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Transgressive shame

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Transgressive Shame / Transgressing Shame Reflections on Lorna Crozier's Poetic Revision of the Christian Myth of the Fall

ABSTRACT: The general aim of this paper is to analyse the ways in which the concept of “transgression” loses its negative connotations in queer and feminist interpretations of the Biblical narrative of the Original Sin. In the course of this analysis, “transgression” ceases to be the indication of evil and sin, and starts to represent the possibility of transformation, redefinition, and rebellion. The theoretical part of the article focuses on the feminist reading of the Biblical Creation Myth and ponders the meaning of shame experienced by Adam and Eve in the aftermath of their sin. It also indicates the parallels between the concepts of “shame” and “queerness,” which comparison, in turn, allows for a redefinition of the notion of “transgression.” The subsequent part of the text constitutes an interpretation of Lorna Crozier’s poem titled “Original Sin.” In her revision Crozier subverts the binary logic of the Garden by means of evoking the character of Lilith as well as Aristophanes’ myth of the origins of human kind. The purpose of the proposed reading is to show that through *queering* the Biblical story, Crozier de-shames the Biblical Eve, and undermines the Biblical depiction of her sin. The last part of the paper focuses on an analysis of Crozier’s poem “What I Gave You Truly” in which Eve’s confession becomes the narrative of transgression.

KEY WORDS: Transgression, shame, feminist theory, queer theory, Lorna Crozier.

The concept of transgression, as construed within the dominant Judeo-Christian metanarrative, is an exponent of the more general conceptualization of the mechanisms of power, central to the symbolic system, constructing — and organizing — the order of the Western world. More specifically, however, despite its seemingly neutral etymology, the term in question seems to have been functioning predominantly as a rather unequivocal value judgment: for centuries, it has solely referred to acts of defiance with respect to accepted norms, which, in the Christian narratives, translates into the God-given Law. As such, transgression

becomes a term shedding light upon the *modus operandi* of the Judeo-Christian normativity: that, which is transgressive is both sinful and evil because it questions the “unquestionable” order, and thus imperils the stability of the structures of power. The menace of transgression, therefore, needs to be counteracted. In the Judeo-Christian, patriarchal, phallogocentric tradition, the term itself has become laden with negative connotations and thus became a part of a larger “failsafe mechanism,” invoking “preemptive measures” of shame and anxiety.

The above notwithstanding, it seems clear that the development of feminist thought, and more recently — *queer* theory, has opened up new vistas upon the matter. Feminist and queer revisions of the inherited language appear to have paved the way for a discourse in which “transgression” — the key-word efficiently locking the padlock of the (Western) world-wide cell in which the would-be, or actual, perpetrators of subversion would be “preventively” held for centuries lest they be tempted to stray from the path of righteousness — loses its negative edge. In poststructural readings of the foundational metanarratives of the Western culture, “transgression” ceases to be the indication of evil and sin, and, conversely, begins to represent the possibility of transformation, redefinition, and rebellion. This paper seeks to demonstrate this change on the basis of an interpretation of two poems by Lorna Crozier: “Original Sin” and “What I Gave You Truly,” which, offering a poetic re-reading of the traditional (canonical) exegesis of the Judeo-Christian myth of Origin, *epitomize* the transgression. As such, they invite an interpretation rooted in the revisionary discourse of contemporary feminist and queer studies, which provides the methodological framework for the ensuing, tripartite, argument.

“What is it that you have done?” (Gen. 3: 13) A Theoretical Introduction

It is common knowledge that the Biblical narrative of the Original Sin and the Fall of Adam and Eve is, cardinally, the story of an archetypal transgression — the first people break the one law devised for them by God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Within the Garden of Eden, transgressions are not to be tolerated: such acts question God’s order — the archetypal Law-of-the-Father — which is hierarchical, patriarchal, heteronormative, and, significantly, established by and in language. In fact, in the stories of creation presented in both Genesis and the Gospel according to John, it is language that is a “precondition of identity” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 165).

