

WHOSE VOICE IS IT ANYWAY?

THE POLITICS OF NARRATIVE STYLISTICS IN ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S

*FRÄULEIN ELSE* & HAN KANG'S *THE VEGETARIAN*

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Arthur Schnitzler's novella *Fräulein Else* has often been juxtaposed with Freud's *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse*, and both can be read as an endeavour to 'give voice' to the hysteric through representation. This representation, however, depends on someone speaking for someone else, and thus, the 'hysteric' herself has no voice of her own. Juxtaposing this with Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian* helps shed light on a different way of communication and understanding, one that does not rely on someone speaking for someone else but allows for the silence of the silenced to be understood on their own terms. I draw on Mieke Bal's narratology and Spivak's "Can the Subaltern speak?" in order to analyse and describe how representation of the 'other' and the possibility of communication with the 'other' is presented differently in these three texts and what we can learn from them.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

There is an interesting paradox in Schnitzler's 1924 novella *Fräulein Else*: the author is the male doctor but the narrator and focalizer is the female 'patient' and this strategy is used in order to give speech to the voice that would normally have been silenced. Therefore, Schnitzler is implicitly taking part in Freud's endeavour to 'give voice' to the 'hysteric'. Freud explicitly references Schnitzler's literary works and expresses his admiration for the writer's understanding of psychoanalysis in *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse* (1905). Many scholars have read Schnitzler's novella *Fräulein Else* as a response to Freud's theories, comparing their analyses of hysteria and drawing conclusions about their respective ideas about the aetiology of hysteria. However, there are more parallels between the two doctors apart from biographical and thematic connections, namely the ideological foundation of their respective projects of 'giving voice' to the 'hysteric'. This concept of 'giving voice' is in itself problematic, for it depends on representational politics without questioning them. Thus it is crucial to look at a literary text as communicative medium that not only narrates a story but also has an impact on the mind of the reader, informing her of someone else's thoughts and ideas. As such, literature often has defined or reflected and dismantled how the 'Other' is constructed through the cultural production of meaning. Here, the ethical problem of writing itself, a writing that always includes representation, is my main focus. My main question is caught up in a quadrangle of issues - agency, speaking, silence and representation (in the sense of 'darstellen'): "What does it matter who's speaking" (Beckett) and who is actually speaking here, whose voice is this? For whom is that voice speaking? Why? In what way does silence speak - and what does this representation of speaking and silence do? In order to fully understand the meaning of

speaking for someone else, giving voice to someone else, I will draw on Mieke Bal's *Narratology*, Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?*.

Through an engagement with these theoretical endeavours I will show that the texts by Schnitzler and Freud present us with questionable reliabilities. However, if their reliabilites are potentially compromised, then so are their representational politics. This shows their internalised, and problematic, assumption that representation is a necessary (and, especially for Freud, neutral) tool for understanding the 'Other'. To find an alternative to this conceptualisation, I will turn to a contemporary South Korean novel by Han Kang, *The Vegetarian* (2007, English translation 2015). The main contrast, which can be drawn between those texts, lies in the narrative structure. Else's interior monologue emphasises her point of view as a powerful tool the author uses in order to take his male point of view out of the equation. Freud, on the other hand, presents Dora through the lense of his own psychoanalytical interpretation. Similarly to Freud's text and in contrast to Schnitzler's interior monologue, the protagonist's point of view in the novel, a young woman named Yeong-hye, is almost entirely effaced from the narrative. Yet, despite the protagonist's absence, the novel creates an atmosphere of complicity between (implied) author, main character and reader. Thematically, both *The Vegetarian* and *Fräulein Else* try to understand and demonstrate the diverse mechanisms of the systematic silencing of women, even though they implement completely different literary techniques in order to do so. Whereas Schnitzler is still more invested in representational politics (i.e. speaking out for the 'Other'), I propose that *The Vegetarian* offers a different perspective on our apprehension of understanding and communication that does neither rely on verbal communication nor on representational politics. Instead, it allows for a new



conceptualisation of understanding and communication based on the idea that understanding of the ‘Other’ necessarily involves a new understanding of oneself. Contrarily to the Western philosophical concept of the autonomous self that comprehends the world objectively, *The Vegetarian* suggests that it is only in relation to the ‘Other’ that one can understand oneself, and that it is only through a genuine desire to understand the ‘Other’ that one can truly comprehend one’s own identity and social situatedness.

I will begin my analysis with a discussion of Schnitzler’s *Fräulein Else* and the question of reliability in that novella. Although many articles have been written on this novella, reliability has (to my knowledge) not been properly investigated, even though it is crucial to determine the (un-)reliability of Else as narrator and focalizer, since the structure of the interior monologue itself presents the narrative as subjective experience and can thus easily be interpreted as unreliable. Most analyses have described her decision-making process in terms of madness or mental illness without even addressing the question of reliability. Through a detailed examination of the text, I will show that Else is indeed a reliable narrator, which directly contradicts interpretations that have described her decision-making process as ‘delirious’ (i.e. as her going crazy) – an interpretation that I do not want to endorse. Furthermore it is not only Else’s reliability that is at stake, but also the author’s. Since the novella is an attempt at speaking for someone who has been silenced, whilst pretending to be speaking from their subject position, it is important to scrutinise how this artificially constructed ‘subaltern’<sup>1</sup> voice is presented and what effect that has on the reader. In order to discuss these questions I will draw on Mieke Bal’s narratology and other narratological examinations of what

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<sup>1</sup> Since Else pertains to the bourgeois, she is not really a subaltern, I will nonetheless use the term here under a slightly different meaning: ‘subaltern’ in this text will be used in order to describe those who do not have any real ‘voice’ in society and whose point of view is silenced.

reliability and trustworthiness mean. Additionally, I will take recourse to theoretical texts by Michel Foucault (“What is an Author?”) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (“Can the Subaltern speak?”) to discuss what it means that this ‘female patient’ narrative was actually written by a male doctor. And finally, I will contrast the representational strategy used by Schnitzler with Freud’s representation of Ida Bauer. Through an analysis of Freud’s (un-)reliability I will argue that the text, even though Freud’s medical assessment of his patient is perfectly coherent, and indeed, is presented in such a way as to be as convincing as possible, Dora’s silence indirectly undermines and dismantles Freud’s carefully crafted analysis.

