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LANGUAGE AND RESISTANCE IN THE WORK OF JANETTE TURNER HOSPITAL

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RESUMO

O objectivo deste trabalho é o estudo da linguagem como forma de resistência às estruturas sociais e políticas existentes na sociedade. Escolhemos a obra literária de Janette Turner Hospital por considerarmos ser ela um exemplo, quase perfeito, de como a linguagem pode ser usada para subjugar e manter intactas estruturas sociais profundamente injustas e ao mesmo tempo ser um meio de combater e reformar essas estruturas.

Organizámos o trabalho começando pela apresentação de um primeiro capítulo – uma introdução de carácter geral – que intitulámos "Os usos da linguagem e os discursos da resistência". Nesta primeira parte da tese apresentámos algumas posições sobre a opressão das mulheres – e outras minorias – que consideraram o uso da linguagem como um dos mais importantes meios de opressão. Na reforma da utilização da linguagem encontram a possibilidade de lutar contra as situações de profunda injustiça e opressão, e através dela, a possibilidade de reformular as próprias estruturas sociais existentes.

O critério para a escolha dos três romances de Janette Turner Hospital teve em consideração a época em que foram escritos, o local, e o conteúdo.

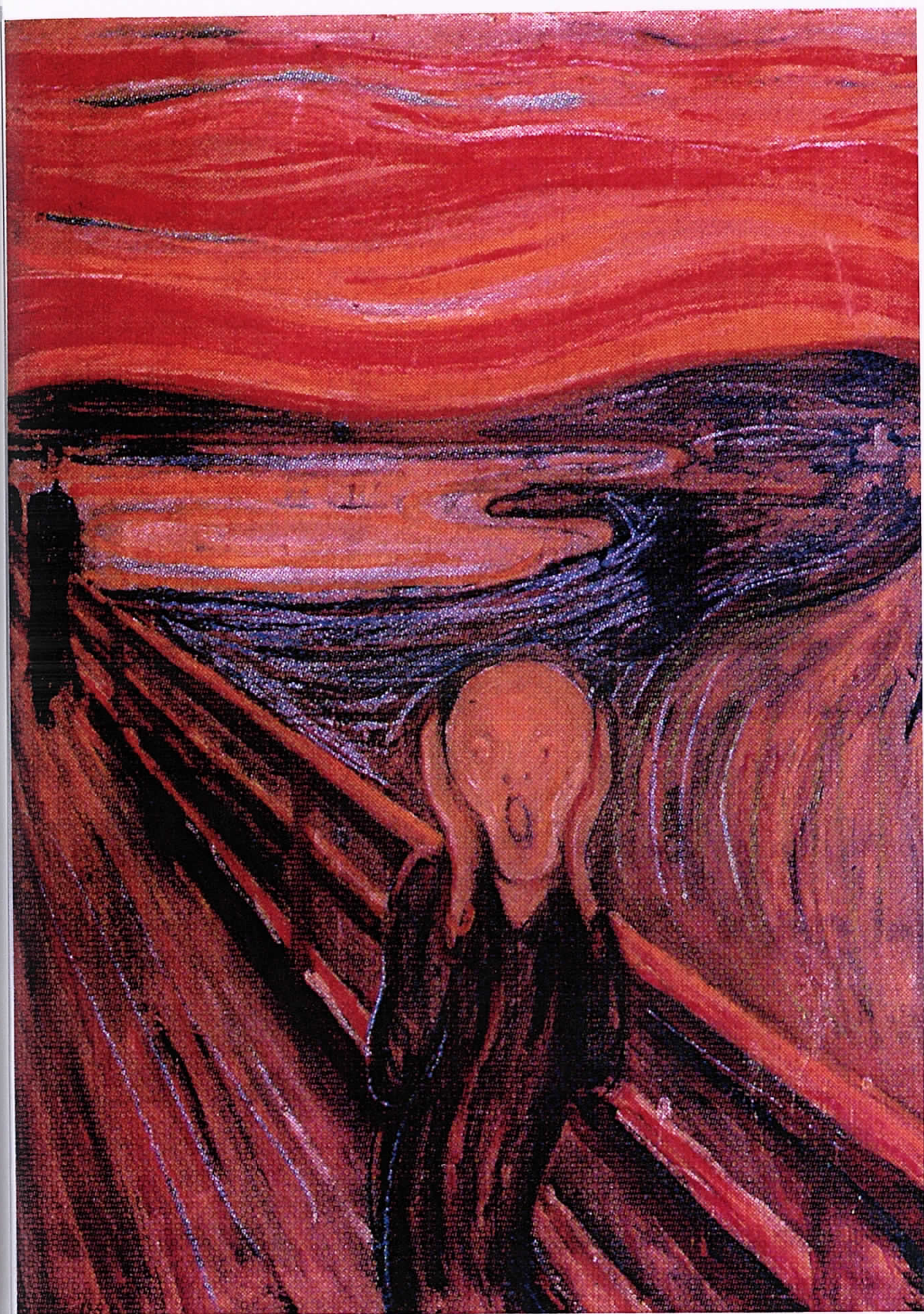
A primeira obra estudada *The Ivory Swing*, é de facto o primeiro romance publicado desta autora, e podemos integrá-lo na primeira vaga de feminismo.

Na segunda obra estudada, *Borderline*, encontramos uma mais profunda resistência intelectual.

O último romance estudado neste trabalho (e também o último desta autora publicado até à data), *Oyster* (1996) apresenta todas as estruturas literárias subversivas do pós-modernismo.

Segundo o conceito pós-modernista não há verdades universais e portanto não há respostas definitivas. Os romances de Janette Turner Hospital recusam soluções finais, e os seus finais podem ser novos começos de histórias não contadas, deixando à leitora ou leitor a liberdade de ter uma "leitura activa".

Na investigação da problemática de todos estes temas, considero que o uso da linguagem feito por Turner Hospital, e as estratégias linguísticas por ela usadas, estão ligadas às possibilidades de resistência da sua escrita.



I

Uses of Language and Discourses of Resistance

I

Uses of Language and Discourses of Resistance

Feminism in its widest sense is arguably the most important event in literary criticism this century. It is not surprising, then, that contemporary Feminism has devoted much energy to considerations of language, to its capacity to be complicit in women's oppression as well as the possibility of reforming it. In Deborah Cameron's words, in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (1985), the essence of the challenge lies in the concern to demystify language and linguistics. And in the very different discourse of Julia Kristeva we cannot conceive of a revolutionary struggle which does not involve a revolution in discourse.

Language was included in First Wave feminist political analyses, because women discovered that it was as important as physical violence, discrimination or legal status in the oppression of women. Feminists started to study the way they were represented by the mass media and were not happy. They perceived that school textbooks, children's fiction and advertising – to give some everyday examples - reinforced sexism in language and in society. Cameron cites instances of "common" language used by the media in which men occur as the central reference, while women are referenced in terms of

their appearance or sexuality: "Blonde in Fatal Car Crash", "Bitches Wear Furs", "Mankind", "Man in the Street", etc., etc..

In the Introduction to *Communication, Language and Sex* (1980), Cheris Kramarae states, however, that it is no longer important to determine how women and men use language differently. The research methods used by tendencies within sociology, linguistics, speech communication and psychology had the effect of making some characteristics of women's communication appear unimportant or unheard. These methods defined what was studied and how, and in fact tended to "perpetuate those visions of reality" (2). An issue that should interest us more, according to Kramarae, is to discover why our culture gives so much emphasis to differences between women and men. We should rather study "the ways that the attitudes and behaviours of people, whether male or female, vary" (4). Thus, while she questions the importance of studying words, language codes and language use, she cites the historian Mary Ritter Beard who indicates "the importance of words as symbols representing categories which guide our view of the world" (6).

Referring to sex differences in speech, Philips M. Smith states that it is undeniable that the representation of women and men in language (in contemporary English usage) shows "prejudicial attitudes demeaning and degrading women while glorifying men, thus apparently reflecting dominant social values" (13). Forms of address, titles, word order and the use of pronouns can be considered a pro-male and androcentric bias in society.

Language as the means for the transmission of beliefs and values deeply affects female-male relations, and reinforces the subjugation of women and the dominance of men. Clearly we might legitimately conclude that there are other variables to take into account when studying speech differences apart from sex differences, and later feminisms have challenged the ethnocentrically western middle-class bias in these issues. Moving on however to the more specific area of literary language it can also be affirmed that it has been centrally shaped by men so that, from a feminist point of view, women are "represented" from an "androcentric" or "phallocentric" perspective. Some feminists often prefer to use the word "phallocratic" which combines the idea of male and power (Greek Kratos, "power"). The social system where men dominated women in all social relations has also been called "patriarchy" by feminists. In such societies, knowledge is used by men as a power that enables them to dominate. There is a tendency, however, to play down the use of the term "patriarchy", as it appears to hypostatize male power as something too inherent in social systems. Terms that suggest male power as more temporary and able to be contested, such as "assymetric power relations", are preferred, by some commentators. Nonetheless, the aim of a feminist literary criticism is generally understood to have the objective of subverting these dominant discourses. Inevitably, in the turbulent world of the contemporary academy, there are several different positions in feminist studies: labels abound, such as sociofeminists, semiofeminists, psychofeminists, marxist feminists, lesbian feminists and black feminists. This

last group believes its members are triply repressed on account of being black (in a white society), women (living in a patriarchal system) and workers (under capitalism). We can consider the two main groups of western feminists however, to be broadly divided into the Anglophone or the French tendencies.

Contemporary anglophone feminism started in the late 1960s and presented its most provocative challenge to English studies in 1970 with the publication of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*. At the same time this can be considered the moment when Feminist literary criticism left the margins and began to move to the centre of English literary studies. Millett analyses the relationship between the sexes in a number of works by male writers, considering this relationship a political one, affirming that "sex has a frequently neglected political aspect" (Preface). It may have seemed surprising at the time that the relationship between the sexes could be viewed in a political light, but Millett says that it depends on how one defines politics. According to her, politics can refer simply to power relationships where one group is controlled by another. She directly relates sex with the power to dominate women so that: "*sex is a status category with political implications*" (24). Domination through sex is thus a way to sustain the preservation of a social hierarchy that feels threatened – Patriarchy in this case. In this social system the subjugation of women has its expression wherever we look - in mythology, religion, social mores and unsurprisingly also in literature. Trying to define the differences between sex and gender Millett states that sex has biological connotations while *gender* has a cultural character, a distinction that has

proven crucial in the development of contemporary feminism. Through childhood all gender identity development is influenced by the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each sex. "Aggressiveness" should be a male characteristic, while "passivity" is considered a feminine virtue, for example. Patriarchy, which subscribes to these views, "is a governing ideology" (33). Its chief institution is the family, which is the controlling unit between the individual and the social structure: "the Family, the society and the state are interrelated" (33). The support of religion for such traditional structures is also a characteristic trait.

In this analysis of such a sexual politics not only sex, but class and race need to be considered. And yet besides sex, class and race, knowledge is perhaps the most important issue. Knowledge is power and part of the subordination women have suffered is due to the fairly systematic ignorance imposed upon them. Even in modern patriarchies where all educational levels are opened to women it still doesn't guarantee them senior positions, as if society doesn't believe they possess appropriately powerful "knowledge". Sometimes patriarchal force is institutionalised through legal systems (the death penalty, abortion restrictions, etc). Sexual violence and especially rape are other forms of non-institutionalised but widespread force: "In rape, the emotions of aggressions, hatred, contempt and desire to break or violate personality take a form consummately appropriate to sexual politics" (44). In pornography and psychoanalysis sadism is directly associated with the male victimisation of the female. Kate Millett presents a long list of cruelties and

barbarities throughout the history of patriarchy and throughout the world in all continents and civilisations: "the image of women we know is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the 'otherness' of women" (46). Within these fears the idea that woman's sexual functions are impure is general – in literature, in myth, in religion, in primitive and civilised life. In the well-known formulation, "the Freudian description of the female genital is in terms of a castrated condition" (47). This lends further weight to the thesis that the female is less than male, so the male should wield power. A certain superstition is linked to these assumed notions of impurity and inferiority and so "nearly all patriarchies enforce taboos against women touching ritual objects (those of war and religion) or food" (47). Pandora's box and the Biblical story of the fall are considered by Millett to be the two main myths of western culture. Both are based on feminine evil – sexuality – putting an end to a golden age. Females are seen as nothing less than the "evils of the male condition" (51). All these ingrained ideas result in the acceptance and maintenance of patriarchal ideology so that representations of woman within all levels of patriarchal culture deprived her "of any but the most trivial sources of dignity or self-respect. In many patriarchies, language, as well as cultural tradition, reserve the human condition for the male" (54).

Millett also posits the question of the conflict between reader and text/author, showing a lack of conventional respect for the authority of the author, stating the right of the reader to her own viewpoint, using anger as a

strategy of resistance. The success of Kate Millett was due to the fact that she was able, as a feminist critic, to bridge the gap between the institutional and the non-institutional. These general areas of concern, of which Millett is such a powerful and lucid exponent, were to lead, inevitably to a reevaluation of the discourse and practices of literary criticism in the Anglo-American critical tradition.

To take one of the most famous results of and stimulations to these reevaluations, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) studied women writers in the nineteenth century. They realised that there were common traits in their literary works even when those women writers [were] "often geographically, historically and psychologically distant from each other" (xi). These common traits "could be explained by a common female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinition of self, art and society" (xii). They found that they had "to recover not only a major (and neglected) female literature but a whole [neglected] female history" (xii). *The creative gift* had been considered a male quality and the notion of an author was linked with creativity but also with authority, and "the poet, like God the Father, is a paternalistic ruler of the fictive world he has created" (5). There was in many male writers throughout the centuries the notion of a parallel between the act of writing (male/ creation/ pleasure) and the sexual act (male/ female/ pleasure). Male writers might use the metaphor of literary paternity differently, but all have one point in common: "a literary text is not only speech [...], but also power mysteriously made

manifest, made flesh" (6). This patriarchal theory of literature posits a question to women writers: is the male-author the only legitimate model? Writing, reading and thinking was thought alien and "inimical of female characteristics" (8).

There are several literary and religious examples of the price women had to pay for not "submitting", for trying to define themselves. In general terms, trying to express themselves constituted a female rebellion that needed to be silenced whether directly or through relegation of women's writing to the unconsidered margins. Accordingly, the woman must give up the search for her *self* in the looking glass. Attention to myths and fairy-tales has been one characteristic of feminist examination of these issues, partly given the strong investment by psychoanalysis with respect to what such stories might tell us about psychological development. The dramatisation of *Snow White* for example – the fight between an "angel" (Snow White) and a "monster" (her wicked stepmother) – presents two images of women who have been locked up in transparent enclosures: the magic glass and the enchanting glass coffin. The male figure (the King) is only present as the patriarchal voice of the looking glass, the voice of judgement. Snow White embodies the docile, submissive heroine (the "angel" in patriarchy) and is going to kill the wicked queen, becoming the "eternally beautiful, inanimate *object d'art* patriarchal aesthetic wants a girl to be" (40). But her future is to go from one glass prison to another one – marriage. Through her goodness she escaped her first prison, but in terms of feminist readings of the tale she must now become

"bad" to try to get free from the second one, destroying herself in the process. Women writers want to look at the other side of the mirror, longing "to escape from the many – faceted glass coffins of the patriarchal texts whose properties male authors insisted that they are" (43).