Within such logocentric theology — formed by the “acts of dividing and knowing through opposition” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 165) — Woman is created as

other than Man. It is, in fact, the “man’s lack, his insufficiency unto himself revealed by his need for a helpmeet [that] generates the necessity for woman” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 167). Eve, therefore — in Leigh Gilmore’s words — is to be unavoidably associated with both *the lack* and *the wound*: “When the name / thing ‘helpmeet’ is discovered to be lacking, God performs the first surgery and extracts a rib from Man to serve as a foundation for a rather peculiar birthing fable that links woman with wound” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 167). Through this act of violence, God creates the *Wo-Man* who stands in a “metonymic relation to Man” and is secondary to him, “morally weaker [...] and [...] thus falls prey to the forces of corruption” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 170). As such, she cannot use the power of language but, conversely, falls victim to it:

The first three chapters [of Genesis] establish naming as the significant and signifying action and make clear Eve’s place in this order. She names nothing, creates nothing. Perhaps in this narrative we could say that Eve was the first to experience the relationship between signifier and signified as arbitrary. Her transgression (which should primarily be understood as the desire for knowledge, the desire to know what God knows), which results in the exile from the garden, initiates only a more formal exile than the one she already lives. Her exclusion from language carries tremendous consequences, and this first revolution of the dispossessed (she does not own her name, hence, her self) concludes God’s experiment in the garden. When God first speaks directly to Woman, it is as a judge, and the first trial is initiated: “What is it that you have done?” (Gen. 3: 13).

GILMORE, L., 1994: 170

Importantly, the first sentence that Eve directs to God in response to his question is, in fact, an act of confession — “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3: 13) — which is traditionally understood to be “an injunction to render into language what is often culturally unspeakable” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 17) or shameful. Its purpose is to transcend the (shameful) experience through redemption granted by an authority. The presence of the authority — God being its ultimate representation — is, therefore, necessary in this discursive ritual. As such — in Michel Foucault’s words — confession “unfolds within a power relationship” (FOUCAULT, M., 1998: 61).¹ A confessant bares himself / herself in front

¹ In Foucault’s phrasing: “The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also the ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority that requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (FOUCAULT, M., 1998: 61–62).

of the confessor who is, at the same time, the sole bearer / barer of the truth, and “enjoys interpretive privilege” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 17). The experience of verbalizing the unspeakable unburdens the confessant of shame only if it is “authorized” by the confessor.

The position of Eve as a “confessee” is particularly problematic, as she is not only construed as secondary and marginalized, but is also “silenced in the construction of [the] story of transgression” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 23). In Bernstein’s reading, in fact, confession only reinforces power relations and, consequently, the only “subject that confession affirms is implicitly gendered masculine and heterosexualized male” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 21).² It is, therefore, Man whom the act of “telling things” empowers, and it is Man who — in the binary world of patriarchy — is assigned to the dominant position of the confessor.

The patriarchal character of the Biblical order is further manifest in the fact that even though both Adam and Eve are disciplined by God, it is Eve who is believed to carry the blame for their loss of innocence. It is Eve, too, whose body is a locus of punishment devised by God. The fifth chapter of Genesis, therefore, in Gilmore’s reading, is the story of another creation: one of the female body as “the site of labor and pain” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 170—171).³ Clearly, the new reality of an exile forces Woman to further subordination: “God [...] predicts the future of heterosexuality with the constituents of desire and childbearing and prescribes the female role in it” (GILMORE, L., 1994: 171).

Importantly, even before the actual punishment is pronounced by God, the disobedience of Adam and Eve results in the sinners’ sudden awareness of their nakedness, concurrent with the mind-altering experience of shame.⁴ In Sally R. Munt’s phrasing, “Shame is fundamental to the originary myth of Judeo-Christian societies, as Adam and Eve were shamefully expelled from Eden to discover their fallen humanity, in the world” (MUNT, S.R., 2008: 80). In fact, the Original Sin can be read not only as a transgression *on* God’s law, but also as a shame-induced transgression *into* a new corporeality. Such a sudden shift is experienced as an immediate, unexpected transfer from a familiar, stable reality to a slippery maze, where

² Bernstein supports her reading of confession by referring to Sigmund Freud’s theory. In Freud’s terms, catharsis is granted by the very fact of “telling things” which “discharges tension so that excitation gains an outlet. In this way even the act of telling things begins to resemble a sexual act based on male norms” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 22—23).

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

⁴ “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3: 7).