In the second part of my analysis I will focus on two chapters of Han’s *The Vegetarian* that contrasts both with Schnitzler’s and Freud’s texts. The first chapter “The Vegetarian” contrasts with Schnitzler’s novella because it represents the protagonist through eight segments in italics, which function as an interior monologue, albeit in an unconnected and elusive way. The primary narrator and focalizer of this chapter is the protagonist’s husband, and thus the narrative functions in a similar way to Freud’s analysis of Ida Bauer because the narrator/focalizer is crafted in such a way as to be contradicted by the silence of the protagonist, which is represented through the segments in italics. Thus, while my interpretation of Freud as an unreliable analyst might rely on my personal disagreement with Freud’s theoretical ideas, in the novel, the complicity with the protagonist is carefully constructed through the narrative structure. This shows the deliberate usage of represented silence in this narrative, in order to guide the readers’ emotional response to the narrative. The other chapter examined in this essay is the third one, “Flaming Trees”. This chapter is narrated by Yeong-hye’s sister, In-hye, and it envisions a completely new strategy of understanding and communication. The protagonist is no longer represented through segments in

italics and is only quoted in conversations. Furthermore, In-hye's comprehension of her sister, which begins to unfold in this chapter, is not even rooted in (verbal) communication. Instead, understanding is seen to function through the desire to understand, through empathy and through a long history of a close personal relationship. As In-hye remembers scenes from their past lives together, she remembers her own problems and traumatic experiences, which enable her to start comprehending, not only her sister but also herself, in a completely new way.

## II. ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S *FRÄULEIN ELSE* USURPER OR SPEAKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

Schnitzler's novella *Fräulein Else* (1924) has inspired many interpretations without the problem of (un-)reliability being raised. Due to the fact that the interior monologue is a very peculiar narrative style that represents the world very subjectively, the question about the (un-)reliability of the narration is of consequence. There are two issues that are of importance: First of all, it is necessary to include a narratological discussion of (un-)reliability and its meaning in connection to this text and secondly, it needs to be taken into account that many of the interpretations of this novella are, in fact, implicitly based on the evaluation of the main character, Else, as an unreliable narrator, at least in some aspects. This is problematic, for it implicitly establishes a connection between the character and 'hysteria'. These designations of unreliability are closely connected to the interpreter's ideas about the concept of consciousness and how that consciousness should (or can) be expressed through language. In this essay I argue that Else is a reliable narrator and I analyse how this problem of assigned (un-)reliability is repeated in the relationship between male doctor/female patient and male author/female protagonist. Furthermore it will be helpful to examine the reaction of Else's aunt (who represents female hostility on the one hand and social rules and etiquette on the other), since she interprets Else as 'hysterical'. In this analysis I am not so much concerned with the question of whether Schnitzler tried to construct a counter narrative to Freud's psychoanalytical case studies or whether Else's story is influenced by the Dora-case. Instead, my focus is the nature of the narrative voice that depicts, i.e. re-presents [darstellen] a character and the implications of that narrative for questions of (un-)reliability on the one hand, and on the other hand, I will explore the meaning that the re-presentative action (the narrative seen as action) creates and how specific

articulations of re-presentative action will influence how that narrative artificially constructs the re-presented. Through a connection to the narrative structure of the text and its link to Freud's Dora-case, we gain insight into the constructedness of the narration as 'immediate' depiction of an experiencing consciousness, its cultural meaning and its critical depiction of the social mechanisms that silence women.

## 2.1. Consciousness, (Un-)Reliability and the Mechanism of Silence

### 2.1.1. Creativity and Consciousness

The literary style of interior monologue presents the world filtered through the consciousness of an experiencing subject and is thus inherently inscribed with, at least, a questionable reliability. Instead of analysing this thoroughly, many interpreters of Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else* have neglected this important aspect of the novella. When attention has been drawn to the composition of the narrative, interpreters have focused on the intermediality of the text that consists of excerpts of the music sheets for Robert Schumann's *Carnaval*, most of which focus on the meaning of Schuman's music as an interpretive tool.<sup>2</sup> But analysing music sheets in a literary text only for "inhaltliche Spekulationen" (Gess, 155) does not take into account the complexity of two different media being interconnected in this text, as Nicola Gess suggests in her essay 'Intermediality Reconsidered'. She argues that the nature of the different media is important in order to understand the implications of the narrative structure.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cathy Raymond, for instance, argued that the music can be read symbolically for Else's emotions and that the audience in the room listening to the pianist playing Schumann's music is actually already confronted with Else's feelings and thoughts through the music.

<sup>3</sup> „Else's Bewußtsein ist in dem Moment von der Musik eingenommen, die sie gerade hört. Ähnlich wie zuvor die Dialoganteile anderer Personen, die kursiv in den Text eingelassen sind, ist so auch die Musik als Notenzitat im Text präsent. Zum anderen *ist* der Innere Monolog aber auch Musik, und zwar nicht nur, weil Musik um 1900 gern als Stimme des Unbewußten verstanden wurde, sondern vor allem, weil der Innere Monolog Strukturen übernimmt und transformiert, die von Schnitzler's Zeitgenossen mit einer bestimmten Form von Musik assoziiert wurde.“ (Gess, 158f.).

Specifically, she points out the connection of ‘Freie Fantasie’ and ‘Innerer Monolog’. As Gess explains the origin of ‘Freie Fantasie’ and describes how it was received in society, an interesting dualism emerges: On the one hand we find creativity, ingeniousness and on the other hand the expression of madness (see 161). This very same dualism was also used in biographical descriptions of the musicians. She exemplifies this in the case of Schumann who was portrayed as “schizophrener Künstler” (153) whose compositions were influenced by his mental disorder (see *ibid.*).