Within the Anglo-American literary critical tradition, other authors who had followed the steps of these pioneering voices could be mentioned: Annette Kolodny, Myra Jehlen and Elaine Showalter. Kolodny, for example makes a study of women's writing as a separate category and advises a kind of feminist comparativism to discover what makes women's writing different from men's. She shows a preoccupation with experience behind the literary text very different from the former New Critical orthodoxy in which texts were apparently self-sufficient aesthetic objects. Elaine Showalter, author of *Sister's Choice*, in turn, has become one of the most important feminist critics in America. In studying the literary tradition in the English novel from the Brontës to the present day she concludes that there are three major phases of development common to all literary subcultures: *Imitation* (of the dominant tradition); *Protest* (against standards and values) and the fight for minority rights and values, and *Self-Discovery* (the search for identity). Accordingly she draws up the following scheme: *Feminine* 1840-1880; *Feminist* 1880-1930; *Female* afterwards. Showalter further considers two different forms of feminist criticism – *woman as reader* (which she calls feminist criticism) and *woman as writer* (gynocritics). Feminist criticism can deal with works by male authors but gynocritics studies literature by women. She thinks feminist criticism is male-

oriented because in it we often study what men thought women should be and feel, not what women have really felt and experienced. Gynocritics however "focus [...] on the newly visible world of female culture" ("Towards a Feminist Poetics" 28), on the historical, anthropological, psychological, sociological aspects of the "female" text. She concludes that theory and experience are two essential points in the study of women's writings, a study which should ideally work toward their rapprochement.

Showalter goes on to posit the question of a "muted culture", asking whether it can have a literature of its own. By muted culture it appears that she means all the female texts written but not published, all the lost poems, all the perspectives on the world, the versions of history not heard, all the struggles for freedom systematically ignored or silenced by violence or marginalisation over many centuries. In this light, it might be mentioned here that Janette Turner Hospital, whose work is the principal object of investigation of this thesis, deals increasingly with the personal search for an identity, but is also deeply concerned with History, the official History which she believes to be a male account of events.

Among the most stimulating and influential of recent and contemporary thinkers in these areas are the so-called French Feminists, of whom the most visible names are those of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. These writers have been taken up, argued with and absorbed into, to a certain extent, the Anglo-American tradition. Whatever the reservations some critics have felt, their presence has marked much feminist thinking in recent years.

Hélène Cixous in her book co-authored with Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, refers to writing /language as the place where women are not obliged to reproduce the system. In their challenge to this system, then, their own book is a book with a simple structure: in the first part Clément analyses two historically negative images of women and presents them as exemplary female figures – the sorceress and the hysteric. In the second part Cixous writes about liberation and the phallocratic theories that have supported patriarchy and led to the need to fight for freedom. Both however focus on the marginalisation that leads to what they term a certain madness, "on the wilderness out of which silenced women must finally find ways out to cry, to shriek, scream and dance the impassioned dances of desire" (xi). Here we can find some ties to the positions expressed in *Madwoman in the Attic*.

Cixous finds the Other within herself, the repressed female who wants to become free, to enjoy life, to write, to dream, to invent new worlds. Clément believes witchcraft and madness exist in the ordinary life of every woman artist or perceiving woman. Women can achieve freedom, fight the established powers and attack the conservative structure of patriarchal society. But women should not forget that these excesses can be repressed by that same society. Clément frames this in terms of the theory of tarantellas – the bite of the tarantula metaphorises the patriarchal law – and says that only through a passionate dance – that is an extreme attitude – can women free themselves from subjugation and oppression.

In this scheme the sorceress can be considered the intermediary between life and death. The term Hysteria comes from the Greek hyster or womb, and the sorceress/midwife, like the womb, contains "the medicinal magic that can kill or cure" (xiv). In this way Clément links the hysteric (the madwoman) and the sorceress. Basing herself on Freud and his theory of infantile sexuality, she shows that the "displaced" guilt of the daughter falls upon herself and she becomes a "silenced figure who unites sorceress and hysteric in one body" (xiv). Such women with their excessive behaviour fought against the system, trying to find ways out, looking for freedom. Clément also tries to find ways out for female oppression, for while the two mythic women figures "no longer exist" (56), in their place a new free woman may be born, a woman who can fly "into a new heaven and a new earth of her own invention" (xiv). Cixous thinks that to free herself from the system and find her own way "woman must challenge phallo-logocentric authority" (xv), exploring female pleasure, reaffirming herself, and being aware of "the other" within the self.

The question of *Écriture Feminine* (1970) became a central issue in the political and cultural debate of these issues due to Cixous. For Cixous, "feminists" were women who wanted power in the system while she is more interested in a "strong critique of patriarchal modes of thought" (104). Patriarchal binary thought is the basis for the patriarchal value system and its models of thought. All the binary oppositions can in turn be reduced to the pair male/female with their positive/negative evaluation. Cixous tries to construct a positive space for woman presenting her as the source of life, power and

energy. To achieve its full realisation she proposes the creation of a new feminine language that will free oppressed and silenced women. For her, feminine texts are those that explore "difference", trying to subvert the dominant phallogocentric logic, destroying the binary opposition. She concludes that it is not the sex of the author that defines *Écriture Feminine,* but the kind of writing which is produced, for she believes in the bisexual nature of all human beings. Bisexuality (for her) means non-exclusion, either of difference, or of one sex.

Linked to the concept of *Ecriture Feminine* there is the concept of the source of the voice. Writing is the prolongation of the speech act, that is, the voice of the Mother in the pre-Oedipal stage. That is why feminine speech is a "voice mixed with milk", and her vision of female writing is placed in a liquid space where there are no differences. In this, she also disregards conventional logic and stresses the liberation of the reader from any constraints. This recalls Kate Millet's similar position where she states the reader's right to her own viewpoint over against the supposed "authority" of the text. Cixous sees feminine/female writing as a relationship to the physical *jouissance* of the female body, creativity in a non-oppressive and non-sexist society. Anglophone feminists have not always accepted this biological concept of feminine writing, just as Sandra Gilbert believes that the female experience in history cannot be reduced to such extreme figures as the sorceress and the hysteric. Nevertheless Gilbert also thinks that North

American figures such as Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* and Mary Daly in *Gyn-Ecology* hold very similar positions

Marginalisation and the response to it – madness, hysteria and witchcraft – this feeling of displacement and alienation every woman understands, are certainly not only central to Cixous and Clément. They are also central in Janette Turner Hospital. In her work there is always a line or a border that opposes displacement to belonging, feelings common to the characters of her novels. Indeed feminists often feel there is no country for a woman as there are no grandmothers in our family history. The only way out for many of those unheard of and forgotten women was a deep fantasy about a new heaven and a new earth built through magic and witchcraft or the related zones of religion, fantasy, romance and storytelling.

In 1985, Luce Irigaray published *Parler N'Est Jamais Neutre*, a study of language. She analyses several types of languages and concludes that there is no neuter or universal discourse. Everybody's language is inevitably situated, but until now the history of thinking has been told in male terms, and thus a feminine language should be created. She also considers the question of the assumed neutrality of scientific language and its relation to the question of gender in language. She believes that the putative universal truths of scientific discourse are still only partly true, because they are stated from the subject's perspective. Central to this debate on the assumed neutrality of language is the fact that "the speaker" has a gender even though the speaker was taught "a neutral" language, although it is also true that many other

factors, besides sex and gender, are going to condition the person who speaks. Yet the question of the sex of the discourse had not been put, because until then man had been the only possible subject of discourse, says Irigaray. The basis of this assumed conception is the idea that "man" is supposed to represent the human race. Irigaray posits the question of how to show the language of the Other (woman) without subordinating to the One (man)? "Comment dire l'Autre sans se subordonner encore à l'Un?" (283). Irigaray goes on to develop this thought by focusing on the different articulation between the speaker and nature according to whether one is a man or a woman. According to psychoanalytical thinking, women don't have to distinguish themselves – as men do – from the Mother Nature that produces them; they can stay linked to her without losing their sexual identity while the male child must always undergo the psychological rupture of separating himself from the Mother Nature. That would allow women (if it were not for the authority of the identity principle stated by man) to enter the universe of language in a different way, a "word way" still unknown. From this refusal to allow woman the construction of her own language comes the sense of non-being, the notion of emptiness, nothingness and displacement. Western logic bases itself on a binary structure, opposing contradictory terms, that cannot "be" at the same time. But these concepts are not valid or used when applied to language, where masculine and feminine are reduced to masculine. Woman is thus perceived as exile in the male world, where there are values she cannot appropriate. Out of the chaos they look for the place

where they got lost: "L'histoire ne leur a-t-elle pas imposé cet impossibilité: continuer à vivre coupés de leur commencement et de leur fin?" (297).

In Irigaray's work *Le langage des Déments* her conclusion about the passive and mimetic relationship of insane people to the structures of language is very similar to the way she thinks in *Spéculum de l'Autre Femme* (1974) that women relate to the phallocratic discourse. *Ce Sex Qui n'en Est Pas Un* (1977) followed the same line as *Speculum.* In Irigaray's feminist theory there isn't (as in Kate Millett) a rejection of psychoanalysis, but a criticism of its submission to the misogynist rules of western philosophical tradition as far as femininity is concerned, especially when it deals with sexual difference. Irigaray considers that for Freud woman is a mirror of man's own masculinity. She is cut off from pleasure. She can remain silent or imitate man, as if she were a lesser male. This mimetic behaviour is (for Irigaray) a form of hysteria. Although there are divergent points, Irigaray's conception of femininity and feminine language is similar to that of Cixous. She doesn't want to intervene in existing structures of power but claims that feminists must transform the existing power structures and the very concept of power.

Finally, Julia Kristeva studies the questions of oppression and emancipation from a different point of view, often opposed to that of Cixous and Irigaray. In her analyses of language Kristeva considers that the basis for modern linguistics is authoritarian and oppressive. Echoing Cheris Kramerae, she claims that the speaking subject should become the object of linguistics and states that the pursuit of sex difference in language is an impossibility and

a political error, as it would mean accepting the concepts of masculinity and femininity as stable. Her theory of language focuses on the process between speaking subjects, concluding that there should be specific linguistic strategies in specific situations. According to her, language should be studied as a specific discourse, as *parole* not as universal *langue*.

The rejection of the dichotomy masculine/ feminine by Kristeva challenges the very notion of identity so painstakingly brought into the open by earlier feminists. Influential U.S.-based academic Toril Moi thinks it is fundamental, for feminists, to defend women as women, as a way to fight patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women. She criticises Kristevan theory, which bases itself on the politics of language as a material and social structure, but doesn't take other structures into account which would be fundamental to any radical and social change. Although Kristeva has very different theoretical orientations, there are in her thinking points in common with the powerful originary voice of Simone de Beauvoir – such as a theory of social revolution based on class as well as gender.

Despite their differences, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray have all been influenced by Lacan's reading of Freud. According to Lacan, in the *Imaginary* or pré-Oedipal period the child is linked to the mother as a part of her and it is only when it enters the *Symbolic* order – when it is separated from the mother, that it acquires language. The loss of the maternal body and the desire for it, is the first repression and it opens up the unconscious. Thus, to Lacan, to speak as a subject is to represent repressed desire.

In Kristeva's theory of acquisition of language she changes Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic order to a distinction between the *semiotic,* the place of the mother, and the *symbolic,* the place of the father, and the signifying process becomes the interaction between these two terms. She thinks that it is the transgression of the *symbolic* by the *semiotic* which would allow for revolutionary change. Contrary to Cixous, who has a vision of the female body as the site of women's writing, Kristeva rejects the concept of an *écriture feminine* as inherently female. For her, to speak "as a woman" doesn't mean anything because woman as such doesn't exist. She doesn't accept the exclusive emphasis on the gender of the speaker, as there are many different discourses, many different feminines. She thus rejects "groups", preferring individuality. Kristeva doesn't so much have a theory of femininity but rather a theory of marginality, subversion and dissidence, where women, dissident intellectuals, and the working class are side by side fighting against a centralised power structure. Many French feminists continue to think that irrationality, chaos and fragmentation, which supposedly represent femininity, are the means to subvert the patriarchal system.

To bring this synthesis up to date, Jean Curthoys' *Feminist Amnesia*, published in 1997, has been considered an important challenge to contemporary academic feminism. In her analyses of several decades of feminism Curthoys states that "the insistence on the general necessity of internal psychological change for effective political change" (15-16) became the defining characteristic of the women's liberation in the late 1960s and

early 1970s. However another characteristic was the idea "that domination by human beings of each other induced a common psychological dynamic of power" (16), leading to the dominance of this dynamic of power and its acceptance by subordinate groups. This so-called "first wave feminism" has been criticised by the "second wave" in the 1990s. This latter is now a powerful movement or tendency with great influence in social institutions. One of the most important parts of this movement is the women's studies movement, within which "more competent feminist minded academic women" (x) have criticised a less academic feminism. Curthoys goes on to establish further differences between the first and second wave of feminism. There was a morality in the movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s that has been forgotten, she claims, referring to that first wave and the ideas that informed it as "liberation theory". It was a critical theory interested in changing the world, not so much in interpreting it. This theory linked psychology with politics, believing that the changes needed in society were only possible through the workings of power. Curthoys thinks this "liberation theory" has affinities with the philosophy of Socrates even though this theory, like most critical theories, is a political one, and "the Socratic way of life is classically posited as an alternative to the political life" (12). Moreover, this "liberation theory", different from other critical theories, is influenced by Christian morality. The solidarity that was central to it can be interpreted in terms of a Christian concept of love. From the political point of view it resembles a Christian spiritual transformation (without the notion of God). Besides the influence of the Black liberation

movement in the 1960s, there were in liberation theory the ideas that would be formative of Woman's Liberation – especially "the activity of consciousness raising" (4). This early movement was short-lived but provided a great "part of the conceptual basis for the emergence of contemporary feminism itself" (4).

The second wave feminists however, state "the superiority of the later feminism of difference" (4). They don't identify with the early movement and this attitude prevents the recognition of the more positive aspects of Women's Liberation – freedom, reason and autonomy. The "universalisation of these and other ideas have been taken as characteristics not only of the thinking of a whole historical period but also as necessary for any theory seriously concerned with ideas of autonomy and freedom" (5). Curthoys states that these liberation ideas have been repressed and that is the reason for what she defines as *Feminist Amnesia:* "the process of rewriting the history of Women's Liberation [...] has been the unconscious result of certain political forces" (6). These forces were socially threatening ideas which dealt with the workings of power and control. This liberation theory opposed power, and opposed *the assumption that some people are intrinsically more important* than others. Simone Weil states this very clearly in *The Need for Roots*: "respect is due to the human being as such and is not a matter of degree" (Weil 1987:15). This ethic of the irreducible value of human beings, claims Curthoys, was the great achievement of the movement and when it was later sidelined and repressed it has led to intellectual and political "compromise".

Second Wave feminists, instead of opposing power, look for it. The contradiction of desiring power and the moral opposition to power is starkly apparent in contemporary feminism. Moreover, it insists on a feminism of difference, because only this kind of feminism can be truly subversive. Liberation theory supposedly didn't explain the origins of power but gave a psychological explanation for the mechanisms of power. These operations of power should accordingly be destroyed within the psyche. One of the main psychological effects of power is the conviction "of the relative superiority and inferiority of human beings" (18). From this comes the notion that powerful is better than powerless, men better than women, whites better than black, and the practical result of these convictions is domination and subordination. Feminists of a poststructuralist/ psycho-analytic orientation criticise Kristeva and Irigaray because both base their theories on deconstruction and on the conception of the divided subject. This conflict is also over the issue of the specificity of sexual difference. It deals with the question of discovering, Curthoys states, "whether there is a specifically feminine desire and, therefore [...] *a specific feminine language/discourse*" (141). *With respect to the nature* of the subject, feminist theory tends to focus on the divided subject, generating different interpretations of Freud's Oedipus complex, and of the work of Lacan, already referred to. Supporters of Irigaray's ideas believe that Kristeva should recognise different subjectivity in men and women, claiming that discourse is also sexed. While Kristeva recognises a different psychological history for the female and the male, however, this difference is

not intrinsic to the sexes as such. Nevertheless, many feminists depend on the conception of a strong sexual difference that leads to a different subjectivity and discourse. They think there is also a female symbolic, concluding that subjectivity is sexed and that male subjectivity has become the only culturally recognised form while female subjectivity is repressed. Even the subjective formation described by post-structuralist theory belongs only to the male subject and the masculine symbolic order. Curthoys refers to "strong difference feminism" as that which claims that the necessary changes might come if women become subjects as *women*, not as men. Women would speak, write and communicate as women and it would lead to a female language and a female symbolic. To fight patriarchy they advocate the creation of women's discourse, women's theory even women's science. Despite such assertions, however, it has proven difficult to formulate a clear definition of women writing as women.