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

LYND, H.M., 1958: 34

The world they are *shamed into* takes Adam and Eve by an unpleasant surprise: merged in confusion and incongruity, they wish to hide from the new reality. The disappearance/invisibility they long for is, however, unattainable, as in this “divisive, shame-ridden consciousness” (FERNIE, E., 2002: 32) they fell into, Adam and Eve are not only separate, but they become “his naked body and her naked body” (JACOBY, M., 1994: 19), the conspicuous objects of desire, and manifestations of difference. In other words, in the Biblical Creation Myth, shame is presented as a negative experience, a prelude to mortality and a foretaste of future pain.

However, shame can be construed as “transgressive” also in the sense that it subverts limits, and boundaries imposed on the self. In other words, even though shame is a very common affect — felt in the aftermath of a trespass, revealed in the form of a blush — its most intriguing aspect is, admittedly, its profound impact on one’s identity. Accordingly, the affect

has [...] recently come to be recognised as the “most poignant experience of the self by the self”(KAUFMAN, G., 1996: 16) which separates us from “both ourselves and others” (KAUFMAN, G., 1996: 17). The feeling of shame is one of a foundational hesitation — since it subverts all the certainty one has about oneself and about one’s relationships with others — and an antithetic one, too, as it makes one feel both invisible and exposed, exorbitantly aware of being ashamed and desperate to disappear or hide. A moment of shame — this disquieting overexposure of blush — exhorts one to look down or to close one’s eyes because shame operates like a magnifying lens through which one sees one’s distorted and (terrifyingly) exposed self-image [...].

SZATANIK, Z., 2007: 91

Therefore, shame is not about “what I *did*”; rather, in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, shame is about “what I *am*. Shame, therefore, realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself. Through shame, I have discovered an aspect of *my being*” (SARTRE, J.-P., 1996: 301—302). Such a discovery necessarily forces one to try to redefine oneself, or to *get oneself together* again.

The transformative potential of the emotion has become the subject of analyses in the field of queer studies. The queer readings of the affect, proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Sally R. Munt, often emphasize the subversiveness

of both, shame and queerness, and therefore interpret the categories as parallel.⁵ The very definitions of the term “queer” make this analogy plausible, as rather than signifying a specific form of desire, “queer” is often theorized as an anti-category which “represents the possibility of blurring and/or exploding categories” (NEWMAN, Z., 2001: 132). “Queer” — in Zoë Newman’s terms — is

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

NEWMAN, Z., 2001: 132

Correspondingly, in *Queer Sex Habits (Oh, no! I mean)* Kosofsky Sedgwick builds her understanding of “queer” upon the etymology of the term:

the word “queer” [...] itself means “across” — it comes from the Indo-European root *twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (“transverse”), Latin *torquere* (“to twist”), English *athwart*.

KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, E., 1995

Similarly to shame, therefore, queerness is “permeable, multifarious [and transformative]” (ALLAN, J., 2001: 144).

In her recent publication titled *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Kosofsky Sedgwick expressly correlates “queerness” and “shame” (both of which, as she observes, are performative⁶ in nature). In her reading, the principal characteristic of shame is that it “makes identity” (KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, E., 2003: 36):

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

KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, E., 2003: 36—37

⁵ At the same time, however, their interest in shame psychology often stems from the fact that non-normative sexualities are construed as particularly shameful within the heteronormative Western culture.

⁶ “Performativity [...] carries the double meaning of ‘dramatic’ and ‘non-referential.’ [...] Performative [therefore] carries the authority of two quite different discourses, that of theater on the one hand, and of speech act theory and deconstruction on the other” (KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, E., 2003: 7).

When analyzed as “queer,” shame is re-defined, and thus it loses the status of a well-grounded punishment: it becomes *what can transform identity* (and not necessarily in a “sinful” way). “Shame” and “queer” remain in an active relation with each other, thanks to which they are “available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, [and] *transfiguration* [...]” (KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, E., 2003: 63).

Like queer studies, feminist theory has by and large focused on questioning and subverting the binary logic of the Western thought. In literature, this has frequently taken the form of re-telling the foundational patriarchal narratives. Lorna Crozier, a Canadian poet and feminist, in her collection titled *Apocrypha of Light*, re-visions numerous Biblical stories, including the Creation Myth. Her poem titled “Original Sin” queers up and perverts the Biblical account of the Sin and the Fall, by means of introducing the *third* character into the story of the first couple.