This dualism creativity and insanity can be traced back to how imagination (‘Einbildungskraft’) and the process of conscious perception were understood to operate.<sup>4</sup> What is important for Gess is that both Freie Fantasie and Innerer Monolog originate from ideas that try to describe how the human consciousness works. For her, the music sheets within the literary text represent a radicalisation of the interior monologue because the interior monologue contains “eine besonders reiche, zugleich aber auch außergewöhnlich dichte semantische Besetzung [...], weil er mehr sagt, als dem Sprecher bewußt ist.“ (166). But this intense content is very cryptic and therefore difficult to decode. Nevertheless, it is even more difficult, if not impossible, to semantically decode the meaning of instrumental music such as Freie Fantasie (see *ibid.*). In addition to this layering of cryptic messages, Gess notes that this representation of music does not represent the usual experience of music: instead of sound, or at least the description of sound, the music sheets are *silent*, just like a literary text and the articulation of dissent of the protagonist. Furthermore, both styles intend to represent [darstellen] (chaotic) expressions of free association and formlessness while

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<sup>4</sup> „Daß die Einbildungskraft ein dubioses Vermögen ist, welches ungezähmt durch den Verstand einen regellosen Fluß von Bildern erzeugt, an dem der Mensch wahnsinnig zu werden droht – so die Befürchtung etwa Kants – findet im Kompositionsstil der Freien Fantasie sein ambivalent beurteiltes Pendant.“ (Gess, 165).

the representation itself is being meticulously crafted. Thus any free association is carefully designed and thus a mere construct, which Gess described as “*geformte Formlosigkeit*” (164). Paradoxically, in order to represent chaos, this chaos needs to be constructed first and can thus, by definition, never be chaotic, or at least, the chaos is not ‘authentic’ but order presented in such a way as to *seem* chaotic. Thus, the phrasing that Schnitzler took ‘his male point of view out of the equation’ (see above) can be seen as a farce, for the ‘female’ point of view is only imagined by a male author and thus necessarily endowed with his ‘male’ point of view. Far from invoking any sort of essentialism, this serves to emphasise the constructedness of the narrative. Similarly, the depicted experiencing consciousness is an inauthentic experiencing consciousness precisely *because* it is artificially fabricated and crafted in such a way as to represent what the writing subject imagines an experiencing consciousness to be. In order to understand this constructed narrative that simulates unconstructedness and immediacy, I want to consider some narratological issues that will also be helpful in analysing the (un-)reliability of the narrator.

Although one could argue that this text is not actually a ‘narrated’ text because it does not ‘narrate’ but rather tries to depict an experiencing consciousness, it is still an intentionally fabricated narrative that tells a story. The text itself was still written by an author, an author who chose an associative style of writing that is mirrored in the display of Schumann’s *Carnaval* and who chose to narrate this story from the point of view of a young girl, elaborating the text as a narration of her consciousness. Thus, it has been the endeavour of, for instance, Dorrit Cohn, to investigate several texts that depict a consciousness and to outline specific narrative elements that distinguish these texts from one another. She describes *Fräulein Else* in her book *Transparent Minds* as autonomous monologue but insists that the literary text has technical flaws in the

representation of a coherently depicted experiencing consciousness. She compares the music sheets to those printed in Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1887) and concludes that the music sheets were "more elaborately and perhaps less efficiently used by Schnitzler" (235f.). She argues that "it is difficult to accept this score simply as a quotation of her [Else's] consciousness; it appears more like an authorial collage that draws attention to the behind-the-scenes 'production' of the text we are reading." (236). But where Cohn detects a stylistic flaw, Gess reads the simultaneous expression that the music is in fact a part of Else's consciousness and that it is a valuable interpretative insight that the irritating music sheets draw attention to the mode of writing.

Cohn's second objection to Schnitzler's use of the autonomous monologue is that the monologist "record[s her] own bodily movements" (ibid.), meaning that the autonomous monologue should be simulating the point of view of an experiencing self *directly*, i.e. without any form of mediation. For her, there must not be any kind of reference to anything that is obvious for the experiencing self and therefore she describes the following scene as 'grotesque' (ibid.): "Ich bewege die Hand, ich rege die Finger, ich strecke den Arm, ich sperre die Augen weit auf. Ich sehe, ich sehe. Da steht mein Glas."<sup>5</sup> (Schnitzler, 378). Of course, in Cohn's definition of the writing style as 'autonomous monologue' it is presupposed that this would be some kind of verbalised representation of consciousness. Although Cohn's theorising has its validity and is certainly helpful, there is one aspect that needs to be examined very closely: Does Schnitzler's text only try to represent verbalised thought, that is, should we presuppose that every sentence that is using "first-person pronouns combined with present action verbs" (236), as Cohn puts it, is a sentence Else *verbally thinks*? To explore how we

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<sup>5</sup> Cohn quotes this segment in English.



understand consciousness in the first place, let me turn to William James' *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to further elaborate on what we mean when we talk about 'consciousness'. To understand how we conceptualise consciousness is also crucial for an understanding of Else's (un-)reliability, since (un-)reliability is often indirectly ascribed by way of describing the depicted consciousness as 'incoherence'.

Gess draws on William James in order to describe the explicit relationship between consciousness and the interior monologue: "die Inhalte des Bewußtseins [haben] die Form eines unaufhörlich fließenden Stroms vager Bilder" (165), and she claims that the interior monologue features as an artistic pendant to James' more philosophical explanation (see 165f.). James dedicated an entire chapter in his *Principles of Psychology* to what he called 'the stream of consciousness,' and explores a variety of questions related to human consciousness. James' analysis is more thorough than I can outline here, which is why I will only discuss some points of his argument that are especially relevant for the question of what an articulation of an experiencing consciousness could look like: Firstly, instead of being stable, consciousness is always in motion and never stands still, or as James formulates it: "There are facts which make us believe that our sensibility is altering all the time, so that the same object cannot easily give us the same sensation over again." (232); and: "Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date." (234). The importance of this is quite obvious for the interior monologue or stream of consciousness<sup>6</sup>: To describe an

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<sup>6</sup> I will use those two terms interchangeably. Both describe a literary style that represents an experiencing consciousness. Even though there is quite some difference in style between *Penelope* (Joyce, 1922) and *Fräulein Else* both texts ultimately do refer to their bodily movements or bodily experience. A consciousness never exists without also being aware of its body and of everything it perceives. I would rather argue that it is then a decision of style (and maybe of focus of attention) that leads an author to depict a fictional consciousness without giving an account of visual perception and sensory sensibility (bodily movements etc.) Nevertheless it can be helpful to draw attention to this difference in style.