If we turn our attention from this general framework to how such issues might be produced within the work of a contemporary and avowedly feminist, novelist, we see that the author chosen for this examination, Janette Turner Hospital, engages with most of these areas of interest repeatedly in her work. She writes from the underworld, speaking the speeches of silenced women, victims of male power structures. But she goes beyond the issue, widening the field of her fight through language to other groups – men included – crossing gender boundaries to embrace all the oppressed and exploited victims of different types of power: political, religious, racial, economic,

ecological and familiar. Through her refusal to accept the official metanarrative, and her fragmented reconstruction of a new History, by means of the energetic constructions of memory, she articulates a challenge to the power structures of western societies. The non linearity of the concept of time, the destruction of certain myths – such as the myth of the good pioneer – the challenge to "authoritative knowledge", the denouncing of violence and the darker sides of human nature, all characteristics of her writing, make her an uncomfortable writer. There are, nonetheless, in her love of nature and her love of language, a mixture that enables her to create vibrant and frequently scintillating prose. Even her interest in violence and the adequate representation of its power do not deflect her into a negative construction of women as victims, but serve as a challenge to a redoubled insistence on the possibility of speaking out, speaking up and using language to further the struggle of the disempowered against the powerful.

II

The Ivory Swing

II

The Ivory Swing

Much has been written on issues of identity, especially on the belonging/ not belonging dichotomy in Janette Turner Hospital's novels. Belonging and the redefinition of identity, key issues in her thinking, are also major concerns of post colonial writers in general as David Callahan states in "Janette Turner Hospital and the Discourse of Displacement". Hospital has written often on her experience of cultural displacement (from Australia to North America) and her concern about how to learn to deal with loss and difference. These concerns are felt by her characters too. As she says, speaking of the novels and in an interview with Diana Brydon: "I think of them as novels about nomadic people. The key characters are people who straddle several countries, several kinds of cultural perceptions, and climatic changes, and that's the way I live all the time" (21). In terms of her own identity, she says: "I have a gut sense of myself as an Australian, but also a feeling that I don't belong anywhere" (15). Coral Ann Howells, writing on *The Ivory Swing*, states that this is a story "about outsiders confronting cultures other than their own, fascinated by difference and in the end led through their very awareness of difference to new insights into themselves" (130). These transposed

identities enable new choices for the future. As Margaret K. Schramm states in "Identity and Family in the Novels of Janette Turner Hospital" (1993), "her characters tend to be nomads like herself, and she writes about crossing boundaries" (84), being generally concerned with the alienated and dislocated. Nevertheless, Schramm thought that scant attention had been paid to the issues of identity that pervade her novels.

Hospital's characters achieve self-knowledge through recognising their accountability for others, particularly for some form of double. In her novels *The Ivory Swing*, *Borderline*, *Charades*, and *The Last Magician* her main characters feel deeply responsible in an individual, moral, and political way for victimised people: Juliet for example feels responsible for Yashoda's death in *The Ivory Swing* as she has encouraged her to rebel against the Indian laws governing widows.

Central to feminist thinking and present in Hospital's novels is also the dichotomy of the public and the private. In *The Ivory Swing* Juliet's husband David travels on a public mission and therefore moves in public spheres, while the female character is restricted to her private journey of self-discovery, although Juliet is always aware of other journeys parallel to her own.

With access to the public zone restricted, Juliet's relation to the Nature she sees all around her takes an added significance. Juliet is physically attracted to nature in India, and we feel behind her the memories of the narrator linking her to the Australian rain forest. This forest, in its intertwined profusion, takes on a double metaphoric power in her imagination, both as a

examination of Juliet's identity, Yashoda, the young Indian widow "becomes Juliet's shadow self, the double who acts out desires that Juliet represses" (86), says Margaret Schramm. Yashoda challenges Juliet to solve her internal conflict and question her choices. In terms of Juliet and Yashoda's being only one character, the half Juliet is going to become a survivor, breaking frontiers and becoming a free, whole human being. Yashoda becomes thus the victimised part, who must be sacrificed in order to give birth to a new born woman. Juliet's quest, however, is not simply selfish but inflected with her deep sense of responsibility for those who live in the margins, "'Outside' the already-existing power relations" (127) as Irigaray states in *This Sex Which is Not One,* or who are the victims of violence. Acting upon this responsibility becomes just as frustrating as constructing her own space in which to act, for the public mission is abrogated in her novels by the male characters.

In feminist terms, History, in general, has been a male narrative possessing many blank spaces that must be filled by female stories. Juliet is going to write her story in the attempt to find her freedom and her intellectual fulfilment. But throughout this journey of discovery she can't find female words strong enough to be heard. There is the need to build a new type of language, a language of authority, perhaps even to appropriate a male language, "In the world of authority and exploration and freedom. The world of men" (146). Juliet is accordingly conscious that language must change, new words have to be found, and used.

As Kristeva has made us aware, we cannot conceive of a revolutionary struggle which doesn't involve a deep change in discourse (cited in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* by Deborah Cameron (1)). In order to change discourse, however, one has to enter it, and to do that one has to face up to something that is central to this novel, which is "silence". Silence serves as language's double, as it were, enjoined upon women who are obliged to accept exploitation and unfair treatment in Indian society: "Don't fight, Yashoda said. It's useless to fight" (45). Tillie Olsen in *Silences* refers to several types of silence – censorship silences paralysing literary production; religious and political silences imposed on people; silences of the "marginal" due to colour, class and gender, "the silence of centuries as to how life was, is, for most of humanity" (40). This issue is ultimately linked with the concept of "official History" and the "truth" of its narrations. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), for example, mentions the historical link between women and silence, referring to lost novelists or suppressed poets. Silence on the other hand can also be seen as a form of language, as passive resistance used as a kind of protest and not always as a subordinate position. Nonetheless, Tillie Olsen, pointing out that "men still have the advantage of not bearing children, and rearing them, of not doing housework plus work outside the house" (32) concludes that women "who write are survivors" (39).

Linked to this issue of silence comes the acknowledgement of the caste system. *Caste*, a word of Latin origin, was used in the sense of "race" by the Spanish and applied to India by the Portuguese in the middle of the 15th

century. According to Dubois, in *Moeurs, Institutions et Ceremonies des Peuples de L'Inde,* the caste system was a way of maintaining order in India and with its division of labour of preventing the individual from escaping social control. James Mill, in *The History of the British India* (1817), suggests that this organisation was common in ancient Egypt, Greece and Iran, and that it is not only linked to the division of labour and production, but also to a religious concept, that of the divine will. As we know it in the 20th century, it is a system of distinctions related to birth, social position and education with a religious justification out of which the Brahmins profit. The central ideological principle in this system is the opposition pure/impure. It is a system of ideas and values where there are complex types of relations between different castes and between different groups within the castes. But the fundamental opposition, pure/impure, explains the superiority of those who are classified as pure over those perceived to be impure. In this complex scale Brahmins and Untouchables (who are without caste at all) are extreme categories. The execution of impure tasks by the Untouchable is necessary to keep impurity away from the others: "This is the task of servant peoples. No other persons are sweeping on my properties" (11), says Shivaraman Nair.

Prior to the publication of Mulk Raj Anand's novels *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), the middle and upperclasses were generally the protagonists of novels by Indian writers. Anand's novels deal, for the first time, with the outcast in India and the conflict between the restraining Indian society and the individual's fight for freedom. Untouchability can be seen as an

intensification of the concept of the man alone theme, and is linked with the dichotomy belonging/ not belonging, with an implied or actual exclusion from the social system and existing power relations, a central issue to Hospital. The pure/ impure dichotomy also has a parallel in western thought which considers woman as not man, concluding that man is superior to woman. Both are ultimately feminist issues and, as Sally Robinson claims in *Engendering the Subject*, the analysis "of dominance and subordination along lines like gender, race or class" (4) must be vigorously entered into. These issues are central to this novel, in which the word *servant* appears often in the first few pages and throughout the novel – "this is the task of servant peoples [...] And yet the boy was a full-time labourer, a bonded servant of Shivaraman Nair" (11). Elaine Showalter in *Sister's Choice* considers language a fundamental issue that allows, "through strategies of double-voice writing a different look at reality" (7). The woman writer is the "stranger" in male literature, as she uses the dominant language which is not "adequate to express the experience and reality of muted or marginal groups" (7). This is the frustration Juliet will feel as she attempts to deal with the powerlessness of both women and servants in this world.

Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), viewed the relationship between the sexes in a political light, concluding that Sex gives the power to dominate. As one form of opposition to this she uses taboo words and aggressive approaches in her literary critical work. As Toril Moi points out in *Sexual/ Textual Politics*, Kate Millett "reads against the grain of the literary text" (24)

with boldness and defends "the reader's right to posit her own viewpoint, rejecting the received hierarchy of text and reader" (25). A part of this strategy is the fact that she is not submissive or ladylike in her criticism of works by male authors. Commenting on Henry Miller's novel *Sexus* she writes: "The protagonist who is always a version of the author himself, is sexually irresistible and potent to an almost mystical degree" (5). And goes on to challenge the accepted concept of the male as the uncontested ruler and master, even in the bedroom: "Ceasing to admire himself, the hero is now lost in wonder at his effects [...] Like the famous programmed dog, in fact just like a bitch in heat, Ida responds to the protagonist's skilful manipulation" (6). On Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* she writes, among other deeply ironic and challenging comments: "the foregoing is a description of heterosexual sodomy" (10), or "the comment is indicative of the heavy heuristic value which the hero is to obtain from his sexual exploits" (11). She also uses graphic words to refer to the sexual organs, which was not common among literary critics, especially women.

In *The Ivory Swing* servants and the lower classes are the outcasts marking the frontier between the centre and the margins, necessary but despicable and the representation of their place in some way factors in to that of social hierarchies in general and ultimately to the ways in which women are situated. There is in the novel a different type of frontier thus crossed that allows Juliet a deeper look inside herself and her life. Here the western woman becomes an outsider – a foreigner and a woman – just as are, in their

different but related ways, the Indian widow and Prabhakaran the young servant boy. To Juliet's western eyes, this foreign culture offers, at first, an exotic quality that fascinates and intrigues. But this traditional western view of the east is soon abandoned as she comes across the daily oppressions which forbid even the most basic human rights. The ivory swing, that Juliet and her husband admire so much, might apparently become the symbol of the oppressive link of an Indian marriage – where there isn't the slightest possibility of a choice. "Radha was tangled with her consort, helplessly as ivy around a trellis" (23). However, as David Callahan points out in "Janette Turner Hospital and the Discourse of Displacement",

> the trope of the swing, [...] well suggests the transitional nature of Juliet's position (amongst other things). Except of course that she has no position, only positions, and it is out of the constant decisions about her actions in a series of linked arenas of power and exclusion that the novel sustains an interrogation of how the various types of power and the various modes of exclusion operate: husband/ wife in Canada and Kerala, man/ woman, Western/ Indian and outside/ belonging (335).

The conflicts within the woman traveller Juliet, her inner division, oppose her desire to flee and her interest in staying. Within her marriage she "is bound by a silken leash to a kind of gentleness more rare and beautiful than a unicorn"

(31). These words – silken leash and unicorn – referring to marriage ties, have a symbolic and subversive meaning with their connotations of dominance and subordination albeit within a fairy-tale world. Nonetheless, the realities of the domestic immediately destabilise this picture in the insistence on the graphic description of household tasks that stresses the impurity of the dirty routine, the stinking, disgusting boundaries of women's/ servant's work: "Her hands and arms were raddled with sticky remnants of intestine and flecked with wisps of feather and fluff from the plucking" (33).

Contrasting with this domestic unpleasantness, the second meeting with Yashoda comes surrounded by mystery and beauty. Hospital suggests a kind of link between these two female characters, a deep complicity, a coded language understandable only to them. This is an issue central to many feminists. In her work *Man Made Language,* Dale Spender aroused the interest of feminists who wanted to think and read about language. Women started to exchange their experiences, understood by and shared with other women. Deborah Cameron in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* refers to sexist language – the one we use – and states that it should not be accepted by women, as we are now "aware of the ways in which English insults, excludes and trivialises" (73) women. The use of universal male pronouns, misogynistically insulting words, patriarchal personal names, "girl" used in contexts where "boy" would be unacceptable, "blonde" for the whole woman, etc., are only some of the examples of sexism in language. Because they feel excluded and not represented in what feminist linguists call he/ man language,

women have special ways of understanding each other: "Is it our intimate and kindred knowledge of cages, of the trapped bird beating its futile wings?" (10) asks Juliet. As Irigaray states in *The Sex Which is Not One*, "in these places of women among themselves, something of a speaking (as) woman is heard! [...] the dominant language is so powerful that women do not dare to speak (as) woman outside the context of nonintegration" (131). At the same time, if we speak to each other as men we'll miss each other, fail ourselves. Linked to this intimate capacity of communication, women supposedly have a different perception of things: in Hospital's terms, part of this is the sense of the unreality of the real, an issue central to her work and ever present in this novel. Is it the need to find "how to read meaning in appearances" (184) as Deborah Bowen puts it, in Borderline Magic: Janette Turner Hospital and Transfiguration by Photography"? Some feminists believe that women must thus have a different and subversive reading of "texts" – not only literary texts, but all structures of meaning. Developing on from this, as Irigaray suggests in *The Sex Which is Not One*, "there are [...] more and more texts written by women in which another writing is beginning to assert itself" (134); writing in the sense of a new meaning for an old male view of reality, which has been presented as "the reality". Women don't accept "sameness" as they want to assert their "otherness", their own view of the world. Contemporary women's fiction accordingly tries to deconstruct official narratives – of history, sexual difference, subjectivity – to create new narratives, says Sally Robinson in *Engendering the Subject*. Through language then, Hospital builds a new

perspective on reality, subverting the male narrative, and using a reading of India which attempts to be different from the western standard view. The first fascination with the exotic is soon abandoned to give place to a frustrated anger, and a deep sarcasm. She is critically conscious of the arrogant behaviour of the Indian "master" towards Yashoda: "he tossed it [a stone] after the fleeing Yashoda as a landlord throws a stone at scavenger dogs" (42). With sharp words she takes a critical position against religious arguments that support the existing social structure: "How that Muslim god must fear women [...] A god who covered women with sacks, like walking dung hills" (85).

In this novel there are multiple female voices: the subjects spoken in the text – the characters – and the speaking subject – the narrator. As Sally Robinson points out in *Engendering the Subject*, there isn't the unitary conception any more that woman is different from man. There are many differences between and within women, and we can see this in the three principal female characters. Juliet is starting to look into the other side of the "looking glass", reading with sarcasm and rage different meanings in "reality", recognising new values, making different analyses, not fitting in anymore, and thus having to search for a different way out. Annie is already on the other side of the "looking glass", reading the "texts of reality" from her own perspective, refusing to compromise. Yashoda, the third female voice, makes desperate attempts to get free from the traps and the cages, but without seeing how she can escape from accepting her place in the male discursive and social system.

Under the title "Who does the talking", Dale Spender refers to the belief that women "talk a lot" about trivial topics. This conclusion was also the result of Cheris Kramarae's research when she investigated what people thought were the characteristics of women's language. Other investigators (Phyllis Chesler in "Marriage and Psychoterapy", 1971) observed that "very rarely do men listen silently to a group of women talking" (179) while the reverse is common, at least in our culture. How can we explain this contradiction? Spender thinks that this belief comes from the fact that "the talkativeness of women has been gauged in comparison not with men but with silence" (MML 42). In a patriarchal society women are devalued and therefore so is their language, inevitably requiring them in certain contexts to be silent. Juliet is aware of the way silence is used as a means to dominate in India, and dares to show it to the Indian "master", Shivaraman Nair, who reacts to her challenge: "how would a father buy a husband for such a woman? How is Professor David living with this arguing? Such lack of respect for authority"... (123). With authority marked as masculine, there is no way for woman to formally challenge it, for this would be to assume the authority she patently lacks, always articulated through one male or another. In Kerala "A woman can only live with Kinfolk. There must be a husband, or a father, or an uncle, or her husband's kin to *shelter* her. There is no other way" (93). Women are even, at times, despised and feared as the potential bearers of ill fate: "When the veiled woman directed the tiny rectangle of muslin – window of her eyes –

at the watchers, they stepped back, spitting betel juice to ward off inauspicious occurrences" (85).

