessy, Brendan. *The Gothic Novel*.Ed. I. Scott-Kilvert. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd, 1978.

Higgins, Therese E. *Religiosity, Cosmology, and Folklore: The African Influence in the Novels of Toni Morrison.* New York: Routledge, 2001.

Hill, Thomas E. Jr., ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Kant's Ethics.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Hitchins, Keith. Rev. of *Dear Shameless Death* by LatifeTekin,*World Literature Today* 75.3/4 (2001): 234.

Holmes, Jeremy. *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno.*Dialectic of Enlightenment*.Trans. John Cumming. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Huggan, Graham*. The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Hussain, Nasser. 'Hyphenated Identity: Nationalistic Discourse, History, and the Anxiety of Criticism in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*.'*Qui Parle*3.2 (1989): 1-8.

Huet, Hélène. 'Monstrous Imagination: Progeny as Art in French Classicism.' *Critical Inquiry*. 17.4 (1991): 718-737.

Ignatieff, Michael. *The Needs of Strangers*. London: Hogarth, 1990.

'Illegal Border crossings.'*Econimic and Political Weekly* May. 2007: 1583-1584.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go.* London: Faber and Faber, 2005.

Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Jackson, Stevi and Jackie Jones, ed. *Contemporary Feminist Theories*.Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Knowles, Ronald, ed. *Shakespeare and Carnival after Bakhtin.* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998.

Koehn, Daryl. *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust and Empathy.* London: Routledge, 1998.

Krumholz, Linda J. 'Reading and Insight in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*.' *African American Review* 36.1 (2002): 21-34.

Larrabee, Mary Jeanne, ed. *An Ethic of Care: Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Lessing, Doris. *The Fifth Child*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1988.

---. *Ben, in the World*. London: Flamingo, 2000.

Lickona,Thomas, ed. *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research, and Social Issues.*New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, c1976.

Lodge, David. *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature*. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.

López, Alfred J. and Robert P. Marzec, 'Postcolonial Studies at the Twenty-five Year Mark,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 56.4 (2010): 677-688.

Lopez**,** Gemma. 'After Theory: Academia and the Death of Aesthetic Relish in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*(2005).' *Critique* 51.4 (2010): 350-365.

Lopez-Ropero, Lourdes.'Homage and Revision: Zadie Smith's Use of E.M. Forster in *On Beauty.*' *Commonwealth* 32.2 (2010): 7-14.

Mabura, Lily. 'Breaking Gods: An African Postcolonial Gothic Reading of ChimamandaNgoziAdichie's*Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun.*' *Research in African Literatures* 39.1 (2008): 203-222.

Marx, John. 'Failed-State Fiction.'*Contemporary Literature* 49.4 (2008): 597-633.

Matus, Jill. *Toni Morrison.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

McDonald,Keith. 'Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as "Speculative Memoir".' *Biography* 30.1 (2007): 74-83.

Michael, Magali Cornier. 'Re-Imagining Agency: Toni Morrison's "Paradise".'*African American Review* 36.4 (2002): 643-661.

Montremy, Jean-Maurice de. 'A writer is not a Professor.' *Doris Lessing: Conversations*. Ed. Earl G. Ingersoll. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994. 193.

Morrison, Toni. *Paradise.* London: Vintage Books, 1999.

Morton, Stephen. *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Mullan, John, 'The importance of food.'Rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss*by Kiran Desai. *Guardian Book Club* 1 Nov. 2009.

---. 'On First Reading *Never Let Me Go*,' *Kazuo Ishiguro:Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthew and SebstianGroes. London: Continuum, 2009.

Mwaria, Cheryl B., Silvia Federici and Joseph McLaren, ed. *African Visions: Literary Images, Political Change, and Social Struggle in Contemporary Africa*.London: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Nagel, Thomas. *The View from Nowhere*.New York ; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986.

Norridge, Zoe. 'Sex as Synecdoche: Intimate Languages of Violence in ChimamandaNgoziAdichie's*Half of a Yellow Sun* and AminattaForna's*The Memory of Love*.' *Research in African Literatures* 43.2 (2012):18-39.

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Sex and Social Justice*. New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

---. 'The Professor of Parody.'*The New Republic Online.*

---. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

---. *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Oe, Kenzaburo. 'The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation.' *boundary 2*18.3 (1991): 110

Okin, Susan Moller.*Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*Ed. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha C. Nussabum.Princeton, N.J.; Chichester : Princeton University Press, 1999.