“Of Adam’s First Wife, Lilith, It Is Told”⁷ Transgressions in / of “Original Sin”

The traces of Lilith have been markedly wiped away. Erased from the Biblical translations, Lilith found her place in the Rabbinic midrash, and was created in the course of the interpretation of the following Biblical verse: “[...] male and female he created them” (Gen. 1: 27)⁸. In the midrashic reading, the original human was a hermaphrodite composed of Adam *and* Lilith. Such interpretation corresponds to the pre-Christian myth of the origin of the human nature, introduced by Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium*. The Adam / Lilith whole can be read, therefore, as the representative of the “third sex:” “[the] single combination, comprising both male and female” (PLATO, 2000: 33). However, for the reason that “this posture made locomotion difficult, and conversation awkward” God “divided the androgyne and gave each half a new rear” (GRAVES, R., 1964: 69).

The partition generated the story of Lilith as the archetype of the Evil Woman: separated from Adam, she did not try to return to the state of the original oneness, but — on the contrary — she refused to make due love to him, which

⁷ Dante Gabriel ROSSETTI “Lilith”. Available HTTP: <http://lilitu.com/lilith/lilipoem.html> (accessed 1 February 2010).

⁸ The oldest reference to Lilith, however, appears in the Ancient Sumarian story of Gilgamesh. The earliest form of the legend of Lilith, on the other hand, comes from the anonymous midrashic work titled *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, written between 7th and 11th century.

left Adam longing for a new wife. Lilith, in turn, relegated to the textual realm of Jewish folklore and fantasy, was described as the queen of demons and the prototypical “whore.” Moreover, her rebelliousness formed the grounds for the differentiation between the motherly Eve, and the murderous Lilith (for instance, while Eve would have procreative sex with Adam and gave birth to his children, Lilith would drink blood of human infants).

In Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s reading of the myth of Lilith, she is the one who — having taken the shape of the snake — seduced Eve, thus bringing about the Fall. The present readings of the figure of the first woman, however, often reveal her feminist potential.⁹ Manifestly, Lilith invites readings, in which she is construed as the first rebel against the patriarchal power, the first victim of this power, and the first “feminist” threat.

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

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

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 20

Lilith’s description of the four-legged, queer creature bears a striking resemblance to Aristophanes’ portrayal of the original human as “a complete whole,

⁹ See: DAME, Enid, RIVLIN, Lilly, WENKART, Henny, WOLF, Naomi, 1998: *Which Lilith? Feminist Writers Re-Crete the World’s First Woman*. Lanham, Jason Aronson; or HURWITZ, Siegmund, JACOBSON, Gela, 1992: *Lilith: The First Eve: Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Dark Feminine*.

spherical, with back and ribs forming a circle [who] had four hands, four legs, and two faces, identical in every way, on a circular neck” (PLATO, 2000: 33). Aristophanes’ ingenious woman — analogous to Lilith / Eve whole — was perfectly complete, self-sufficient and “remarkable for [her] strength and vigour” (PLATO, 2000: 33). Both in this pre-Christian myth and in the Biblical one, it is the first humans’ shameless ambition that brings about gods’ / God’s punishment. Having “tried to make a way up to heaven, to attack the gods” (PLATO, 2000: 33), Aristophanes’ original humans are cut into severed halves and thus rendered powerless. From then on, “each half [has gone] round looking for its other half,” longing to “restore [themselves] to [their] true human form” (PLATO, 2000: 35). This is why, as Aristophanes suggests, people are naturally inclined to love. Daughters of the earth,¹⁰ Lilith and Eve are driven by their earthly desire to “[wind] around each other” again (CROZIER, L., 2002: 21).

Although perfectly complete as one, in the Garden of Eden, Lilith and Eve are destined to be disunited: inevitably, they will be split into the first and the second wife of Adam. In Crozier’s poem God is the master of numbers and labels; since there is no name for the “double brightness” (CROZIER, L., 2002: 21), Lilith and Eve have to be separated, which is why Lilith is marked:

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 20

Through this signifying act, Lilith becomes other-than-Eve, although she “[clings] to the womb / with [her] nails and teeth” (CROZIER, L., 2002: 21). Lilith is *signed* first, and then *sins*: her refusal to leave the state of harmony and *jouissance*¹¹ is punished (“[She], not Eve, brought pain into into the birthing room” (CROZIER, L., 2002: 21)). The Original Sin, in other words, is Lilith’s refusal to be separated from Eve. In the next stanza, Lilith confesses that she sinned again:

[...] I wouldn’t lie placid
as a hooked and fatty fish under Adam,

¹⁰ “The reason for having three sexes [...] was this: the male was originally the offspring of the sun, the female of the earth, and the one which was half-and-half was the offspring of the moon [...]” (PLATO, 2000: 33).