The Ivory Swing might be said, then, to function as a clear, even obvious articulation of Dale Spender's strictures with respect to man-made language. When Spender speaks of man's definitions of the world being made from a position of dominance, we see over and over in this novel that men from different sectors of different cultures, but especially Keralan culture, institute their dominance so firmly at the centre of any version of reality they might present, that any version that challenges it is unable to be voiced. Shivaraman Nair makes sure his authority is understood: "The things cannot be discussed with a woman, he said, the matter is closed" (169). This official concept of reality, of history constructed by male narratives, contested by Spender is similarly rejected by Carol Gilligan in her classic *In a Different Voice* (1982), "Listening to women, I heard a difference and discovered that bringing in women's lives changes both psychology and history. It literally changes, the voice: how the human story is told, and also who tells it" (xi). As many other feminists, Gilligan stresses "the crucial role of women's voices in maintaining or transforming a patriarchal world" (xii). Woman should no longer fear to tell "her" truth as was the case of Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, when she refers to the fact that when a subject is highly controversial, as sex is, women cannot hope to tell the truth. Feminists have since learnt that women have got a particular power of their own, as Hospital's countrywoman, Helen Garner, makes us aware in *The First Stone* (1995). In

this economy of discourse, silence is sometimes a consciously chosen answer, and Hospital's character Juliet contemplates opting "for a life of contemplative withdrawal" (46) as the only way to cope, as many other women have done. In Gilligan's words: "it was better to appear selfless, to give up their voices and keep the peace" (x). Besides silence, fairy-tales allegories and the building of unreal worlds have been some of the paths followed by the heroines of many women writers to cope with the frustration of living in an alien world, as has been mentioned.

In *The Ivory Swing*, death for the Indian woman and the young servant, and the breaking of marriage ties for Juliet are the "ways out" Turner Hospital chooses for her characters. Prabhakaran tried to find a different way for his life, through fairy-tales, a glimpse of light for his anguished days, aligning the powerlessness of children with that of women to some degree. That Juliet should choose C. S. Lewis's fable to read to Prabhakaran suggests also that she is aware such narratives offer a discourse of escape in his constricted circumstances, that realism would be inappropriate: "eyes widening at the adventures of those children who found a magic door in the back of a closet and slipped through it into a secret and fabulous world" (131). Nonetheless, stories offer a limited zone in which power can be contested and Hospital is ever aware of the violence with which authority is liable to express itself. Prabhakaran is killed, there is no escape through the wardrobe for him.

Historically women have been excluded from the production of cultural forms which are ascribed power, and language is the most important one, as

we have seen. Even when women achieved the condition to produce cultural forms their production has often not survived or been accorded respect. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) summarised it cuttingly when she said that to write, a woman needed money and a room of her own, referring to economic stability and freedom. In *The Ivory Swing*, Hospital, through her character Juliet, denounces the position that shuts out women's voices and one can see that this is done repeatedly through her marginalisation with respect to language dealing with power and authority: "There had been a cluster of men, a political discussion and she had pitched in energetically. After her speech there had been a silence [...] This is a new Stone Age, she thought. A just discovered colony of Neanderthal beings, perfectly preserved" (170). In Beauvoir's famous summation, this male position led to the concept of woman as "Other", different from the (male) norm. Both sexes have accepted this conceptualisation as the prevailing reality and it is certainly not restricted to India. It can be seen in Canada as well, as we see with Juliet's frustration over small-town life in Ontario: "She was to learn over the years that a small town has subtle and sometimes vicious ways of not forgiving deviations from the norm" (112).

Nonetheless the worlds described to us are not the whole world. With this attitude feminists challenge the ideologies that have supported male power. Joan Roberts, to take one representative example, realised in *Beyond Intellectual Sexism: a New Woman, a New Reality*, that there was the need "to rethink the concepts inherited from men – about them, about us and therefore

about humanity" (1976:5). To the challenge of small Canadian towns and Indian villages alike: "We do not permit changes" (IS 110), women must answer with another challenge. David thought about Juliet: "She was someone who could leave him. [...] She had never been, never would be, dependent on him" (153). However, while this is something Juliet can decide, the Indian widow cannot. The task in general becomes thus to reconceptualise the way in which knowledge could be constructed so that women could be included. The rules for making meaning, for structuring the world differently, must change. Women must no longer be silent and invisible and their construction of reality starts when they begin "to reject the definition which had confined and distorted them", in Spender's words (MML 65). Ultimately then, silence cannot be the answer. Turner Hospital denounces this silence, although admitting the pressures that bring it about, having Juliet suppress her responses on specific occasions: "How unjust, she raged shaking with suppressed anger. How primitively male!" (12); "Barbarian! She fumed silently!" (130) Even though Hospital's text articulates the desire that women should generate their own meanings on the basis of a multidimensional reality and start to unravel the sources of their oppression, it becomes a difficult task when "one could not escape an age-old conviction of wrongdoing" (205), and thus has to face conflicting solutions, often severely culturally specific: "Yashoda and I, she thought, we want everything. We swing between worlds, always in conflict, always looking for impossible resolutions destined to uncertainty and dissatisfaction" (208). " The world of

men" Hospital refers to is an apparently closed male circle, formed by David, Shivaraman Nair and Anand, excluding from it all the female characters for fear of a change in "their" world. But Hospital and her female characters are unable to remain passive in the face of this need for change. One interim strategy is to talk amongst themselves. The revolutionary character of the consciousness raising groups in the 1960s played a major role in the growth and inspiration of the women's movement. Women met and talked and this bonding between them evoked negative reactions from their husbands and lovers, who feared being exposed and losing control. Similarly the female characters in this novel are deeply aware of the fear their attitudes might arouse among males: David "feared bereavement and change, [...] there was no guarantee, should he make an incorrect move, that Juliet would ever come back" (249). Nonetheless, women have a connection between them that comes from sharing the same problems and which, to some extent, fortifies them temporarily against male responses: "the women held each other's gaze. It seemed that all understanding passed between them, the knowledge of all women who braid their own eyes into shackles, who weave with love and resentment the silken cages of their lives" (158).

To Jo Freeman, in The *Politics of Women's Liberation*, consciousness raising groups were "structures created specifically for altering the participants' perceptions and conceptions of themselves and society at large" (1975: 118). Even though in the beginning women might not be conscious of all the implications, these groups helped transform the *muted* condition of

women. They realised the need for new meanings but also the need to keep a link to the old meanings. Nevertheless women's talk (language) is one of the most powerful ways of subverting and transforming the "old" order. Hospital has been conscious of the power of words and has been using them as a weapon to promote change, conscious nevertheless of the attempt on the part of patriarchy to deny her even the possibility of exchange. She makes us aware of it through her character Juliet: "Caged! If I were Faustus, she thought, I would not ask for some male version of Helen, but for one genuine bout of intellectual debate, a sword-play of words and ideas, an opponent who would not quail or cheat." (170). Spender's doubts about the efficacy of consciousness–raising relate to the fact that we "learned" the world through the eyes of men, we "learned" their language, their perceptions of reality, their experiences. We even learned how to know ourselves through their eyes. It is not easy to get outside the "language trap". Spender's fears with respect to linguistic conventions are scarcely exaggerations; Richard Gilman summarises the position when he indicates that: "The nature of most languages tells us more about hierarchical structures of male-female relationship than all the physical horror stories that could be compiled..." (40-45).

When feminists started to try to eliminate the practice of using *man* to symbolise *woman* they were accused of "tampering" with language. Women's understanding that they are not represented in conventional usage has contributed to women's muting themselves, auto-excluding themselves from

that which they feel inscribes their exclusion at its centre. Writing however intrinsically insists that women must become linguistically visible to fight against their non-existence. Although aware of this need of visibility, we know it is not an easy task, for, as Carol Gilligan states "To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard" (xvi). This is not easy to achieve when one group holds a disproportionate amount of power with respect to naming the world. This position gives that group not only the power to influence reality but also the force to rule it, defining who is and who is not allowed access. When Juliet is forbidden entrance to the temple, it serves as a metaphor for the operation of blocking mechanisms in the circulation of cultural power: "you are not permitted, Mrs. David Juliet " (152), to enter the temple. Indeed, naming within religion is a potent and central case of male naming of the world, as Mary Daly indicates in *Beyond God the Father.* In the Bible, according to Daly, men have classified themselves as superior and women as negative. But in other religions we can also find this discrimination as an excuse to control, especially women's sexuality: "you are not understanding that sort of woman, Mrs. David Juliet. Their thoughts wander after men, straying in all directions like the roots of the banyan tree. This rottenness will spread, everything will suffer!" (129). The connection between this control and its articulation through the terms of reference of religious discourse means that when Juliet refers to Yashoda, she ironically summons up this same discourse: "there was a

disturbance in the cosmic ordering of things. Unless the disorder was rectified [...] the full chaos of the Kali Yuga [...] would come upon them!" (218).

Another feminist issue referred to by Spender, and other feminists, is the assumed non-sexuality of women, which she defines as a cultural construct imposed by males and central to the assumption of women's silence. Although women are in fact sexual beings, for centuries they "were required to accommodate their physiology to the male version of reality" (MML 173). Contemporary women have increasingly been breaking this silence about their sexuality and denouncing this fake male construct. Hospital takes her place among these voices in stressing this point in her novel in relation to all female characters. Juliet "remembered lying there sticky with their mingled juices and blood smelling of fertility and springtime" (105). Yashoda, considered an outcast by her kinsman, "flaunted her beauty shamelessly. She was indifferent to family honour. And yet after all, she was woman" (212); she breaks "the old rules [which] have never contained her. She had always been different." (224). And what she defiantly ran the risk of breaking "dharma" to know and fulfil, was her own sexuality: "And yet, she thought, I have known it. This once I have felt the great passion that all the poets sing of. It can never be taken from me. It is everything!" (227). Annie belongs to a different generation of women, who accept sexuality as a part of their lives, apparently free of prejudices: "... you've always been free as a bird, you walk away with a shrug and a laugh, you can't be touched. You're unhurtable" (136). Central to recuperating this sexuality is finding a language in which to

articulate it. Dorothy Hage, in "There is glory for you", realised there is no term for normal sexual power in woman, and Spender points out that there is no name for a sexually healthy female and, without a name, it is difficult to believe in it and accept it as reality. The male sexual construct contains a "double standard" that Hospital acknowledges: "His pride is hurt, she thought. He did not mean for the rules to be played both ways" (75).

Juliet must define her subjectivity before she can question it and she must define the selfhood she has been denied by the dominant culture. She is going to try to write her "story", as telling individual stories is the way to make the *Story* known. Individual stories have to do with power and how it operates and through the deconstruction of History it is possible to achieve a new reality. There is the need to find "words" strong enough to be heard, as she is conscious that women "can subvert the authority of language, language seen as having a single and final meaning" (7), as Linda Hutcheon states in *The Canadian Postmodern*. Postmodernism investigates the relationship between language and reality (the structures of social and cultural power) in ideological terms, but feminism reminds us that these power structures and ideological considerations are implicitly gendered as well. Feminists consider that postmodernism has ultimately an "ideological complicity with the dominant forms of culture it wishes to challenge" (12) and this link is contested by them. Issues such as gender, authority, truth and subjectivity are fundamental to feminist thinking and concepts of social justice in the western world are based now on the right to difference. In *The Ivory Swing* we can

also find differences in the three main female characters. Hospital reminds us of Sally Robinson's indication that one can't assert the unitary conception of women's subjectivity, as women are too heterogeneous to be constructed in this way. In this Keralan patriarchal society women were (and still are) devalued and so is their language, requiring them to be silent in many and significant contexts. But silence must be abandoned by women and other disempowered groups if the principle of "untouchability" is to be eradicated from societies and consciousness alike.

The exclusion from power within social systems still present in many societies and existing power relations are a central issue to Hospital and the main theme of this novel. Women writers and others must "reread" Western cultural assumptions such as the suggestion that culture is male and nature is female, as Sandra Gilbert states in her essay "What Do Feminist Critics Want?". These definitions of cultural authority and creativity excluded women from meaningful cultural production as men considered that "Western culture itself was a grand ancestral property that educated men had inherited from their intellectual forefathers" (33). Juliet's frustration in her attempts to deal with the powerlessness of both women and servants runs through *The Ivory Swing* as a pungent *leitmotiv*, a cry for freedom from constraining and ancestral frames, and a rejection of the established hierarchy that throws "subordinate" people to the margins, leaving the centre to those with power. Janette Turner Hospital, through her character Juliet, tries to cross this frontier between the centre and the margins of social hierarchies, pointing to further

borders to cross, other than the social ones, as can be perceived in her third novel *Borderline*. The themes of female subjectivity, sexual assertiveness, knowledge as a way to achieve independence and intellectual freedom, which have been historically denied to them, excluded from the production of authoritative cultural forms, with their relation to language being at the centre of this exclusion – slightly dealt with in *The Ivory Swing* – become the main issues in *Borderline*.

III

Borderline

III

Borderline

Jean Marc, the male narrator of *Borderline*, constructs what happened a year before – Felicity's story – all the time hoping Felicity is going to reappear and read her own story. He is the narrator but he is also a character within the story. He invents the novel before our eyes and throughout all the story he reminds us that what he says is invention, although this fiction seems to us more real than the world outside his text – a typical postmodern gesture. Jean Marc recreates the characters of this novel in words, while his father recreates them in his paintings, says Patricia Koster in "Bound". Jean Marc further appears as a hybrid character who is used as Felicity's double, her sedentary, logical side as opposed to her restless side that leads her to cross new borders continually. Jean Marc is the land where she returns to from her flights into freedom. Jean Marc tries to put order in her life and Felicity answers with wandering and fragmented behaviour, as she doesn't accept domination in her fluid life. This is the opposite of the traditional concept of the female role in society, Felicity's mode of fighting the place a conservative social structure would assign her, her language of freedom.

Felicity's fluidity and transience is a language of freedom that Hospital uses as a way of allowing her female character a way out: "She is only at ease in transit" (12) says Jean Marc. Felicity has a quality of absence that stresses this sense of independence, this lack of ties: "She floats away [...]. She lives somewhere between now and then. She moves in and out of her life" (93). We are not sure, as Helen Daniel says in the "Introduction" to *Borderline*, whether the novel is a diaphanous narrative which clings to Felicity's memory of the Perugino painting or [...] her [...] image of being entrapped [...] (in) Seymour's paintings" (v). This notion of the immateriality of matter has some contact points with Jeanette Winterson's concept of matter in *Sexing the Cherry*: "Matter, that thing the most solid and well known, which you are holding in your hands and which makes up your body, is now known to be mostly empty space. Empty space and points of light. What does this say about reality of the world?" (8). Uncertainty, and a vision of the world seen as random and multiple, even absurd, are characteristics of a postmodern attitude, and destabilise the conventional authoritative knowledge of reality. Steven Connor in *Postmodernist Culture* suggests there no longer seem to be principles which can act as criteria of value. The post-modern is a centreless universe and "manifests itself in the multiplication of centres of power and activity and the dissolution of every kind of totalizing narrative which claims to govern the whole complex field of social activity and representation" (9). Postmodern theory disavows authority and it can be seen as a nexus of forces opposed to tyrannical totalization and representation. This refusal to accept

traditional knowledge challenges the latter's authority and opens the way to the possibility of many different knowledges and realities fracturing the edifice of certainties. Both Winterson and Hospital share these conceptions and subscribe to these challenges. In this respect, apparently feminists and postmodernists have the same concerns. "Jean François Lyotard defined the postmodern condition as a state of incredulity toward metanarratives" (262) says Linda Hutcheon in "Negotiating Postmodernism and Feminisms". It may be that "smaller and multiple narratives" (262) characterise postmodernism, and we could say that *Borderline* is made up of a series of these "smaller and multiple narratives". But for feminists their main oppositional concern is patriarchy, and they contest the "maleness" of the post-modern movement. As Hutcheon states, there is the need for a transformation of patriarchal social practices and for this Postmodernism has no strategies of resistance.