experiencing self, i.e. a consciousness in its process of continuous sensual, visual, emotional and intellectual momentary experiencing of life, the narration, logically, does not take the reader into account. The text is not designed to give full explanation but to portray the process of a consciousness that experiences and changes according to new thoughts and ideas or new appertained knowledge and that also changes due to sensorial perceptions or emotional reactions to others. Thus it is helpful to examine how the reader's interpretation of an interior monologue is described in relation to the narrating/focalising consciousness. Interestingly, the relation between Else's consciousness and the reader's interpretation has been described like this: "While she remains unable to construct a coherent and transparent narrative of meaning, the reader is able to put all the pieces of Else's interior monologue together." (Huysen, 42). Although it might be true that the reader is capable of analysing the novella in a sensible manner, Else's consciousness is far from being incoherent. The mere fact that it is extremely easy for the reader to follow all her strains of thought, to feel empathy towards her and to understand her behaviour underlines the coherence of the narrative. This is also true if we consider the development of Else's thoughts and her reasoning (i.e. the way in which she in fact does 'construct a coherent and transparent narrative of meaning'). Even if everything that is transmitted to the reader in a verbalised manner does occur in Else's consciousness without the actual 'utterance' of those words, her manner of reasoning is still absolutely coherent. Even granting that Else's development of thought does not follow a strict logical course and that her opinion about certain matters constantly changes, it needs to be recognised that this is precisely how a consciousness would be developing a coherent narrative of meaning. James quotes Mr. Shadworth Hodgson who wrote "What I find when I look at consciousness [...] is a sequence of different feelings." (230), and concluded that "Every thought we have of a

given fact is, strictly speaking, unique, and only bears a resemblance of kind with our other thoughts of the same fact. [...] Often we are ourselves struck at the strange differences in our successive views of the same thing.” (233). This is exactly what happens to Else. She constantly revises her opinion about whether she should sacrifice herself for her father and her opinion changes according to spontaneous feelings and thoughts, e.g. the thought that her father knew exactly what Dorsday would ask of her enrages her and in this light it is only logical for her to argue that her father deserves to be in prison. However, once she realises that everything in her life, even her status in society, depends on her father’s wealth and reputation and that both she and her mother would be poor and outcast by society if he would be imprisoned, she begins to understand her situation in a completely new way. Insinuating that Else is incapable of constructing a ‘coherent and transparent narrative of meaning’ (Huysen qtd. above) simply shows that this interpreter was incapable of accepting this young woman as an intelligent observer and interpreter of her situation and of giving her the credit she deserves and thus exposes his own gender-biased view. This labelling of Else’s narrative as ‘incoherent’ will be important later on in the context of (un-)reliability.

Having discussed how to deal with coherence in such a narrative, I want to explore a second important point of James’ discussion of consciousness: the question whether our thoughts always appear in our minds in the form of language or not. James draws on the writings of “Mr. Ballard, a deaf-mute instructor in the National College at Washington” (266) in order to declare that thought need not only function through language. He does not directly state whether he thinks this to be the case for all people or merely deaf-mute ones, but I believe it to be implied that this should be accepted as a strong argument for nonverbal forms of thought. This non-articulate thought, then, does pose quite an intricate dilemma for the literary style of interior monologue. For, if

we suppose that there are parts of our consciousness that are verbally inaccessible and therefore beyond verbal articulation, this also means that if literature depicts an experiencing consciousness it would need to somehow still express what is impossible to articulate, i.e. verbally inaccessible. In this sense, Schnitzler did not try to depict what Cohn calls an ‘autonomous monologue,’ and indeed to insist that writers conform to narratological classification is absurd in itself and thus the devaluation of any style of narrative due to a technical flaw seems ridiculous. Furthermore, Cohn’s argument that to mention ‘bodily movements’ interferes with the coherence of an autonomous monologue would be based on the assumption that this type of monologue should only depict what is verbally expressible. Instead, I want to argue that Schnitzler’s novella depicts more than mere verbal articulation of the consciousness because it also tries to express parts of Else’s consciousness that are located outside of the possibility of articulation, which is also hinted at through the implementation of music sheets that dismiss verbal thought altogether. Obviously, in a medium that is very much based on the possibility of verbalised expression of thought and experience, it is difficult to portray those parts of the consciousness that cannot even be verbally accessed. Additionally, we need to take into account that the experiencing consciousness might not always be aware of the full meaning of her/his actions. This does not mean that this narrative needs be incoherent, but it does give rise to the question of (un-)reliability in the narrative text.

#### 2.1.2. Determining (Un-)Reliability

In order to address the question of (un-)reliability in *Fräulein Else* it will be productive to incorporate some basic narratological terminologies. Whereas a literary text has mostly been divided into *discourse* and *story*, Mieke Bal argued that there is, in fact,

another level that one needs to take into account when talking about a narrative: the *text*. According to Bal, the text is a medium or material that consists of signs. The nature of these signs will depend on the nature of the medium, for instance written word, film or picture (see 5). The *text* of Schnitzler's novella consists of written word, written word in quotation marks and in italics, but, and this is interesting, the music sheets would also be part of the *text*, thus confirming Gess' analysis and her argument that the music sheets are part of Else's consciousness. In Bal's terminology the *story* refers to what others call the *discourse*, and the *fabula* corresponds to the *story*. In order not to overcomplicate this terminology, I only focus on Bal's concepts without pointing out specific differences and divergences between her terms and those of other narratologists (e.g. Genette). I chose to implement Bal's terminology because the additional element of *text* allows us to understand the narrative in a more complex way, for it incorporates the visuality of the text and thus helps our understanding of the narratological structure. It is important to notice, however, that, for Bal, these terminologies are merely theoretically distinguishable subdivisions, which account for the complexity of any narrative and its interaction with the reader.

I will begin by outlining Bal's definition of the *fabula*. According to her "A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (ibid.). This concept of the *fabula* does not envision an objective storyline that underlies the story, but rather that the recombination of the events into a coherent structure of time and logic depends on the reader's interpretation of the *story*, the reader being influenced both by the "initial encounter with the text and by the manipulations of the story" (9). Here, Bal addresses already two major problems of literary analysis – the reader is always influenced by the visual presentation of the text and manipulated by the way the story is told. Hence the importance of Bal's

incorporation of the *text* as separate layer of the narrative, which is the element of the text which we first encounter. In distinction to the *fabula* which the reader herself fabricates, the *story* is everything that happens in-between the other two layers, “a *story* is a *fabula* that is presented in a certain manner” (5), including the choice of chronological or achronological presentation, point of view, colouring of the actors with definite character traits,<sup>7</sup> and locations that are given specific characteristics (see 8). This is different from the layer of the *text* because the *story* can be transmitted using different signs and thus a different medium - language, image, sound, or a combination of these etc. - changes the reader’s perception (see *ibid.*)

In order to show the full significance of Bal’s differentiation, I want to exemplify this with *Fräulein Else*. As mentioned before, this text combines two different media: written word and written piano directions. Additionally, there are different styles of writing and indications of direct speech. What has not been discussed yet is another element of how the interior monologue is visualised: The story’s style of writing is visually accessible through its unusual punctuation (‘-‘ ‘- -‘ or ‘...’). Another issue is Schnitzler’s use of ‘incorrect’ grammatical spelling in his attempt to depict colloquial language.<sup>8</sup> All these elements are part of the *text*.