¹¹ The term *jouissance*, in the understanding of Jacques Lacan, signifies a specific, pre-Symbolic women’s pleasure. In Lacan’s words: “[there] is a *jouissance*, [...] a *jouissance* of the body which is [...] beyond the phallus. [...] There is a *jouissance* proper to her, to this ‘her’ which does not exist and signifies nothing. There is a *jouissance* proper to her and of which she herself perhaps knows nothing, except that she feels it — that much she does know. She knows it, of course when it happens” (LACAN, J., 1995: 64).

my wings pinned back. For punishment
 God banished me and turned my sister into bone,
 honed away everything she'd been
 when we lay together among stars

CROZIER, L., 2002: 20

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

Transformed into Adam's complement, Eve loses the memory of the past, but walks to the edge of the Garden, led by the unconscious desire of "poetry and silence" (CROZIER, L., 2002: 22). It is in the liminal space, between the Garden and the Wasteland that Lilith inhabits, that Lilith and Eve briefly find each other. During the encounter described in the second part of the poem it is Eve's body that *remembers* the feeling — or *feels* the memory — of the perfectly sensual union with the other woman:

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 23

Like in the Biblical story of the Fall, in Crozier's poem it is also the taste of the forbidden that leads to the knowledge of the body as erotic and sexual (while God, enraged "[roars] through the leaves" (CROZIER, L., 2002: 22)). And like in the Biblical myth, such knowledge marks Eve's Fall from amnesic innocence to the painful awareness of the lost unity:

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 23

Through the introduction of Lilith to the Garden of Eden, Crozier *queers* the Biblical Creation Myth, which, as I will shortly demonstrate, is in itself the strategy of de-shaming Eve. At the same time, Crozier *de-shames the queer*, by means of referring to the Ancient Greek text. According to Aristophanes, "the name of [...] desire and pursuit of completeness is Eros, or love" (PLATO, 2000 : 37). Such love does not distinguish between "good desire" and "evil desire": the

pursuit of wholeness — irrespective of whether one may originally have been the child of the sun, the earth, or the moon — is both natural and *good*. The myth presents the genesis of homosexuality in a way which renders its character natural or, indeed, defines homosexuality as *superior* to heterosexuality:

[Women] who are part of an original woman pay very little attention to men. Their interest is found in women; lesbians are found in this class. And those who are part of a male pursue what is male. As boys, because they are slices of the male, they are fond of men, and enjoy going to bed with men and embracing them. These are the best of the boys and young men, since they are by nature the most manly. Some people call them immoral — quite wrongly. It is not immorality, but boldness, courage and manliness, since they take pleasure in what is like themselves.

PLATO, 2000: 36

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

To conclude, “Original Sin” *queers* the Biblical Creation Myth in a variety of ways. Firstly, it draws upon the pre-Christian past, and thus undermines the Biblical *truths* — particularly those concerning the nature of Woman and the heteronormativity of the Garden of Eden. Secondly, the poem contrasts meaningful creation with the pre-symbolic state of the perfect unity. Previous to the first act of divine signification — the “transfusion of the living body into language” (OLIVER K., 1997: xvi) — Lilith and Eve find themselves in the semiotic space of the body.

It was Julia Kristeva who, in her *Revolution in Poetic Language*, famously distinguished between the symbolic and the semiotic elements present in the process of signification — the former referring to all that which is “proper,” “grammatical,” “structured,” “meaningful,” “masculine,” while the latter refers to “bodily drives,” “tones,” “rhythms,” “the pre-meaningful,” “the maternal” and “the subversive.” In this pre-linguistic state, Eve and Lilith are, accordingly,

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 22

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

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 22

Kristeva's "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini" offers a vision of motherhood particularly congruous with Crozier's portrayal of the pre-linguistic, homoerotic womb, as it links maternity with homoerotic desire:

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

KRISTEVA, J., 1997: 303

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

"Moments and Margins" Transgressiveness of Eve's Confession

"What I Gave You Truly" is a poetic monologue of the Biblical Eve, which announces a new *truth* about the Original Sin. The poem, in other words, is Eve's confession: no longer a figure in someone else's story, she narrates her own testimony. Since, however — as it was indicated in the introductory part — Eve's *relation* with language is dubious, her blasphemous *relation* of what happened in the Garden of Eden is even more so. Consequently, the purpose of this section is

to examine if, and under which conditions, confession can become the narrative territory of compensation and shame-less freedom for Crozier's Eve.