In *Borderline*, however, Hospital deals with feminist issues in a rather different way from *The Ivory Swing*. Whereas in the earlier novel we can witness a more physical type of resistance – although there is also the psychological resistance of women characters – *Borderline* provides an arena for an expanded intellectual resistance. The issues of the official concept of History, considered a male narrative with the complete absence of female stories; the analyses of the dichotomy Public/ Private, already slightly dealt with in *The Ivory Swing*; women's sexual assertiveness; the reconstruction of the past through memory – the individual, private experience of events that may lead to the reconstruction of a different and truer version of History; and

the notion of being in transit between worlds, with the consequent dichotomy of belonging and dislocation, are the main lines present in this narrative of power and violence. Central to Hospital's work, violence is naturally a question with moral connections, and, through her characters, she articulates an ethic of interfering (as David Callahan states), of acting because of our responsibility to those victims of dominance and violence. On the other hand violence itself can be seen as an extreme form of interfering in other people's lives. As Felicity states: violence "marks you out. You don't want to get involved, but you find out you can't *not*" (112). Linked to the issue of violence there is fear: "Felicity knows about fear. There are two kinds [...] there's the fear, Felicity said, that you are all alone in the world" (152). The other principle kind of fear in Hospital's work is the fear of physical violence, especially rape.

This issue of rape is a *leitmotiv* in many of Hospital's short stories, and can be considered itself a language of dominance. In *Borderline*, Felicity recalls an incident where she and Hester were victims of rape at school. There is forceful condemnation of this type of male behaviour in *Isobars*, in "The Last of the Hapsburgs", after an outrageous violation of women's space by a group of male teenagers: "The acts of men, even when they are boys [...] are shouts that open the signs that try to contain them. We have no access to a language of such noisiness. Our voices are mice mutter, silly whispers" (27). As Silvia Albertazzi points out in "Violence, Angels and Missing People in Janette Turner Hospital's World", "the disgusting act is seen as a linguistic expression" (32). In the story's words: "it spoke a thick dirty

language" (*Isobars* 27). This notion of gender violence, which is very deeply ingrained in all the characters of Hospital's work, is not enlisted against heterosexual relationships. On the contrary, Turner Hospital stresses the pleasure of free, willing sex between people throughout her novels. She fights violence, not sex. Felicity indeed discovers with perplexity a strong and unorthodox sexuality: "I am capable of the commonest kind of lust, she thought, with interest. The sordid garden – variety kind" (*Borderline* 145). It is Violence, all types of violence, that has to be denounced and destroyed. "In her world, [...] violence is a line in itself, [...] connecting women and men" (31) says Silvia Albertazzi. Hospital, in *Borderline,* is however further worried about victims of another type of violence, other than the more predictable sexual violence.

At the beginning of the novel when Felicity is crossing the frontier to Canada she sees a group of illegal immigrants trying to cross the border, hidden in a refrigerator truck, and she is a witness to the way people are treated like animals, without any kind of respect. This incident on the border is told in sharp, shocking words, a violent language to describe a violent action: "Like animal things still warm and faintly bleating in the midst of an abattoir's carnage" (30). The surrealism of the scene surprises Felicity who cannot, at first, understand the reality before her eyes. She had witnessed unbelievable distressing things in the past, in another continent, but was not expecting to see similar scenes in such a wealthy country: "She thought of cave dwellers. Of refugees from another time and place" (31). Again in the description of that

scene Hospital uses shocking, graphic language: "They stared at the carcass nearest them. [...] Someone was in there. A woman. Across her forehead hung a tendril of intestine, ghoulish curl" (35). As Seymour says, " 'These are violent times' " (12). And as Julian Cowley insists in "Violent Times: Janette Turner Hospital's Art of Memory and the History of the Present", "the articulation of that violence is central to her history of the present" (179). In Dolores Marques we can find both the mute and sad representation of "Mary Magdalen" in Perugino's painting and the silent despair in the face of Munch's "Scream": "The woman recoiled, her mouth formed the shape of a scream though no sound came out" (47). Silvia Albertazzi refers to the fact that "in Hospital's world, it is [...] common to find mute or dumb women" (32) and that often women oppose silence to violence – silence becomes another form of language, of discourse, of relations of power. She further states that "violence has just one meaning, [...] (while) silence is polysemic" (34). The same position was supported by Tillie Olsen in *Silences*: "class-economic circumstance and colour, those other traditional silences of humanity, can be relevant only in the special ways that they affect the half of their numbers who are women" (24). In "The Last of the Hapsburgs" (*Isobars)*, one of the characters states that women "are masters of the genre of silence. We will have to invent a new alphabet of moss and water" (27). Silence "in feminine post colonial writing", says Albertazzi, "is a means of revealing the emptiness of the language of violence" (34). Linked to violence (and victims) is the issue, central to *Borderline*, of our responsibility and our moral obligation to

intervene. Albertazzi thinks there are also other and more structural reasons for the silences of Hospital's characters: they live between worlds – the late colonial and the newly independent world – and they feel dislocated. In all of these contexts silence thus becomes a strong language of resistance.

Hospital underlines, all through this novel, the moral obligation to intervene and as a sideline to this criticises the Catholic mode of thinking. To intervene "would be a life time decision. Like giving birth to a retarded child, she was thinking. You can't unmake that kind of burden" (59). Gus, the philandering insurance salesman, is Felicity's accomplice in smuggling one woman across the border. Analysing his behaviour, Felicity goes on to criticise the easiness Catholics have in searching for forgiveness after having committed forbidden acts: "only Catholics had dreams like that. [...] We are trained to spend our lives in hell, so we'll consider purgatory a good deal" (66). Maybe Turner Hospital is only being ironic, suggesting that Catholics have a way of dealing with the need for forgiveness, that some Protestants don't have. However, this way of making amends for the sufferings inflicted on others is not enough and these kinds of crimes must be prevented by the responsible intervention of witnesses.

The writer questions the nature of official History, the collective memory, confronting it with individual memories of the past. Individual narratives of the past and indeed storytelling itself are crucial in reconstructing a true History and it is through such memories that we can understand past events, challenging the fake official narrative, bearing witness. Felicity "knew

better than most people how simple it was to rearrange the past [...] (she) could also toss the present into yesteryear with a mere flick of the phrase" (131). Language can be used to rewrite history, challenging traditional, accepted narratives: "history is what I'm writing" (131).

Other feminists have insisted on the political aspect of official History, considering it a patriarchal means of maintaining the system and preventing changes. Jeanette Winterson in *Sexing the Cherry*, however, believes in the truth-revealing power of storytelling. Storytelling is a way of recording the past where each one tells the same story in a different way. History (official History) doesn't offer a truthful version of the past but a simplified and distorted version of it. She questions the objectivity of traditional/ patriarchal history that tells people "what to believe" and tries to keep them "where they belong". Winterson proposes the construction of an individualistic kind of history that relates the recording of the past to the individual memory of it. Hospital has a similar notion of history, suggesting that public and private memory should be melded together to build a truthful History. For Winterson, the traditional western tale seen by male western eyes should be abandoned for a different history made up of the recording of individual memories of the past. In *Sexing the Cherry* the story of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" has been seen as a feminist solution to the problem of getting free from the father, the dominant order. These women choose positive life solutions, positive "ways out". As a result, they are either left alone by men or the women

willingly leave men, but the women retain their energy, their light, their movement and their freedom.

In *Borderline*, Hospital mentions language/ words as a means of communication which the characters find is hardly transparent: "Gus's mind glazed over. He had no visa for the country of talk" (56). You have to know the codes to understand the messages carried by certain words and accordingly several types of language, or codes, are used in this novel: words, silence, body language, paintings, music, literature. They can all operate as means of challenging, of resistance and reconstruction. The structural fragmentation of the narrative in this novel can itself be seen as a language of deconstruction of the conventional narrative and thus of resistance to traditional strategies with respect to the organisation of discourse.

The sense of dislocation, ever present in Hospital's work, is linked with another feeling, the need for freedom and solitude. Felicity can handle the latter. Like Elizabeth in *The Tiger in the Tiger Pit,* Felicity has never accepted the responsibility of marriage and family: "She doesn't want to be held. She has always been addicted to loneliness, which is freedom, and to freedom, which is loneliness" (*Borderline* 255-256). Felicity's behaviour, with its denial of a unifying frame, is linked to Hospital's symbolic concept of water, with its wandering fluidity that doesn't respect boundaries: in all her novels, water, the oceans, accordingly, have the symbolic character of Liberation. As she states in an interview with Diana Brydon "All my experiences of that kind of ecstasy have to do with water" (22). This sense of freedom is given by moving water,

never in one place, unpredictable, unattached, subversive and lonely. Referring to Felicity, in *Borderline* Hospital states: "She needed to be on the road, on the move, defying another border" (23). Place is connected with continuity, with links that hold you, whether you are inside or outside them. You are tied to places in a physical or in an emotional way – you may feel place as home, or place as margins, but the ties are there. Your memories are attached to places and you build your identity out of places you know, where you have lived or had intense experiences.

Water is similar to memory – circular, involving, confluent, but with the freedom of openness and movement. Water cannot be caught between your hands, and you never touch the same water twice. It flows and vanishes in wandering ways. In its natural state it is supposedly free and lonely: a sign of life – a beginning – or a sign of death, it can be the site of a state of physical oneness with the landscape. This capacity to feel the landscape intensely we find in most of Hospital's positive characters. In *The Ivory Swing*: "Juliet breathed in the damp pungent smell of vines and fungi, the fragrance of bushes which still flowered in bright splashes where the sun fingered them through gaps in the treetops" (126). In *Borderline* this deep feeling towards nature has a different meaning and it is linked not only with physical connections but with the effacing of difference: "She loved the subway, as steamy and murky and full of the unexpected as a tropical rain forest. Everyone in transit. An underground world of equals" (177).

Beyond the personal/private level of the story, however, there is the Public sphere where power fights for control, but interwined with the private stories of the pursued immigrants. Agents of the Right or the Left pursue La Magdalena, Dolores Marques or La Desconocida – as she is referred to – an absent/present figure, a muted character whose existence we often doubt. This issue of the Public/Private dichotomy is intrinsically linked to these issues of power and violence. Males are usually associated with the public sphere while females are linked with the private. Accordingly, approved or publically valorised, writing has historically been mainly male; so a published female writer is, to Dale Spender, a contradiction in terms: She must be accepted in the patriarchal order – which paradoxically requires female silence. And she further states in *Man Made Language:* "While women could be relied upon to write about feelings and emotions – [...] – they could not be expected to deal with the more significant intellectual issues in their writing" (199). Second wave feminism challenges this position as it is a highly intellectual movement supported by academic women: Turner Hospital is herself a university professor. In *Borderline* she challenges these patriarchal concepts, creating a female character who has a profession in the world of the arts, generally occupied by males, and who makes a point of keeping her freedom. Felicity is in tune with Dale Spender who states that "once women ceased to seek approval and confirmation of their talk by males alone, they deconstructed part of their muted condition and were free to explore and name their own

experience" (216). Nevertheless the symbolic system constructed by men to ensure supremacy is still largely in place.

Both in *The Ivory Swing* and in *Borderline* we find a double female pairing – the extroverted and the muted: Juliet/Yashoda, Felicity/Dolores. Both are in opposed positions of power and in both cases the muted female belongs to non-white groups. Trying to discover the message of this language of images and race positions is crucial. The silent female characters belong to third world countries, whereas the other two exist within the capitalist system. This might lead us to conclude that there is a connection between development, richness and freedom of thought that allows the opening of boundaries leading to a fairer system, a system in which women can, to a certain extent, speak. Another and perhaps more relevant factor, although certainly connected to material development, is ignorance. It may be claimed that it is mainly through knowledge/education that women (and others) can achieve a true liberation. All the main female characters of Hospital's novels are educated women while those not intellectually or technically prepared are the victims of domination and exploitation.

Power and difference are also connected, as being different may mean becoming subordinate. To be different for women could be understood as being "less than a man", or it could instead be seen as intrinsic to the affirmation of women's (and other groups') subjectivity, as has been stated by second wave feminism – the feminism of difference – allowing women to create their own space. Where the boundary between being different and

being marginal lies is an issue Hospital studies, as she consistently writes on violence and violence can be situated at the centre of marginality. In her work, violence is also linked with public power and authority, so it seems we face a difficult problem as violence is seen as two faces of the same coin: violence/authority and violence/marginality. This confrontation takes place on a wider or even universal level, but there are also the individual levels that should be entered into: the confrontations between men with power/women without power which are the basis of the large edifice of domination constructed by the patriarchal system. The boundaries between the genders have not yet been crossed in most civilisations even when the law apparently gives the same opportunities to both male and female. The refugee in *Borderline* is a woman, the victims in *The Last Magician, The Tiger in the Tiger Pit* and in *The Ivory Swing* are women. Nevertheless there is in her work a sympathy for all those – besides women – who are the victims of injustice, persecution and violence, those who are generally considered "marginals" and even twinned with criminals, whom she sees as "outsiders". The concept of "Other" in Turner Hospital is thus not only the feminist and gendered concept, but has a wider range that includes all outsiders from the system. Analysing difference can clearly lead us to arrive at notions of several types of difference: to recognise the foreign within ourselves as Kristeva states in *Strangers to Ourselves*, or gendered, class, race difference, and cultural difference, among others. Being "different" and acting "different" are also

strategies in which forms of language are centrally involved, used by Hospital in ways that can "upset" the system and even subvert it.

In *Borderline*, the characters try to find out their own stories and through reconstructing their past lives understand why they have become "different". Kate Temby in "Gender, Power and Postmodernism in *The Last Magician*" states that "the narrative is self-consciously disordered and employs chaos theory as a metaphor for narrative structure" (47). Fracture is a characteristic of postmodernism and these same characteristics can be found in *Borderline*. The denial of a "conception of unitary subjectivity" (51) as Kate Temby mentions, pointing to the existing of several selves, and also to the changing of the self through time is present in Hospital's fiction as her characters inhabit other possible selves: " 'How many changes can be rung on the human condition? Is it surprising that I feel at home in Felicity's condition? That sometimes she slides into mine?' " (192) asks Jean Marc. Power, according to Hospital, destroys or silences the oppressed, but they have a power of their own too: the power of "not caring if you got hurt, and not caring what other people thought of you" (*Last Magician* 202) and in some circumstances the freedom to criticise official power, which becomes a power itself.

In order to consider these issues, the problem of how one knows arises; how one knows to sort out different versions of reality or in the case of this novel, different versions of the operation of power and responsibility. This becomes inflected in *Borderline* with the question of narrative knowledge.