The story, however, is the description of everything Else experiences, her feelings and thoughts and her dialogues with others. The characters in the story are exactly how Else describes and characterises them. In this way, the depiction of Cissy, for instance, is ambiguous. Throughout the narrative, Else *seems* to oscillate between esteem and mockery: “Warum sagt Cissy >Dinner<?<sup>9</sup> Dumme Affektation.” (327);

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<sup>7</sup> The ‘actor’ is in the *fabula* what the ‘character’ is in the *story*.

<sup>8</sup> He sometimes does use grammatically ‘correct’ abbreviations (e.g. *wär*’ for ‘wäre’), and sometimes grammatically ‘incorrect’ forms (e.g. *wär*).

<sup>9</sup> Here another element on the level of the text designates differences in pronunciation.

“Hat sie was an unter dem Schlafrock, wenn sie zu ihm kommt? Es ist schwer, wenn man in solchen Dingen nicht geübt ist. Soll ich sie um Rat fragen, die Cissy?“ (356). My use of the word ‘*seems*’ already shows how troublesome it can be to clearly distinguish story and fabula, and it is essential to observe this closely. Here, the very style of narration makes this differentiation extremely delicate because Else never clearly defines her opinion of Cissy – of course not: the text, i.e. the narrating medium, is that of an experiencing self in the present moment and there is no reason why Else should clarify her meaning to herself. In this narrative style it is easier to first distinguish story and fabula on a broader scale: The *story* consists of a young girl, Else, who is on holidays with her aunt in a hotel with several other guests she knows. One day, she receives a letter from her mother, telling her about an unfortunate event that has fallen upon their family. Her father has illegally gambled with ward money and has to go to prison if he cannot pay his debt. Therefore, Else’s mother asks her daughter for help, saying she should persuade Dorsday, an old acquaintance of her father, to send her father the needed amount. Else tries to do so, but Dorsday wants something in return: to contemplate her nakedness for a quarter of an hour. Else does not want to do this and, after a very long process of decision-making, finally disrobes in public. She does this because she wants to cheat Dorsday without actually denying his request and thereby still forcing him to give her father the money. She falls into a state in which she can still hear and later on also see everything around her, but she cannot move. Once she is brought to her bedroom and everyone is in the hallway, she is able to move again and drinks a glass of veronal that she had put on the side of her bed before publicly displaying her naked body. She then drifts off, loses consciousness. This is the *story*.

Now, the *fabula* is constructed according to my own interpretation of this story. In order to argue that the fabula I have fashioned this way makes sense, I need to analyse

the texts closely and scrutinise whether certain details I detect are actually part of the story that is being narrated. In my case, the *fabula* runs like this: A young girl, Else, is being asked by her naïve mother to help out her father who is an irresponsible criminal who gambled with ward money. Else realises (and correctly so) that her father has foreseen what kind of service Dorsday would ask of her in return for the money and that her father is trying to abuse her daughterly feelings for him. Else rebels against this injustice but eventually has to accept that without the support of a financially stable male subject she has no place in this society. But rather than simply accepting this social condition and conforming to its conventions, she decides to defy every social rule that has been imposed on her: she denies Dorsday the pleasure of seeing her alone and she refuses to acquiesce to her father's will that he might profit from her sacrifice without making sure the world knows that there has been a sacrifice. When she realises that the world will construct her as an hysteric instead of seeing the injustice done and recognising her sacrifice, she panics and drinks veronal in an attempt at suicide.<sup>10</sup> The distinction between *text*, *story* and *fabula* will be a very helpful tool for discussing (un-)reliability.

There have been quite a few discussions about (un-)reliability and its meaning for literary analysis and a recent collection of essays also addressed the issue in connection with doctor-patient relationships, politics and journalism: *Unreliability and Trustworthiness: Intermedial and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2015). As Vera Nünning explains in the first chapter of this volume, cognitive narratology has argued that the concept of untrustworthiness is “used in order to reconcile and explain text-

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<sup>10</sup> “ [Scheible] has clearly shown, the repeated exact amount of Veronal cited in the text can only serve the purpose of pointing to the fact that this amount of the popular sleeping pill is not enough to lead even to the danger of death, i.e., Else stages a suicide attempt, but will most certainly wake up after the end of the novella.” (Schmid-Bortenschlager, 515).



internal as well as -external discrepancies” (8). Of course, in most cases, if the narrator is unreliable that is because he/she/it was written as such. Nünning also argues that different designations of unreliability can point out what the difference between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ consists of in a specific culture (see 14). In the context of Else’s explicit classification as ‘hysteric’ by society (Cissy says: “*Ein hysterischer Anfall wird behauptet.*” [Schnitzler, 378]) this is crucial, since

“how unreliable narrators are dealt with allows one to recognise what is unreliable but tolerable and just within the limits of the acceptable, what is considered as scandalous and criticised, and *what is mad* or deceitful to such an extent that it is *deemed necessary to send the narrators to closed psychiatric wards* or commit them to prison.” (Nünning, 14; my italics).

First of all, Cissy’s phrasing ‘wird behauptet’ makes quite clear that she is of another opinion (without even quoting her explicitly saying this). That Cissy does believe that Else has had a hysterical seizure is thus part of the story. The interpreter could argue that Else only imagines this, after all one could argue that she is in a traumatic shock and thus the probability of her account of reality being unreliable has been increased. But this is not what I want to contend. Instead, it will be useful to consider this inherent connection that Nünning makes between analysed unreliability and patterns of social exclusion. Assigning unreliability positions the character as an outsider in society and since the style of interior monologue does suggest at least a questionable reliability it is essential to understand how and why this designation of unreliability comes about. The following discussion of (un-)reliability in doctor/patient relations, the differentiation between focalizer/narrator and some attempts to deal with narrative texts that are ambiguous concerning (un-)reliability will help analyse Schnitzler’s novella and, more importantly, the (un-)reliability of its main character, Else.