In "What I Gave You Truly" time is sorted into "before" and "after," and space is divided by the "bramble bush" into two (opposite) sides: in-side and out-side. The Garden — conventionally orderly, organised and regulated — is a private territory, a *center* which is harmonious and aesthetically enjoyable for its Master/Gardener, and from which Eve — imperfect and immoral¹² — is excluded. She is sentenced to margins and, as such, she speaks

[...] from the other side
of the bramble bush, the side where nothing
grows but wheels and cogs and the loneliness
of exile on this earth

CROZIER, L., 2002: 39

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

A softness longed for
at the end of the day, its vesper song,
mothering the weary

CROZIER, L., 2002: 39

Apparently, through the Fall — this divisive event — Eve lost her *mother-tongue* and her motherly/virginal qualities as such, and became a model temptress, punished and condemned to exile and loneliness. Although, however, she recognizes the sweetness of "before" and the bitterness of "after," the feelings of shame, guilt and responsibility for the Fall are absent from her speech: what she says she "gave man / without a lie and truly [...]" (CROZIER, L., 2002: 39), is merely an apple: "Gravenstein, Spartan, Golden Delicious" (CROZIER, L., 2002: 39). The act of offering the fruit to Adam and enticing him to "*Eat this*" triggers the conversion into a new reality which, however, contrary to the Biblical account, appears to be faultless and shame-less:

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 39

¹² In fact, the words "integrity" and "morality" are etymologically linked. The root of "integrity" (Latin *Integritas*) implicates not only "wholeness" but also "honor," "honesty" and "virtue."

The new reality that Eve transports Adam to is evidently sexualized; indeed, the tasting from the Tree of Knowledge can be interpreted as the first sexual act, or the first realisation of sexual desire.¹³ That is why, according to Stephen Pattison, it is “[since] the incident of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden [that] sexuality and the body have been seen as particularly sensitive sites of shame [...]” (PATTISON, S., 2002: 267). The lyrical I of Crozier’s poem, however, is not the authoritarian *seer*: the unexpected nakedness she witnesses is unworldly and incorrupt. Eve’s confession, in other words, locates shame “somewhere else” — shame is instituted upon her instead of being *naturally* rooted in Eve’s apparent lewdness. In Ewan Fernie’s phrasing, in the Judeo-Christian discourse the “basis of female shame is unchastity or a reputation for unchastity” (FERNIE, E., 2001: 84). In the feminist discourse, conversely, Eve is neither promiscuous nor ashamed. Her confession appears to be, therefore, a form of resistance against the dominant story which creates the definition of Woman. The purpose of Eve’s speech is, seemingly, to give a blasphemous testimony of what happened in the Garden of Eden (“without a lie and truly”), the testimony which “[contends] to challenge the sovereignty of male (that is, objective, distant, abstract) [...] discourse” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 31). Eve voices what is “culturally unspeakable,” namely, her innocence. As it is Man, however, who is the designated confessor (i.e. both a listener and a potential redeemer), the question arises whether such a pronouncement *makes sense*.

As suggested in the introductory part of my paper, for numerous feminist writers — such as Sarah Kofman, Mary Daly and Sandra Lee Bartky — confession is the act in which Woman is “forced to replicate [her] disenfranchised social status” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 36). Empowering Man solely and requiring the redemption by patriarchal authority, confession cannot serve as a means of resistance against the patriarchal power. Eve’s blasphemous confession, therefore, can be read as the narrative of transgression which is *meaningful* only in the sense that it is a “transformative activity” (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 34) and “a mode of going through the change” (FELMAN, S., LAUB, D., 1992: 15).¹⁴

The subversive and transformative nature of Eve’s confession reveals itself in the lyrical I’s contesting the notions of truth and objectivity. Crozier’s Eve urges the confessor to “Remember *that*” — to recognize a story which is different from the traditional “this.” Such an idea evidently questions the concept

¹³ In Hebrew the word „know” — *yada* — is a euphemism for sexual intercourse (ECKER, R.L., 1995). Also, in psychoanalytical terms, “the desire to know is [always] constructed from sexual desire and curiosity” (BROOKS, P., 1993: 5).