Jean Marc, the narrator, both asserts and denies his knowledge, depending on Felicity's return to confirm her story, which doesn't happen. There is also a change in the narrative point of view, or rather, a change of the narrator from Jean Marc to Gus, for example on page 127. Chaos, or the "non-linearity" of the narration used in *Borderline*, may be seen as a way of subverting traditional literary strategies and at the same time of undermining the system, not accepting the established proceedings. As a plant that must first die to give birth to a new one, so this narrative subversion would first lead to destruction to achieve a new order of things ultimately. Post Modern implies "the end of certainties" (145) says Xavier Pons in "History and her story: the Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the Past in Janette Turner Hospital's *Charades*". In her work there are no certainties, about us, about others, about society, about the past. This is meaningfully true when Hospital doubts the official History – what we have learned to call History – but also true when, even individually, we want to reconstruct past events through memory or through photography - photos freeze reality at a certain point in time and out of their context they can be fake witnesses of the past: "She (Felicity) knew better than most people how simple it was to rearrange the past, that yesterday was an hypothesis existing purely by the grace of today" (131). Deborah Bowen, in "Borderline Magic: Janette Turner Hospital and Transfiguration by Photography", suggests that Hospital "finds photographs both disturbing and tantalising, because they tease the spectator about the nature of reality by arranging and preserving it" (182). The relation between

memory and image allows the viewer new readings of past events, readings that can be reconstructed. According to Deborah Bowen "this link of photography with the transcendent is especially important" (185) in *Borderline*. In this novel it is through a photograph of Dolores' family that Felicity is compelled to intervene: " 'Just how accountable are we? You and me' " (44) Felicity asks Gus. Photography is another type of language that can be an incisive witness to horrific events of the past, allowing the preservation of a reality that others might wish us to forget, although it can certainly be tampered with and have its power of witness unsettled. Photos and individual memory are thus linked in order to permit reconstructions that challenge official versions of events and this link can also provide a language of challenge towards power.

Another issue present in Hospital's world is a shifting of boundaries between real and unreal, especially noticeable in the figure of Dolores Marques: the reader and the other characters constantly doubt her presence, her destiny, even her existence. But the responsibility to support the victims of the system is more real, even when there are doubts: " 'So why should I put myself in jeopardy? I've had enough trouble, I've paid my dues!' " says Felicity (90). It is also through a photograph that Felicity knows her mother and, as Bowen remarks, there is a transcendence of vision in this connection: Felicity feels that the loss and darkness of Dolores' situation recalls her own, when a young girl. The narrator, Jean Marc, makes us aware of that transfiguration: victims, all victims, whether female or not, are our responsibility and we must

talk and act to fight for them, even though the fight often appears hopeless. Both Jean Marc and Seymour want to fix the reality of Felicity's existence: through words, story telling or through paintings, but Felicity proves to be an elusive reality. The question of what is really "real" is not answered fully, as the boundary between real and surreal, fact and imagination, is constantly shifting: " 'For the past, as Felicity knows and I know, is a capricious and discontinuous narrative, and the present an infinite number of fictions' " (122).

In order to negotiate these fictions there are many kinds of borderlines to cross in the novel. Felicity is trapped in her public responsibility towards the illegal immigrants and feels she cannot escape it, out of a sense of moral obligation. At a private level there is another trap, symbolised by Seymour's paintings of her, which she doesn't accept. She doesn't want to become an object and the fight for the survival of her subjectivity is to escape. We may not be sure about what is real or dream, or surreal or magic, and before the evidence of photographs our belief is still shattered, because as Deborah Bowen says "For Hospital, life is shot through with both the surreal and the magical, and photographs hover as potential evidence on the borderline between worlds" (194). Photographs are used by Hospital in this novel "as the presence of the past [...] in flux" (194) and have the same validity as memory – they may allow a different or different interpretations of the past but cannot be accepted as unproblematical witnesses. Challenging the fidelity of photos as well as memory, Hospital also challenges the fidelity of past narratives – those narratives we have been told as being the true ones. If these official

narratives are to be contested as reality, all other fields of knowledge should suffer the same interrogation and through this critical discourse she challenges the very basis of the dominant system: "I told myself that the truth must be tempered because mere accuracy was false" (*B*.189) says Felicity. As Xavier Pons states, Hospital "asserts that there is no escaping ambiguity, especially when trying to reconstruct the past" (146). History, or the reconstruction of the past through memory is one of her obsessions: the absent characters in her novels are the reason for such journeys of reconstruction and searching at the individual level, but there is also a wider level of concern when Hospital deals with the collective memory of past events, most notably the Holocaust in *Charades*. Very often, individually and collectively, people need to assuage their consciences through writing off horrific events of the past in the hope that, if they are able to forget, the events have not taken place at all and become mere nightmares.

However, destroying evidence is what Hospital doesn't want to do and that is perhaps why she becomes an uncomfortable writer. She is a logical and lucid writer, her language is strong and clear, and she uses startling metaphors and provocative analogies when she needs to analyse and criticise structures of authority. As Linda Hutcheon states, to contest cultural dominants – imperialism, capitalism, etc – is not enough. Feminists want to go beyond this postmodern frontier, trying to fight the oppression of women and other minority groups by patriarchy. Postmodernism appears to stand in an ambivalent position towards the system, a position of both complicity and

critique. However, its thinking does not operate in terms of gender, but rather in terms of ideologies, setting up an apparent fissure between postmodernism and feminism. Hospital shares this point of view in her fiction, emphasising "gender" and not subsuming it or marginalising it with respect to any of the other elements of her analysis.

The obsession with absent characters is a common trait in Turner Hospital – in *Borderline*, *Charades, The Last Magician* and *Oyster* – and as both postmodernist and feminist writers have given voice to those previously silenced "ex-centric" – those who were "different" because of class, gender or race, it seems we can also identify them with the absent characters of Hospital's fiction.

Postmodern writers question authority but offer no answers and are suspicious of the very notion of final answers. Likewise, Hospital's novels have open endings as if there were always new borders for her characters to cross, new lands to discover, and these unfinished stories are the mirror of the unsettled feelings of their dislocation, a never ending search for a place to belong to, a place to achieve a new order. Studying the attitudes of former colonies and women, some feminist theorists think there is a relationship between the Canadian or Australian search for a cultural identity and the feminist seeking for a distinctive gender identity. In both we can find the opposition to "colonial" positions towards the power of dominating cultures. A similar position can be found in Felicity's wandering and fragmented behaviour, her way of fighting against the constraints of being entrapped in

Seymour's paintings – a symbol of the traditional strategies of dominance. In *Borderline* beyond the private level of the story, there is the Public sphere where Hospital states our responsibility to intervene in support of the victims of domination and exploitation. Crucial to postmodern writers is the particular relation to the historical past and the non-acceptance of official metanarratives. Nevertheless feminist theorists have been at the forefront of a new and open reading of texts, and the idea that there is an eternal, universal truth has been replaced by "truths" (viii-ix) as Linda Hutcheon states in the Introduction to *The Canadian Postmodern*. The postmodern "different" also replaces the humanist "universal". The incredulity towards metanarratives and being different and acting differently are fundamental traits of Hospital's novels, and in them we can find the same postmodern urge to trouble and to question, that "both sets up and subverts the powers and conventions of art" Hutcheon (2). The postmodern writer situates her or himself in a marginal or "ex-centric" position with regard to the central or dominant culture and thus challenges any notion of centrality. The postmodern literary techniques of fragmentation, irony and parody used to exploit and subvert cultural authority are all present in Hospital's fiction. But if language is an "absolute precondition for nearly all social life [...] inextricably bound to thought" (9) as Hutcheon states then language is for female writers the fundamentally significant area to be appropriated. If "man made language", as Dale Spender states, then feminist writers are now using it to develop a new literature, formulating a new symbolism for women's expression. In *Borderline*, Hospital tries to denounce

the silenced "ex-centric" – opening the way to give them voice in her latest novel. Here the "silent cries" of many are going to be heard, as silence is replaced by *language*, and language becomes the main character of *Oyster*.

IV

Oyster

IV

Oyster

While in *The Ivory Swing* there is a more physical resistance and in *Borderline* a deeper intellectual struggle, *Oyster* locates itself on a wider and more global level, embracing physical, intellectual, ecological and cultural resistance, "a warning against political and religious extremists" (20) as Anne Steacy points out in "This Microcosmos in Her Oyster". Language, central to *Oyster*, is used as a way of survival and understanding in an oppressive and suffocating narrative set in the equally oppressive and suffocating Australian outback.

In an interview with Wendy Cavenett, Hospital confessed:

> What I love about it is language itself. I feel I have an erotic relationship with language. For me, language itself is more than a plot of characters or anything else. It is the medium I love to work in and I love the placidity of language and the precision of it, the sensuousness of it and all those things where I just sort of love shaping language. And then next for me comes character, y'

> know, to be able to present really complex characters
> and explore all the nuances and then plot (2).

As Miss Rover synthesises when she advises Mercy: "Let your words fashion shapes unpredictable, [...] as mirages do" (203), Turner Hospital delights in the images words can create in the service of the suggestiveness of multiple meanings. *Oyster* is probably her most potent and dangerous novel, writes Wendy Cavenett, with its study of the darker sides of the Australian psyche. Referring to the Outback where this novel takes place, Hospital writes: "People perish. Their habitations and their histories seem to leave no trace, though they do make an effort, they scatter messages. Relics abound, if one only knows how to look. In fact, Outer Maroo is thick with coded testaments, but the messages are legible only to those who can read the secretive earth" (6).

Coded messages understandable only to those who can read them is an issue central to feminism. Jeanette Winterson, for example, also talks about a "coded language" accessible only to those inside it. There is in her work also a real love of language and the precise notion of its power: "I noticed that women have a private language. A language not dependent on the constructions of men, but that uses ordinary words as code-words meaning something other" (*Sexing the Cherry*, 31). In *Written on the Body* this same secret code runs through the story and it is only visible in certain lights, for not everybody deserves equal access to it: "I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story" (W.B.

89). In *Oyster* the silent messages run throughout the story, certainly in the special way women have of communicating, without talking: "The two women seem to exchange information, through the surfaces of their skin" (130). Vi and Sarah share memories of their children, now in danger at the hands of a religious fanatic. Winterson tells us stories about *the spaces in between*, the hidden life we must search for, the hidden life written in invisible ink. Hospital also refers to the hidden life: "We only know a few pinpoints of someone [...]. We don't know the spaces in between" (188). Miss Rover whispers inside Mercy's head "the secrets are hidden in my writing" (348).

In *Oyster* Hospital widens her concept of coded language, crossing the gender boundaries, enlarging the need to decipher the hidden messages of the land and the people for both male and female. She surpasses a simplistically feminist gender position, going beyond it to encompass all those able to read the language of the earth as well as the message of freedom, which is centrally focused upon respect for individual rights. Steacy underlines that Hospital's "writing is as encoded and many-layered as the opal producing rock and shifting sands of Australia's interior" (20). The Australian writer Marion Halligan, in "Countdown to the Millennium", considers that Hospital, in this novel, writes wonderful prose using "marvellous words and seductive rhythms" (40) but criticises the mixing of "the abstract and the concrete in glamorous sleights of words" (41), referring to such typical Hospital sentences as: "he swims in the fissures of existing logic, he dives into the great crevasses where paradigms shift" (*Oyster* 171). Halligan doesn't consider this

a realistic novel, as it possesses, according to her, no verisimilitude, as well as the gratuitous use of too many violent words. But how not to use violent words? The political connotations of the book's anti government strains seem to require a vigorous oppositional discourse. Moreover, the corrupt, religious extremism that exploits credulity, fear and ignorance are not best opposed with kid gloves. The violent confluences lead to outrageous savage violence in the short but frightening description of Miss Rover's murder or in the sexual abuse carried out by the fake prophet. " 'Do you know what they did to her?' " asks Pete Burnett referring to Miss Rover, the school-teacher. " 'After they had kicked her to death. Do you know what they did? [...] They took her to one of the old shafts at Inner Maroo' ", he says. " 'They had a feral pig in the shaft. [...] So there is *nothing* left. [...] Nothing at all. No bones, no clothing, nothing.' " (250). A cold shiver creeps over one at this short, disgusting and outrageous passage, and then a deeper feeling of revulsion and rage at the description of Oyster's abuse: "Mercy can feel her panic raising. [...] Then there is a hand on the back of her neck. Mercy screams" (363). "You must kneel and move forward on your knees" (364); "Oyster opens his robe and she sees his white naked flesh. [...] She is gasping, she is sobbing, she is gagging, and Oyster is laughing and moving and shouting [...] she cannot breathe, [...] Mercy's ears are ringing and bursting [...] and then there is black" (365). From a woman's point of view sexual abuse might be said to arouse deeper feelings of revulsion and rage even than murder as this criminal action is felt as an unwanted and degrading violation of her privacy, a

way to prevent her from possessing agency over her own life, a hateful stamp of possession and control which is going to leave scars as long as a woman lives. This is an excellent example of a coded language that perhaps only women can understand. The crude descriptions are in themselves a way of resistance through language: silence in such violent situations could mean acceptance of the crime and the abuse.

The apparent lack of verisimilitude, and the mixing of the abstract and the concrete, are part of the process of narrative fragmentation, structural deconstruction and non-linearity of time, common to Hospital's work. As action is both inside and outside our minds, the abstract and the concrete coexist. Prior to this novel, in *Borderline*, Turner Hospital underlined the apparent unreality of the real, and the indefinition of La Magdalena's destiny, or even her very existence, are examples of this, and she continues in the same enigmatic vein with respect to narrative and character behaviour in *Oyster*.

The non-linearity of the concept of time is an issue common to feminist writers. When we read that "The water in opal is thousands of years old, [...] so the past is locked inside it the way a meaning is locked in a word" (68), this parallel between the concept of time and the word "meaning" suggests that words carry within themselves facts, the land, ideas and people. And yet these things are "locked" within words; we cannot extract them, we can only deal with the words in the same way we deal with strata of opals: mining them, cutting them up, polishing them, fashioning them into shapes. As we might expect, language is the weapon of the mind, the privileged means of

communication, the way to articulate what we take for knowledge and beauty. At the same time it is something more visceral, something that connects us to atavistic regions of ourselves and even others. The non-linearity of the concept of time in Hospital is even more evident in this novel, "but I know that time doesn't run in a straight line, and never has" (*Oyster* 429), and is similar to Winterson's concept of time in *Sexing the Cherry*. For her there is no Past, Present or Future: "the future, the present and the past only exist in our minds" (144). Like the Hopi language, as famously outlined by Benjamin Lee Whorf in *Language, Thought and Reality*, Winterson thinks that time is a continuous present. "Time is only the present and nothing to remember" (83). The inner journey of the mind defies the established concepts of time and space: "I found that there is no end to even the simplest journey of the mind" (102). In her journey she shifts background and foreground, establishing a new dimension of time and space:

> I gave chase in a ship, but others make the journey without moving at all [...] Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning in this journey. All the times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day, the minds can make a millpond of the ocean (80).

This is a complete subversion of the common-sense or traditional concepts of time and space and can also be observed in *Oyster*: "The notions of time and space and sound. They seem interchangeable" [...]; it is impossible "to pin down where time ends and where space begins and how one might possibly

describe the sound of the silence of either one" (136). These notions cross the boundaries of established concepts, "related as solid and liquid gas are related" (136), and can be enlarged to the apparent opposition of the coexistence of the concepts of abstract and concrete present in the novel. Lynne van Luven describes the setting of this novel as existing "in a kind of floating time that incorporates both the happening and the aftermath of an apocalypse cult-tragedy" (63). Accompanying the non-linearity of time there is accordingly a non-linear narration: "I began with the beginning of the end, one week ago. But of course, the end began long before that. Perhaps I should start one year earlier, ..." (43). The action does, however, take place in a concrete site, that of the Australian inland, known as the outback.

To some Australian writers, as throughout western culture, "the relation between society [the city] and nature [...] is polar: they are opposite to and exclusive of each other" (30) as Australian Cultural Studies scholar Graeme Turner states in "The Australian Context: Nature and Society": "Our image of nature is a critique of our culture: nature is what culture isn't – it is defined by difference" (36). The attraction of the bush is justified because it is outside culture and thus, supposedly, beyond criticism. For Turner "Living with the land is mythologised as the authentic Australian experience" (37). The development of this national self-image started among the early bush workers, says Russel Ward in his now classic *The Australian Legend* (1958). This thesis of the myth of the typical Australian is summarised by Eleanor Hodges in "The Bushman Legend" (1992), where she refers to the characteristics of

this typical Australian as collectivist anti-authoritarian morality, physical endurance and resourcefulness, concluding that "the greater degree of social mobility [...] tended to have a levelling effect without diminishing class consciousness and hostility" (5). The concept of "mateship" was essential for the survival of these men, and this led to the creation of what has been called *the bush ethos*. By the end of the 19th century the figure of the "noble bushman" had disappeared but his lifestyle was transformed into a national myth. The notion of frontier in the American West helped build the myth of the pioneer, which meant freedom to appropriate Native American land and to get rich thereby. However in Hodges's words "to the Australian pastoral worker it meant freedom to resist authority" (13).