The volume mentioned above features an article by Jarmila Mildorf titled “Unreliability in Patient Narratives: From Clinical Assessment to Narrative Practice”. In this essay she examines the relationship between doctors and their patients and the problem of basic doctor-patient communication, i.e. how does the doctor know whether his/her patient is an unreliable source of information? She starts by pointing out why this question is of importance – even in a doctor/patient relationship where one might be tempted to suppose that the patient relates his/her problem in a reliable manner. Mildorf detects several problems that might arise in doctor/patient communications. Firstly, a doctor might doubt the patient’s narrative because s/he believes that the patient is only pretending to be sick (see 395). Secondly, she argues that “reliability is also related to certain codes of conduct and practices that are adequate in a given social interaction” (396), meaning that the designation of unreliability might derive simply from a patient behaving in a non-normative way. Thirdly, she says that unreliability is also “closely connected to the ways in which people wish to present themselves in conversations” (ibid.). Although these points are all interesting and absolutely valid, her last argument is especially intriguing: “And finally, unreliability may depend strongly on what the doctor perceives as ‘unreliable’ in a given situation.” (397), This point also reflects back to her second observation: It is the doctor’s perception of ‘unusual’ behaviour in the patient that will determine the doctor’s verdict. This, of course, will depend on the doctor’s assumptions of normative, i.e. ‘normal’ behaviour. Obviously, this is a very important point in Mildorf’s entire discussion, for she stresses this several times (see 399, 409) in order to argue that a major problem in the doctor/patient relationship is that the patient’s narrative is not taken seriously enough and that the doctors should focus more on *how* their patients narrate (see e.g. 406). She adds that doctors need to be aware “of their own biases” (408) that contribute to the

unreliability of the patient's narrative.<sup>11</sup> She clearly wishes to accentuate, however, the potential danger of too readily adopting a "benevolent image of the patient" (405) which would lead to an ignorance of the real problems that a patient's "malingering or deception [can pose to] doctors and to society" (see *ibid.*). Interestingly, Mildorf does connect these issues to literary analysis and narratology, albeit only in a footnote: "whether a story is perceived as reliable or unreliable, [Christoph] Bode argues, depends on how readers read the text and on whether they begin to feel suspicious about what they are told." (398). This shows firstly, that narrative analysis is always important, whatever kind of narration might be the focus of examination, and secondly, that the discussion of (un-)reliability does not need to deal with the style of the narrative but also with the question why an interpreter designates a certain style of narration or a specific character as unreliable.

It is very intriguing that through the analysis of (un-)reliability several attempts have been made to deal with the problem of ambiguity – whether by distinguishing several kinds of unreliabilities (e.g. irony as narratological tool to undermine the focalizer's point of view or by drawing on the Possible-Worlds Theory that states that conflicting points of view do not mean that one point of view needs to be described as 'false'. The problematic issue with this theory is that it legitimises every point of view, and if everything is possible, who gets to decide what reality is? Nevertheless, these theoretical frameworks can help distinguish different types of unreliability. Robert Vogt's attempt to connect the Possible-Worlds Theory to cognitive science in order to make his theory valuable for interpretation is interesting, because even though

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<sup>11</sup> Dana Crowley Jack writes in *Silencing the Self. Women and Depression* about how theories of depression have often not acknowledged that women experience depression for other reasons than men do and thus need to be treated differently. She also accentuates that women have often been taught to not talk about their own needs because they are perceived as invalid (see chapter 1 "Prepare to Listen").

unreliability is something that is ascribed rather than an inherent feature, a *false* description, e.g. ascribing someone a specific role, of reality still exists and that needs to be analysed in its full philosophical depth. Thus, Vogt's premise firstly, that a reader is able to differentiate between narrator and focalizer etc. (see 144), and secondly, that the reader can analyse the narrative and interpret it (see 148) is vital, for it ascribes a basic ability to analyse to every reader. This distinction between narrator and focalizer can be paralleled with the reader's ability to distinguish between *text* and *story* and its importance for defining the (un)-reliability of a fictional character.

The reliability of Else in Schnitzler's novella is certainly questionable, and not only due to its composition as interior monologue. The style Schnitzler uses guarantees the reader a direct, i.e. unmediated, migration or insight into Else's consciousness. Nevertheless, this warranty only exists on the surface of the narrative text. Once the reader realises that this professed unmediated migration into the mind of another is in fact only a textual construction, or a convention of a literary subgenre, the illusion is disrupted. This reiterates the point Gess made that I quoted above: The highly artificial construction of a supposedly chaotic unconstructedness. Thus, there are already two issues that call the reliability of the novella into question – Else, of course, interprets everything that happens according to her own, very subjective, perception of her own feelings and likewise interprets the behaviour of others in relation to her personal apperception of social codes and their meanings. The second issue relates to the theoretical difference that can be made explicitly between *text* and *story*. While the *story* is formulated by the *focalizer*<sup>12</sup>, the *text*, however, is the layer at which Bal situates

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<sup>12</sup> For Bal, the focalizer is “an aspect of the story [the] narrator tells. It is the represented ‘colouring’ of the fabula by a specific agent of perception, the holder of the ‘point of view’.” (19).

the *narrator*<sup>13</sup>. This is an absolutely crucial distinction and designates that there is a narrator that is neither identical with the author (or the implied author), nor identical with the focalizer (which in this specific case would be Else). In terms of (un-)reliability, this means that Bal's distinction brings a valuable point into the discussion. In describing Else's narrative as incoherent, one misses the point that Else actually does not narrate at all. She is the focalizer in this narrative text and is therefore a character in the story. The textual (linguistic) signs that constitute the text, however, are narrated by the narrator, an agent that (at least in this sense) technically doesn't exist on the level of the story, because it only refers to the text-layer of the narrative. In this case, the narrator is, due to the chosen style of writing and the chosen point of view, almost imperceptible. Here, the narrator only appears as a transmitter of signs and can be detected best by the elements of the text, i.e. the usage of italics, but also through a discussion of (un-)reliability. This distinction needs to be made because the focalizer in the story, the experiencing subject, would not need to textually distinguish (i.e. using italics) between who is speaking. These are signs that are not part of the experiencing consciousness, thus the need to theoretically distinguish between focalizer and narrator and the need for or the choice of the narrator to make these differences visible in the text. An experiencing consciousness is the focalizer, but the depiction of that consciousness is still a mediation and therefore needs to be 'narrated'. Therefore, even in an interior monologue a narrator is required. Apart from that, the discussion of (un-)reliability can establish that if the narrator weren't a neutral transmitter of signs then the conflict between the focalizer's point of view and the world would not be undistinguishable, that is, there would be an obvious disparity between the focalizer's

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<sup>13</sup> For Barl, the narrator is "that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text" (18). It does not correspond to the idea of the 'implied author'.

interpretation and the interpretation the reader makes of this narrative according to the narrator's influence.