¹⁴ Felman and Laub distinguish between “confession” and “testimony” and define the former as mute, silent, secret and reductive. Testimony, on the other hand, is — in Felman and Laub’s phrasing — active, open and unconscious. For the sake of coherence — and for the reason that I do not use Felman and Laub’s theory as an interpretative tool — I do not make the distinction between “confession” and “testimony,” and continue to use the former term.

of memory as the faithful inscription of objective facts. Every memory — and every confession — is necessarily imperfect, as it is necessarily incomplete. Such incompleteness, in Bernstein's reading, "allows space for divergent accounts, for competing perspectives" (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 37). At the same time, in confession "emerge varying vested interests in defining the transgressor, the transgressed, and the transgressive" (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 37). Confession, therefore, is an indefinite discursive territory of action and change, where linear truths are fractured by "moments and margins" (BERNSTEIN, S.D., 1997: 38).

The interchange and indefiniteness are evidently detectable in Crozier's poem; on the one hand, Eve belongs to the reality which is neatly arranged into "before" and "after," in-side and out-side, action and reaction, cause and effect. Apparently, she confesses the truth which subverts the dominant, Biblical account of the Original Sin. Apparently, she claims herself innocent, is a transgressor, a defendant and a subject of defence. On the other hand, however, another testimony slips in between the lines of Eve's monologue. Eve tells the story of the past, Man, and the apple, and, at the same time, she tells the story of the present, the "you" and the apple:

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

CROZIER, L., 2002: 39

In Eve's confession, "Remember *that*" contends against "Eat *this*"; the justice-seeking victim matches a tantalizing seductress who nibbles "you" while her speech opens itself, invites and entices, over and over again like a siren song. The *truth* Eve tells is elusive and amorphous, as Eve is inscribed into the continuous process of seducing and falling, opening and being misunderstood, and it is another *truth* she tells. Eve's monologue cunningly engages "you" in the game in which "you" discover "you" are being seduced, and what seduces "you" is not the *truth* "you" finally learn from the *real* Eve, but the ancestral and textual *Eat this*. "What I Gave You Truly," as suggested earlier, questions the very concept of the "truth," instead of replacing one "fact" with another.

To sum up, Eve in Crozier's poem becomes a "linguistic" subject which is, however, ambivalent (as, concurrently, she is the object of another story) and transformative. Her shame is transcended not through redemption granted by an authority, but through the subversion of the very concept of the authority, as well as the notions of truth, memory and identity. Eve's monologue, therefore,

becomes an “experimental site” and, simultaneously, Eve’s sin and shame turn open to transposition.

Conclusion

In her *Gyn/Ecology. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Mary Daly compares the well-known fairy-tale titled “Snow White” — in which a beautiful princess seemingly dies having eaten a poisonous apple — to the poisonous fruit. In Daly’s words, “the child who is fed tales such as *Snow White* is not told that the tale itself is a poisonous apple, and the wicked Queen (her mother/teacher), having herself been drugged by the same deadly diet throughout her lifetime (death-time), is unaware of her venomous part in the patriarchal plot” (DALY, M., 1978: 44). To borrow Mary Daly’s analogy, the Biblical Creation Myth can be interpreted as the forbidden fruit, consummation of which leads directly to the experience of shame. Myths — in Daly’s phrasing — are said to “open up depths of reality otherwise closed to us. [What] is not usually suggested [however, is] that they close off depths of reality which would otherwise be open to us” (DALY, M., 1978: 44). While participation in patriarchal reality requires the constant repetition of “mythical models to *reactualize* them continuously” (DALY, M., 1978: 45), *transforming* this reality depends upon the metamorphosis of its mythic narratives. The purpose of my interpretations was, accordingly, to point out the transformative qualities of Crozier’s poems, as it is my belief that Crozier “[a-mazes] tales that are phallic” (DALY, M., 1978: 47) and by doing so advocates the redefinition of “shame” and “transgression” into open and subversive categories.

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