Hospital's narrative on the other hand subverts the idealised perception of the bush, contesting the myth of the pure and brave male pioneer with precision of thought, unrelenting honesty, deep irony and an oppressive description of the outback, its natural extremes and the extreme human behaviour it can encourage – corruption, greed, lack of moral consciousness, and outright crime. The extremes of the harsh landscape of the interior require the use of strong but beautiful words that can describe both place and feelings – Sarah's fear: "She has a sense of marshes, and of backwaters that twist and mislead, and of treacherous quicksand traps, and of salt pans" (161). It is a typical Hospital strategy that these words are not only describing nature but the dark dangers of the corrupt and greedy usurpers of the land. George Seddon, in the essay "Dual Allegiance: The Inescapable Tension of Being

Australian" explains that the European Cultural heritage "creates images of a human habitat that are sharply dissonant from our own" (7). This creates the tension of being Australian that is similar to that experienced in cultures established by settlers from Europe: a dual allegiance. This struggle between the European heritage and the Australian reality has its echoes in the language. The English language has often struggled to describe the bush, the rain forest, the desert and the interior, not to mention the behaviour, and the way of living in nature of the Aborigines. *Oyster* is striking for the way language is used to describe the colour, the texture, the harshness, and all the extremes of the Australian outback. The language describes a world of opposites, such as dark/light or harsh/merciful, as Lynne van Luven suggests. This is, accordingly, a highly visual novel where language carries unusual and strikingly suggestive images: "Opal. The word itself was like a charm. You could stoke a word like opal. You could taste it. You could swallow it whole, raw and silky like an oyster..." (11). Trying to understand the significance of the use of the word "oyster" here, can encourage us to find several links and several meanings. When we pronounce "opal" the movements we make are similar to those we make to eat an oyster; besides oysters are food only rich people can afford, just like opals/jewels. Oysters also speak through their pearls, and produce an unexpected beauty.

Language is used by Hospital in this novel not only as a way to resist and intervene in order to change, but also as a sensual partner, one to give us pleasure. Thus it is that the positive character, Miss Rover, writes letters that

are "beautifully written in intricate sentences that Mercy wanted to wrap in crocheted cotton handkerchiefs to tuck up her sleeve" (77). Hospital cannot resist the colourful simile or the vibrant comparison: "laughter [...] always seems to her merely the brackish foam crest on a wave of sorrow, a tidal wave ..." (92). Connecting perceived items to words from other contexts can have physical results for the perceiver: "each white thread of the dress of the woman opposite is as keen and fine as piano wire and cuts Mercy's skin" (93). Many of the images in the novel are in fact designed to contribute to the oppressive environment by articulating high levels of intensity, whether pleasurable or hostile.

The myth of the great inland sea, which explorers wanted to exist in the heart of the Australian desert, gives the sense of the vastness of the outback, but also the feeling of insubstantiality that has clung to the interior. Time, space and sound overlap with each other in the outback, provoking deeply unusual sensations that Hospital describes as the sound and vastness of silence: "Out here silence is the dimension in which we float [...] I go on and on seeing nothing but a silence so profound that it roars in my ears and pummels me and makes me feel seasick" (135) and this "vastness of silence frightens all of us" (145). Outer Maroo is marginal from a geographical as well as a conscious point of view. It is not on official maps and its people don't want to be traced, so they have willed their own marginalisation from the rest of the world. Marginality is a concept women understand all too well and an issue central to feminism. When placed in the margins, excluded from the

centre, one response is to reinforce the marginalisation by a process of auto-exclusion. In Canadian moral philosopher Charles Taylor's words, in his important essay "The Politics of Recognition":

> Thus some feminists have argued that women in patriarchal societies have been induced to adopt a depreciatory image of themselves. They have internalised a picture of their own inferiority, so that even when some of the objective obstacles to their advancement fall away, they may be incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities (225).

In Outer Maroo, blinded by a form of religious extremism and a vigorous suspicion of official power, the locals try to protect themselves through this process, becoming like an oyster enclosed in a tough shell, in this case, of ignorance and greed, away from their perceived enemies.

In postmodern terms "the margin" is not only a place of transgression but a place of possibilities, a starting point in the construction of a new reality. The "open endings" of Hospital's novels are the symbol of this concept, the non-acceptance of defined final solutions, as multiplicity takes the place of unity. In *Oyster*, the surviving female characters – and others – don't follow the pattern of Charles Taylor's analysis, as they choose "the margin" as the beginning of new lives, refusing to be kept within the frames of that conservative society that wanted them silent and quiet: they take advantage of the opportunities they have created for themselves and find a way out. Kay

Schaffer in *Women and the Bush* refers to the fact that "natives were [...] placed on the lowest order of human life" (59) but underlines that Aboriginal women and white convict women were especially damned and concludes that women in general, in Australia, have a very "low status when compared to the position of women in other western [...] cultures" (66). Other noted Australian female writers such as Ann Summers and Miriam Dixson share the same position,

Valmai Howe in "Seduction and Opals in the Outback", refers to the "extraordinary power of place" (D 10) in this novel. "The Australian outback – with its extremes of droughts, flash flood and fire" (D 10) is the perfect setting for an end of the millennium story with its apocalyptically frightening landscape and the perfect background for Oyster, the fake prophet, to plant his seed of false promises in the credulous and ignorant minds of those doubly lost persons. The land out there has been "raped by cattlemen, plundered by opal miners" (D10). Like a woman who has been attacked and exploited and is now ready to struggle free and take revenge, this land is going to punish those who have abused her.

Representations of the traditional man's relationship with the land, in Australia, are heterogeneous but absolutely male. This myth of the bush, constantly reproduced in the twentieth century, "functions as a locus of desire" (61) states Kay Schaffer in *Women and the Bush*. The outback represented the possibility "of a spiritual quest and vision and also the nightmare fears of madness and death" (61) but only for men. These images of the bush come to

us through texts by male subjects who constructed the land as a feminine symbolic as also happened in North America. In Australia there was no place for a woman in the bush. Whenever they inhabit the bush in fictional accounts or in histories they appear in relationships to men as daughters, lovers, wives and mothers. They "are excluded as subjects of representation. Identity, autonomy and authority are denied them in their own right" (63). Social, political and cultural structures try in these myths to maintain women's inferior status. "Women are either left out of the debates on nationalism or are characterised as 'cast outs' or moral guardians" (68). These two stereotypes of women in Australia – damned whore/ bad mother or God's police in Ann Summers's famous formulation – are linked to the feelings of low self-worth of both the convicts and colonial authorities although they can be also seen as generically western. Victorian prudery, brought with the British middle-class, also contributed to affirm women's inferior status. This dichotomy is the "two sides to a masculine projection of female sexuality" (69): the damned whore is the scapegoat for the convict society and God's police his redemption. Women in the bush were sometimes idealised as "Mum" by male writers who ignored the real hardships including physical dangers. "Rape as the most violent repressed form of women's oppression" (70) doesn't appear in official histories. Here women are not considered as autonomous individuals. A woman in the bush didn't really have a place of her own: she preserved the man's position for him. In a feminist approach to questions of national identity Bronwen Levy, in "Constructing the Woman Writer", examines "the

construction of the contemporary woman writer in Australian literary criticism [...] (and) reminds us that language is a crucial site of political struggle for marginalised groups" (Schaffer, 74).

In this novel, the land, language and women come linked in an inseparable trilogy. Hospital insists that the land should be returned to those who understand its language and respect it – the Murris (the term often used in Australia nowadays to refer to Aboriginal peoples in Queensland) and Ethel the old Aboriginal woman, deeply rooted in the land of her ancestors, refers to the outback as a "country of [...] lost languages" (135). Another type of language, written language, is what Mercy keeps so fiercely in the caves: Miss Rover's books and journal are Mercy's most precious heritage. In her journal the schoolteacher gives her satirical version of the events, tells her story and through it she challenges the official version. Words and knowledge are hidden in the mine shaft and inside Mercy's head, a seed of hope and freedom, that is going to guide her out of the nightmare that is imprisoning her life. Hospital insists on the value of the "written word" as she is conscious "*of an underground of power that can be adopted by the sheer practice of writing*" (iii), as Selina Samuels states in the "Introduction" to *Janette Turner Hospital*. Many other feminists discovered the strength of the "female voice", considering it as the expression of the woman writer, putting an end to our historical silence and opening the possibility of the beginning of our story. As Markman Ellis states in "In the Back of the Outback", Mercy's "survival becomes the unifying theme of the novel as she battles marauding foes, male

and theological" (22). Ellis thinks Hospital shows a critical vision of the fractures within outback society and destroys the settler myth of pioneers bringing civilisation to the unexplored land. According to him, this outback is not "the mysterious inner space in the Australian psyche, receptacle of anxieties and fears" (22). This is a place for historical change and the beginning of a new healthier era, a sweeping away of the repressive and destructive old myths, which is going to be achieved by Mercy Given, "seduced not by flesh but the allure of the printed word" in Howe's words (D10). Perhaps the most important character in the novel is thus the clear thinking schoolteacher who has taken residence inside Mercy's head:

> If it were not for [...] Miss Rover's hidden library [...] how would she have known there was any other way to talk? And since there are these two worlds, one of which she could so easily have missed knowing about, how many others might there be? (33-34).

It was like living on two planets: Mercy's known world, full of constraints, where almost everything was forbidden, and another one full of hope and freedom where real knowledge would be available to her avid eyes – Miss Rover's books, the printed word shimmering like a promised land in the horizon of her future: "Mercy pored through Miss Rover's dictionary, word by forbidden word, sucking each meaning as she went. The taste was addictive" (66). The allure of the printed word with respect to Mercy meant the access to

knowledge which is freedom and enabled her to deny the existence of "the truth" as, in fact, there are many truths.

Another reading of this narrative subversion of the myth of the pioneer and land is the non-acceptance of the official metanarrative. Hospital builds a new story that contradicts the official history based on the constructions of a patriarchal vision. That is why we can find in this novel the issues of the motivation of cult-followers – the membrane between the ordinary person and the monster that might exist inside each of us is a thin one; the racism still visibly present in rural Australia; the individual incapacity to react against collective action a critique of the myth of the anti-authoritarian Australian bushman. This is also a theme returned to in Australian culture; the most famous examples are Randolph Stow 's *Tourmaline* and Patrick White's *Voss* (1957). In the latter work White deals with some of these central Australian myths, including the attempt to conquer the unknown interior and the rebellion against authority, underlining the contrast between the tamed, softly corrupted city and the wild, tough and supposedly honest bush. The darker sides of the Australian character are certainly targets for Hospital's attention as they were for White. However Hospital also describes the wonder of the landscape, dealing at length with, for example, the trapped water that makes silica into opal, a miracle of nature where the use of her colourful and beautiful language transforms this book into a highly visual and fascinated representation of the land. As Laframboise states, the words chosen by Hospital "are themselves pure notes to be savoured" (2) as a musical theme that contrasts with the

oppressively real and desolate outback. It is in this oppressive, desolate but wonderous inner land that religious and political extremisms flourish. When certain conditions prevail, even madmen who claim to have the purest motives – most famously in our time Hitler and Stalin – can inflict deep devastation. *Oyster* is a lesson in respect for human rights, and a warning against extremisms. Human beings are entitled to have freedom of choice, and although on the surface *Oyster* is mostly a negative analysis of the human race, Laframboise reads it as a triumphant novel, as "it is about the few souls in every community who see that the emperor is naked and say so in quiet reasonable voices" (2). As Miss Rover says to Mercy: " 'It's up to you. […] You have to decide what you are willing to live with, Mercy, and what you will die for' " (350).

With respect to the voices through which the novel is articulated there are principally two: that of the omnipotent narrator, and that of Jess, also called "the old silence". Ethel, the mostly silent Aboriginal, is another significant female character, along with Mercy and Miss Rover, the schoolteacher. These female characters are in part muted figures, with the exception of Miss Rover who dares to speak out in that closed, conventional, ignorant, patriarchal community, but who suffers the extreme consequence of being murdered.

Some light fairytale references – common in some feminist writers – are also present in Hospital's narrative: "down went Mercy after the rabbit" (269), establishes a link with *Alice in Wonderland*, as a way to underline the

weird environment of that remote community with its insane behaviour, a world with its own logic and alienating power. The myth of the "wicked stepmother" (168) is also mentioned in a deeply ironic manner.

Julian Cowley in "Violent Times: Janette Turner Hospital's Art of Memory and the History of the Present" states that Hospital writes in a post-modern context, which is to say, out of a challenge to authoritative knowledge. From this point of view, authoritative knowledge should be read as official, conventional positions towards knowledge, precisely what Hospital, as well as other feminists, contest. Silent women, on the other hand, are familiar, traditional figures and to decipher the meanings of these silences, feminists such as Tillie Olsen, Carol Gilligan, and Helen Garner, to mention only some more recent authors, have written about this issue, as has already been referred to in this work. Silence and violence are recurrent *leitmotivs* in Turner Hospital's novels. As Cowley suggests, the author "examines [...] key narratives of patriarchal society, the stories that tacitly sanction perpetuation of violence"(176). Violence means control and power while silence can have many meanings: "the refusal to speak emphasises a situation of submission imposed from the exterior on women, by the violence of men" (37) says Albertazzi in "Violence, Angels and Missing People in Janette Turner Hospital's World". Thus, to own our own language is the first step to the acquisition of personal freedom and individual dignity. We can find a silent despair in all those muted women in Hospital's world: Jess, the map maker sent by the government to the inner land, is trying to forget and to conceal her

past under a wall of protective silence. Ethel, born under a tree, is silently and patiently waiting for her *mob* to come home: "They'll hear on the bush telegraph, they'll start showing up from Bourke" (397). But in this novel there are not only women protecting themselves with silence. Other characters like Major Miner, are fighting the nightmares of their past, hidden lives, unable to forget. Major Miner is a male character and despite the nightmares and the silence he is going to survive. Hospital goes beyond the gendered frontier to an opening of boundaries where not only women, but other "outsiders" from the dominant system – men included – seek freedom from persecution due to "difference", difference that had to be hidden behind a curtain of silence. To decode the many meanings of these silent characters we must try to find the key in the context in which the silence originated. The voices of the main female characters could barely be heard in the middle of that invisible fog they called Old Fuckatoo. This establishes a thread of understanding and complicity linking these characters – Jess, Mercy and Ethel. The fourth main female character is mostly an absent or missing figure, although ever present in Mercy's memory – Miss Rover.

This group of women comes out of the red dust of Outer Maroo and takes shape in the pages of the novel and while they are apparently muted figures, they constitute the backbone of the story. Miss Rover is the one that breaks the silence to say that the emperor is naked. Ethel, the symbol of Aboriginal culture, is waiting patiently but stubbornly "for a lost language to come back to her. She believes it will rise out of the stones. It will drift into her,

into the place where words are made" (40). Many white generations have come and gone and her people are still surviving. Jess, hiding out from her own private crime, is one of the narrators. Whenever the others are in danger, she comes out of her silence to rescue them. Mercy might be seen as a version of Turner Hospital as a young girl for they both lived in an extremist religious environment where almost everything was forbidden: "She is not allowed to listen to the radio, watch TV, and she is not supposed to read anything but the Bible, so she is positively ravenous for anything in print" (*Oyster* 53). She is in love with the *word*, she loves language as she came to understand that it is through language – written language – that we can achieve knowledge and be free. A wall of silence surrounded Outer Maroo, but Susannah Rover —the schoolteacher – stubbornly refuses to respect those silences. She would cross the boundaries of taboo territory, voicing what everybody knew, but was not willing to acknowledge:

> Everyone knew that vasts amounts of money were changing hands, but nobody knew what went to whom. Everyone harboured suspicions [...] everyone was involved one way or another with Oyster Reef, but no one wished to see it like that. They all felt soiled (57).