Having seen the full extent of political, medical and literary implications of (un-)reliability, I want to address the above discussed 'incoherence' interpreters have seen in Else's 'narrative,' because arguing that her perception of reality is incoherent undermines her as a reliable source of information. As I have outlined already, she does not narrate in an incoherent manner. Furthermore, she actually does not narrate at all, but is the focalizing character in the story. In this context it is of great importance that Schnitzler chose to depict Else's situation in the form of an interior monologue. One would suppose that this narrative style would incline all readers towards an interpretation that is in favour of Else's rationality and sensibility but contrarily to this conjecture there have been various interpretations that have argued either for the incoherence of Else's thoughts, and accordingly for her unreasonableness or else for her being brave by defying the world and losing her mind due to the disturbing experience that her defiance exposes her to. Interestingly, even differentiated (feminist) readings describe the scene leading to Else's disrobing as an "increasing delirium" (see Elizabeth Goodstein, 220), or her disrobing as an artistic expression of her exhibitionism (see Kelly Comfort, 202-204) and it needs to be noted that while Goodstein's phrasing is far from unconnected to a possible designation of Else as 'going mad' or as being a 'hysteric,' Comfort's analysis does not differentiate between Else's desire of being seen by a man she desires and the circumstances that force her to publicly disrobe. These designations inherently undermine Else's point of view as valid and thus can be aligned with other issues of 'victim-blaming'.

In the next section I want to cross-analyse Schnitzler's narrative with two other texts and thereby show how the differentiation between narrator and focalizer can be a

tool for determining (un-)reliability. I will include a discussion of the feminist reception of Freud's *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse* (1905), and a short excursus that contrasts Else as narrator/focalizer with Edouard Dujardin's narrator/focalizer Daniel in *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1887). This will showcase how unreliability can be implemented on the level of the text (i.e. the narrator) in order to undermine the focalizer. These discussions will portray the analytical importance of properly distinguishing between (socially) ascribed unreliability (see Vera Nünning above) and real unreliability in doctor/patient narratives (see Mildorf above). This will shed light on many important questions<sup>14</sup>, which I will outline first, drawing on Spivak, Foucault and Beckett:

## 2.2. What matter who's speaking?

### 2.2.1. Theory First: Spivak, Foucault & Beckett

In a literary text there are always multiple voices at work, however, if one wants to answer the question of whose voices those voices are, one must inevitably take a look at the figure of the author. Although I do not argue that the author should be interpreted as an independent, sovereign Subject who is the sole creator of the literary universe, the figure of the author should not be disposed of too lightly. I view the author as a subject immersed in life, culture, education, personal belief, biological predisposition, etc. who will not act independently of any of these influences. Despite this, it would be wrong to completely negate the agency of the author, since the author is still the one who actively decides what sort of story to write and whether to include social, political or

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<sup>14</sup> Who is ascribing unreliability to whom? Who is speaking for whom? What does it matter who's speaking? And whose voice is it anyway? (see introduction).

ethical questions in her writings. This agency will often involve a personal ethics that drives the author to such a choice. In the following I will consider Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question *Can the Subaltern speak?*, with a focus on her criticism of eurocentrism in Foucault and Deleuze and her differentiation between representation [vertreten] and re-presentation [darstellen]. Since writing a story inevitably involves some sort of representation Spivak's critique draws attention to the political importance of nuanced re-presentation and will make visible the power dynamics that are inherent in representational politics.

Her canonical essay was first published in 1988 and has since been revised for her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) and revisited again in 2010 in her article "In Response. Looking Back, Looking Forward."<sup>15</sup> As she accounts in the last, the driving force was not only the question of 'Can the subaltern speak?', but also "who hears the subaltern?" (229). Another point of importance in Spivak's analysis is the idea of reading or seeing "death as text" (235). In her response she emphasises her personal role, her own involvement as educator, as teacher on the one hand and as an intellectual listener/reader of the subaltern. She argues that in order to challenge the designations of subalternity, there needs to be a crisis in the subaltern's conception of herself, i.e. there needs to be a challenge to the status quo of the subaltern. This crack in the ideology that makes the subaltern reject their own conditions as 'natural' can happen in different ways. One is the task of the educator who listens to the subaltern and shares a space with them, enabling the educator to teach the subaltern to perceive themselves differently, to question their own condition as 'natural' – "If this teaching is not

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<sup>15</sup> I quote all three texts from the same book: *Can the Subaltern speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, that emerged after a conference at Columbia University. The first version is printed as appendix (pp. 237-291); the version from *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* constitutes 'Part One' (pp. 21-78), and *In Response* 'Part Five' (pp. 227-236) of this volume. I will only quote the page numbers.



performed, subalterns remain in subalternity, unable to represent themselves and therefore needing to be represented.” (232). The other task is that of the intellectual to listen to and to read those subaltern subjects who are able to express their dissent, but cannot make their dissent heard in institutions that would give them any legal power. Similar to this is also the need for the intellectual to learn to “read situations where no response happens” (235).

In addition to these, I want to emphasise the importance of education within the society of the oppressor.<sup>16</sup> As a white European cis-woman, I am concerned with the question of how to become sensitive to my own biases, how to comprehend the ‘other’ on their own terms and how to dismantle the ideology of the Western subject who sees itself as the sole bearer of enlightenment, democracy, equality and human rights, without acknowledging their own manifold disavowals of those same values. Therefore I will first outline Spivak’s criticism of Foucault and Deleuze, her subsequent analysis of the difference between representing [vertreten, which has the connotation of ‘standing in for’/‘replacing’] and re-presenting [darstellen, which has the connotation of ‘depicting’], and then focus my analysis on two literary texts that can be read as re-presenting a specific subaltern subject. I will argue that this *Darstellung* of the subaltern does, however, more than just re-present because the mode of re-presentation in these specific texts functions simultaneously as a speaking *for* the subaltern – not so much in that it would be a representation [Vertretung/Repräsentation] but in that it allows for an understanding of the re-presented based on the emotional connection established through the style of re-presentation. In arguing thus, I am not so much focusing on the question whether the subaltern can or cannot speak but rather on the implications of

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<sup>16</sup> Spivak does not address this distinctly although it seems to be implied in her notion of the teacher as counter-action.

someone else speaking *for* the subaltern by way of re-presentation. These implications are outlined in detail in Spivak's essay.