---. *Justice, Gender and the Family*.New York : Basic Books, c1989.

Page, Philip. 'Furrowing All the Brows: Interpretation and the Transcendent in Toni Morrison's *Paradise.'African American Review* 35.4 (2001): 637-649.

Paker, Saliha. Introduction.*Dear Shameless Death.*By LatifeTekin London: Marion Boyars, 2001.

Parker, Saliha.'Translating 'the shadow class (...) condemned to movement' and the Very Otherness of the Other: LatifeTekin as Author-Translator of *Swords of Ice.' Translation and Opposition*.Ed. DimitrisAsimakoulas and Margaret Rogers. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 201.146-147.

Plato, *The Symposium*. Trans. W. Hamilton. Harmondworth: Penguin Books, 1983.

Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott. New York: W.W. Norton, 1985.

Rich, Sharon. 'Daughters' Views of Their Relationships with Their Mothers.'*Making Connections: The relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*.Ed.Carol Gilligan, N.P. Lyons, and T.J. Hanmer. London: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Robbins, Bruce. 'Cruelty is bad: banality and proximity in *Never Let me Go.'Novel* 40.3 (2007) 289-302.

Robbins, Ruth. '(Not Such) Great Expectations: Unmaking Maternal Ideals in *The Fifth Child* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin.' Doris Lessing: Border Crossings. Ed.* Susan Watkins and Alice Redout.London: Continuum, 2009. 95.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Royle, Nicholas. *The uncanny.*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Rubenstein, Roberta. 'Doris Lessing's fantastic Children.'*Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*. Ed.Susan Watkins and Alice Redout. London: Continuum, 2009. 61-62.

---. 'Enfant Terrible.'*The Women's Review of Books*. 5.10/11 (1988): 22.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*.London: Granta Books, 1992.

---. *Shame*. London: Vintage, 1995.

Scarry, Elaine.*On Beauty and Being Just.* London: 2000, Duckbacks-Duckworth Media Group, 2001.

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: The Destiny of Illusion*. New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006.

Sen, Amartya. *Inequality Reexamined*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995.

Sennett, Richard. *Respect: The Formation of Character in a World of Inequality.* London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Knopf, 1977.

Shamsie, Kamila. *Burnt Shadows.* London: Bloomsbury, 2009.

Shamsie, Kamila. 'Pakistan, America and the Pitfalls of Plotting.'*Guardian* 23 March 2010.

Showalter, Elaine, ed. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

Singer, Peter. *Ethics*.Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1994.

Sked, Alan and Chris Cook.*Post-War Britain: A political History*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993.

Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty.*Leicester: W F Howes Ltd, 2006.

Strehle, Susan. 'Producing Exile: Diasporic Vision in Adichie's*Half of a Yellow Sun.*' *Modern Fiction Studies* 57.4 (2011): 650-672.

Taylor, Charles, et al. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Ed. Amy Gutmann.Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1994.

Tekin, Latife. *Dear Shameless Death*.Trans. Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne. London: New York: Marion Boyars, 2001.

Tew, Philip. *Zadie Smith*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Toker , Leonaand Daniel Chertoff. 'Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.' *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6.1 (2008): 163-180.

Toolan, Michael J. *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction.*London: Routledge, 1988.

Wall, Kathleen. 'Ethics, Knowledge, and the Need for Beauty: Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*.' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77.2 (2008): 757-788.

Walters, Tracey L. 'Zadie Smith.' *Twenty First century "Black" British Writers*. Ed.R. Victoria Arana. London: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009.

Watkins, Susan.'Remembering Home: Nation and Identity in the Recent Writing of Doris Lessing.'*Feminist Review* 85 (2007): 97-115.

Waugh, Patricia. *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Waugh, Patricia and Philip Rice, ed. *Modern Literary Theory*. 4[th]ed. New York: Hodder Arnold, 2001.

Whitehead, Anne. 'Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.' *Contemporary Literature* 52.1 (2011): 54-83.

Wilhelmus, Tom. 'Ah England.' Rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai.*The Hudson Review* 59.2 (2006): 345-351.

Williams, Bernard Arthur Owen. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*.Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Williams, Melanie. 'Only Connect: *Howards End* and Theories of Justice.' *Law and Literature* 18.2 (2006): 253-280.

Zweig, Stefan. *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography*. London: Cassell, 1943.