Male misbehaviour, sexual abuse and rape were well known but no condemnation of such behaviour passed anyone's lips. There was a line that couldn't be crossed. The community's veil of silence, with respect to sexual abuse and corruption, protected them out of fear or simply for money. More

than a story about religious extremism, that exploits ignorance into submissiveness, this is a story of more generalised corruption, sexual abuse and racism – "we don't want any pack of feral black kids running wild around here..." (61) – where the escape is built by female resistance through language and achieved by the most innocent of them – Mercy Given. Although Susannah Rover had the courage to break the wall of silence and mention such matters aloud, her challenge to conventional authority means that she becomes "a woman at risk" (57). She dared to speak and was consequently threatened and insulted, but refused to back down: "Words are maps, you'll find out..." (63) and words are the key to finding the way to know the truth, to break free: "Words are like bushfires, [...] you can't stop them. And you can't tell where they'll end up" (64). Miss Rover is the "angel" opening the magic door of knowledge to young Mercy and there is between them a coded language that passes the message over: "The dove of Miss Rover's word" (65) reached Mercy, so not everything was lost. "All my books and journals, Miss Rover whispered from somewhere inside Mercy's head [...] keep them safe" (65). Like a scribe in the Dark Ages, keeping the knowledge in the hand-written books in convent libraries, Miss Rover's heritage to Mercy is the possibility of the transmission of knowledge which is freedom. To keep these treasures away from ignorant, barbarian hands is going to be the young girl's mission, her hope for survival.

The knowledge in *Oyster*, contrary to patriarchal tradition, is transmitted from woman to woman to safekeep it for the next generations; not only oral

knowledge acquired through storytelling, but the printed word, so important in the process of testifying to facts, to the understanding of the events that occurred in Outer Maroo and which, otherwise, would be lost or changed forever by those not interested in remembering them. Books "teased Mercy and provoked her" (66), and the need to put into written words the stories she knew and didn't want to see lost led her, like an Anne Frank of the end of the millennium, to write her own *Diary*. Similarly, to keep Miss Rover's journal in the safe tunnels of Aladdin's Rush, lest it should be lost, is one more stone thrown against the wall of silence. But "stories do insist on being known" (77) no matter what people do to erase them from other people's memory. Memory, one of Hospital's favourite issues, is kept here in a safe place by Mercy, who doesn't want them to forget. Mercy is situated between two worlds fighting her way through the mined fields of Outer Maroo: "Miss Rover has taken permanent residence as a sniper inside Mercy's head. But there are other snipers" (116), most obviously the conservative and ignorant community that still surrounds her.

Introspection, however, risks isolation and that is why there is always in Turner Hospital's characters – especially the female ones – the consciousness of the public responsibility that leads to intervention. Her female characters use language to fight what Julian Cowley calls the "monologic positions of authority inviting no response, no questioning, no alternative view" (176). To question the "systems", and the awareness that they are "human constructs", are postmodern principles that feminists accept.

Both postmodernists and feminists contest the existence of a universal truth and state that there are many truths and many different answers, and not a final one. They re-narrate the past and re-conceptualise "the world of those social, cultural and ultimately ideological systems by which we all [live] our lives" (9) says Canadian Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Post-Modern*. Women writers often find this position paradoxical as many (male) postmodern writers contest the ideological bases of the system, but don't consider the possibility that women possess their own subjectivity and use their own language. Turner Hospital emphasises the need to use language as a form of resistance wielded by her female characters in order to change or at least to challenge reality. That need suffuses all her novels as we have seen and is particularly present and intense in this one.

CONCLUSION

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This century women in some cultures have discovered that language has been complicit in women's oppression, so they have felt the need to reform it. To demystify language and linguistics has been considered essential in the process of deconstructing patriarchal societies – or to use a more generalised term – societies possessing asymmetric power relations. It was Kate Millett in 1970, with her work *Sexual Politics,* who brought women's writing from the margins to the centre of literary criticism in the English-speaking world. She stated sex relationships were political, if we considered politics as relations of power where one group dominates the other. Traditional ways of considering gender relations were thus being challenged, but the means available to women – language – continued to seem man made, as Dale Spender argued in *Man Made Language* (1980). When women started to examine their identities anew they discovered they had been excluded in significant ways from human representation and communication. The most powerful or accepted representations of the feminine were those made by males, as Gisela Breitling makes us aware in "Speech, Silence and the Discourse of Art" (1985). Even when women had spoken, they had largely

been relegated to secondary positions. Accordingly, all feminists considered language to be one of the main issues they had to fight over in order to change society and establish a fair balance in social discourse. In Breitling's call to arms: language "is [...] the medium which contains our subjectivity, our identity; our discourse shapes our history" (163) and history only tells what language is able to tell: language and history had made women invisible. "Men have stamped the neutral concept of humanity with their own mark" (164) continues Breitling, so women searching for a way of expressing themselves had to free themselves from the segregated places to which that language confined them, and needed to find their own voice.

As language is never neutral, according to Luce Irigaray in *Parler n'Est Jamais Neutre* (1985), the history of thinking had been told in male terms, so a feminine language needed to be created. Western logic bases itself on a binary structure opposing contradictory terms that cannot pertain at the same time, but these concepts are not valid for language where Masculine and Feminine are reduced to Masculine.

Studying the question of women's relation to language, French feminists have defined *l'écriture feminine* as a practice of writing "in the feminine". This practice subverts the linguistic, syntactical, and metaphysical conventions of Western narrative, and it "is not necessarily writing by women; it is an avant-garde writing style" (9) as Linda Hutcheon states *in The Canadian Postmodern*. The most radical French feminist theorists, however, believe that it is connected to the rhythms of the female body and to the

different and powerful possibilities of her sexual pleasure. For Hélène Cixous writing/language is the place of freedom where woman is not obliged to reproduce the system. She fights against the phallocratic theories that supported patriarchy and marginalised women. These repressed females want to become free and their writing is the means of challenging authority and constructing a positive space for woman. To achieve it she proposes the creation of a new feminine language which she defines as *Écriture Feminine*, concluding that it is not the sex of the author that defines it but the kind of writing which is produced, although she sees feminine/female writing as a relationship to the physical *jouissance* of the female body.

Julia Kristeva studies the questions of oppression and emancipation from a different point of view, often opposed to that of Cixous and Irigaray. She doesn't accept the study of sex difference in language, thinking that particularised speaking subjects should become the object of linguistics, and goes on to state that language should be seen as a specific discourse – not as universal language. Kristeva rejects the concept of an *écriture feminine* as inherently female, as, for her, woman as such doesn't exist, as there are many different discourses, many different feminines.

In such radicalisations of the issues, French feminist theorists have had an important role in leading feminists to the study of language. At first the French theorists' position seems very different from the Anglo-American tradition, but it has many similarities with respect to the nature of a possible female aesthetic and women's writings. Toril Moi, in *Sexual/ Textual Politics,*

supports the idea that women should create their own specific space and language and that it is fundamental, for feminists, to defend women as women. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, several decades earlier, elaborated a theory of social revolution based on class and gender, as a way to achieve a fairer society. Many French Feminists supported the idea that only through irrationality, chaos and fragmentation would women achieve a change in the asymmetric power relations – patriarchy.

As Kate Millett states in *Sexual Politics* (1970), the creative gift can no longer be considered a male quality and writing is a powerful way to recuperate "a whole [neglected] female history" (xii). Elaine Showalter, the author of *Sister's Choice* (1991), studied women as writers and called it *gynocritics*, posing the question of the existence of a muted culture – all those forgotten, neglected or ignored females over the centuries. At the same time, Gisela Breitling points to the danger that "women artists are uprooted from their historical context and banished to a special area – the feminine – so that their work, their achievements and their ideas usually become incomprehensible" (165). There is, in relation to female artists, a ghetto of the feminine. Feminist linguists have thus "investigated not only the suppression of feminine discourse but also the suppression of the feminine in every kind of discourse" (167). Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern* states that Canadian novels by women writers have become important because they have shown "how cultural notions of the feminine are inevitably inscribed by and in language" (ix).

Concerned with the ways that literary genres have been shaped by masculine and feminine values, "or the exclusion of the female voice from the institutions of literary criticism, and theory, feminist criticism has established gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis" (3) states Elaine Showalter in "The Feminist Critical Revolution" (1985). And she continues by saying that feminist criticism is similar to the female literary tradition: "women writers searched for a language of their own, a style, a voice, and a structure with which they could enter a discipline previously dominated by men" (4). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their literary critical work *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979), showed the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse of women in male literature and the exclusion of women from literary history. Feminist criticism was powerfully demonstrating that women writers had a literature of their own, which had been ignored by the values of dominant culture.

To synthesise the many feminist positions we may talk of a first wave feminism during the 1960s that insisted on the need of psychological change which would lead to political change. This change would destabilise power relations and re-establish them on less aggressive lines. The main achievement of this period may be summarised as consciousness raising. In the 1990s, we may talk of a second wave feminism in which the powerful voices are feminist-minded academic women who defend a feminism of difference and who seek to wield power instead of opposing it.

Today feminist consciousness is reflected in a different way of using language, in a self-conscious awareness of the androcentric tendency in language. Crossing the limitations imposed on the feminine is a starting point for trying to establish a "true universality in which the feminine will find its rightful place and the masculine its actual dimension" (174) concludes Breitling.

This brings us back to the question of whether there is a specific feminine language/ discourse, as we have seen certain French feminists claim. Many feminists think there is a strong sexual difference that leads to a different subjectivity and discourse and they support the idea that women should become subjects *as women*, not as men, which would ultimately lead to a female symbolic and a female language/discourse.

Whether this can always be sustained or not, a female culture and tradition which has been ignored for many years has taken shape, and I agree with Showalter when she states that women have a "literature of their own" in which they both reject imitation of male patterns, and protest against wronged womanhood. Female writers have developed new models based on female experience to build a tradition of their own, and no longer adapt male models and theories or seek male approval.

If it were possible to put boundaries around a novel it could be said that the more physical resistance of the characters in *The Ivory Swing* could be placed inside the first wave feminism. Here we can find a challenge to the structures of power at several levels – political, religious, social and familiar –

and at the same time an attempt at consciousness-raising: Hospital underlines the repressed messages of the main female characters in the novel, Yashoda and Juliet. Juliet is given the opportunity of an intellectual challenge, choosing to attempt to free herself from the constraints of the patriarchal society, while Yashoda, although conscious now of her imprisoning boundaries, is not yet able to break them, and is going to be a victim of the system. However, there is, even in this early novel, another type of behaviour – that of Ann – that points the way to a different type of behaviour and a different challenge. Language is the means to lead this fight and the use of unusual *graphic language* – at least unusual once upon a time for a woman writer (a battle well and truly won now, as witness Hospital's compatriot Linda Jaivin's erotic succés d'estime *Eat Me* (1996) – and *the deep irony* in the analyses of male behaviour and their supportive structures of power, are fundamental in this novel. Another feminist issue present in *The Ivory Swing* is the insistence on *female sexuality* and the freedom to assert it is present at different levels, in the three main female characters – Ann, Juliet and Yashoda. In the *challenge to male official authority* we may find an indication of what is going to become an important characteristic of Hospital's other novels – the non-acceptance of that authority, which leads to the challenge to all authoritative knowledge, and the denial of other official truths of dominance and control. The private/public dichotomy, with the female linked to the private, is also present in *The Ivory Swing.*

From the three novels studied in this work, that in which we can find a more expanded intellectual resistance is *Borderline*. Several central feminist issues are present here. Firstly, the issues of the non-acceptance of official metanarratives, with the preference for individual stories that reconstruct the past through individual memory. Secondly, women's sexual assertiveness through the character Felicity, who, without denying her sexuality, doesn't accept domination, using her wandering and fragmented behaviour as a strategy of resistance to domination and control. Thirdly, the issue of rape, present in most of Hospital's work, also has a place in this novel, as it is considered by feminists and Hospital alike an extreme form of violence and a language of domination of the female, characteristic of patriarchal societies that should be vigorously denounced. Fourthly, the issue of silence arising out of fear, domination or conversely as a language of resistance can also be found in *Borderline*, in several characters, but mainly in the figure of the missing/ absent La Magdalena, the pursued immigrant. This silence is not a gendered silence as it also embraces intellectual dissidents, marginals and in this particular case refugees. The analyses of the dichotomy Public/ Private, already slightly dealt with in *The Ivory Swing*, are, in *Borderline*, the main issue of the novel and can be considered an overtly political issue, as it is intrinsically linked with power and dominance and their consequent violence. Here the resistance to structures of power is not only a gendered resistance but goes beyond it and is enlarged to all those who are in the margins, for

Hospital valorises differences – not only gendered difference – and links them to the incomprehension that leads to violence.

From a more intellectual point of view there is also in *Borderline* the denial of a conception of unitary subjectivity: Hospital points to existence of several selves, leading us to conclude that there is not Woman as such, but many different women and even different aspects in the same person. In *Borderline*, language in the sense of the free expression of feelings, ideas and experiences is still not available to all – women and immigrants included. As to La Magdalena – the absent/silent character – however, Hospital uses silence as a strong language of resistance. In Felicity's telling of past stories we can find a discourse of challenge towards official metanarratives and the questioning of authoritative knowledge. Her refusal to be kept between any type of "frames" is her language of freedom, underlined by her involvement as a witness of the shocking border incidents, an expression of the political character of language.

In *Oyster* a more violent struggle is entered into, with all the subversive literary structures of post-modernism, with its challenge to authoritative knowledge, as well as the forceful condemnation of patriarchal power with all its violent domination and exploitation. The use of a non-linear narration, and the presence of a non-linear concept of time are literary strategies consciously used to subvert and challenge traditional literary methods. There are in *Oyster* several different levels of resistance - literary strategies, challenge to authority, deep irony and silence – but overarching all of them is the use of

language. Violent language is used to denounce the violence of a patriarchal and fiercely male society, with all the abuses of power it presents. Another type of language is used by Hospital as a charming oasis in the middle of such violence, harshness and abuse – the marvellous words that describe the beauties of the Australian landscape. There is thus a deep contrast between the language used to describe the actions of males – violent, harsh, full of an extreme condemnation – and the language used to talk of the land and the Aborigines – the symbol of the preservation of nature. This is an intentional literary strategy that emphasises violence, corruption and abuse in the actions of men and opposes them to the wonders of Nature they don't respect. Written language is considered the means to achieve knowledge which is freedom for females - and others – and is a leitmotiv that runs throughout all the novel, symbolised by the character Miss Rover, the schoolteacher.

In postmodern terms, there isn't a universal truth, or authority and thus the very notion of "final" answers is deeply questioned. At the same time Feminist writers believe that "too many literary abstractions which claim to be universal have in fact described only male perceptions, experiences, and options" (127) as Elaine Showalter states in "Towards a Feminist Poetics". Hospital has thus had the difficult task of representing women's "perceptions, experiences, and options" at the same time as affirming the postmodern suspicions of truth claims in general. Hospital's novels have "open endings" that refuse final solutions, as the end of each novel is the beginning of a new

story we are not told, and they represent "a move away from fixed products and structures to open cultural processes and events" (23) according to Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern*, valuing multiplicity and believing in the active role of each person/reader in the making of our culture. As David Callahan states in "Acting in the Public Sphere and the Politics of Memory in Janette Turner Hospital", "clear answers as to how the equally strongly delineated argument in her work that a relation between the always already displaced nature of memory and subject position, on the one hand, and public responsibility, on the other hand, may be articulated or hermeneutically tidied up do not seem forthcoming" (80).

In the investigation of the problematics of these issues I have suggested that Hospital's use of language, and the linguistic strategies associated with the principal characters, are intimately connected to whatever possibility of resistance she is able to generate in her writing.

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