In the first part of her essay<sup>17</sup>, Spivak focuses on the voice of the Western intellectual who attempts to speak for the subaltern and she criticises both Foucault and Deleuze for their naïve transparency, arguing that “the two systematically ignore the question of ideology and their own implication in intellectual and economic history” (238). In ignoring the importance of ideology in the formation of their own knowledge and thinking, the two philosophers who have critiqued the idea of the sovereign subject implicitly reinstate the idea of a sovereign subject in their conversation. In proposing that one only needs “to establish conditions where the prisoners themselves would be able to speak” (Foucault qtd. in *ibid.*, 241), Foucault imagines that the subaltern are merely being silenced and not, as Spivak argues, simultaneously influenced by an ideology that legitimises the current conditions, an ideology in ‘native’ (or through colonisation established) patriarchal systems that makes the female subaltern doubly invisible. This importance of ideology in the construction of identity can be seen most clearly in Spivak's conception of the educator as the person who enables the subaltern to question their own subalternity (see above). Without taking ideology into account, there cannot be a proper analysis of the contradictory consciousness of the subaltern – and of the intellectual. The main problem with the Western intellectual who does not reflect the construction of her own identity in terms of socio-economic and ideological influences obscures “that Western intellectual production is, in many ways, complicit with Western international economic interests.” (235). She continues:

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<sup>17</sup> I am using the earlier version of her essay, since Spivak kept all the elements of that essay that are of interest in this context unchanged in her revision in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.

“Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. The theory of pluralized ‘subject-effects’ gives an illusion of undetermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has ‘no geo-political determinations’.” (238).

Her point is that unquestioned ideological assumptions of the Western intellectual lead to a reiteration of cultural biases, as can be seen in her analysis of the conversation between Foucault and Deleuze in “Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.” Thus, when Foucault appropriates the term ‘Maoist’ “for the eccentric phenomenon of French intellectual ‘Maoism’ [he] symptomatically renders ‘Asia’ transparent” (ibid.). This transparency is dangerous because it presupposes that the Western subject can silently disappear and ‘objectively’ represent the Other (in this case ‘Asia’). This, however, means that

“The S/subject, curiously sewn together into a transparency by denegations, belongs to the exploiter’s side of the international division of labor. [...] However reductionistic an economic analysis might seem, the French intellectuals forget at their peril that this entire overdetermined enterprise was in the interest of a dynamic economic situation requiring that interests, motives (desires), and power (of knowledge) be ruthlessly dislocated.” (248f.)

Spivak’s critique can be more clearly outlined with the concept of desire, especially present in Deleuze. His (and Foucault’s) misconception here is that they disallow for the subaltern to be incoherent, contradictory subjects and imagine them as sovereign subjects who desire only that which is in their best interests: “We never desire against our interest, because interest always follows and finds itself where desire has placed it” and “We must accept the scream of Reich: no, the masses were not deceived; at a particular moment, they actually desired a fascist regime” (Deleuze qtd. in ibid. 241). However, this creates the illusion of an undivided subject and simultaneously

disallows for the influence of ideology in the production of subjectivity. Consequently Foucault and Deleuze see themselves as intellectuals who are capable of understanding ‘the masses,’ including the subaltern and the oppressed, which leads Foucault to announce the project “to establish conditions where the prisoners themselves would be able to speak” (qtd. in *ibid.*). Spivak criticises this illusive transparency that acts more as a means through which the intellectual can present herself as transparent and thus capable of representing society’s Other (see 243) and accuses Foucault and Deleuze of being unaware

“that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor [which can be seen in] the unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual” (242).

She argues that this can be seen in Deleuze’s assumption “There is no more representation; there’s nothing but action,” “action of theory and action of practice” (qtd. *ibid.*), thereby ignoring the complexity of the very term ‘representation’. As Spivak points out, the term (both in French and English) eradicates the difference that can be seen in German. She draws on Marx to exemplify this. For my purposes it will suffice to outline the different connotations of the word ‘representation’ as made visible in German without talking about Marx specifically.

Spivak marks this difference in English through hyphenation: representation vs. re-presentation. I have kept this difference in the section above. She uses ‘represent’ as the equivalent of the German *vertreten* and re-present as *darstellen*. *Vertreten* has the connotation of ‘standing in for’ or ‘replacing’ and could be also translated as ‘substituting,’ while *darstellen* has the connotation of ‘depicting’. As Spivak argues, this opposition can be traced back to a discussion about rhetoric being either tropology

or persuasion. *Vertreten* would fall in the category of persuasion and *darstellen* into that of tropology (244). Thus representing and re-presenting are conceptually completely different from each other. This difference is effaced in Deleuze's statement quoted above. The idea that there is only action, in theory and in practice, means that there need not be a critique of ideology and that there need not be an education that counteracts ideological (deceived) consciousness:

“The critique of ideological subject-constitution within state formation and systems of political economy can now [i.e. after Deleuze's dictum ‘There is no representation’] be effaced, as can the active theoretical practice of the ‘transformation of consciousness.’ The banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent.” (243).

There are two points of importance here. Firstly, that Deleuze's denegation of representation implies that the subaltern are not re-presented [as in *darstellen*], which is obviously wrong. And secondly, that despite that negation, the Western intellectual still pretends to be able to represent the ‘Other’. In the following I want to turn towards the idea of re-presentation [*Darstellung*], explicitly in the form of literature.

In literature re-presentation needs to be accounted for on several levels, as can be described with Bal's terminology outlined above. The characters in the story are re-presented by the focalizer and the focalizer is re-presented by the narrator, who is re-presented by the (implied) author. Thus it is essential to ask *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?* (1969) as Foucault did. Even though specific aspects of Foucault's writing are, as Spivak outlined, problematic, his observation of the power structures that define who is allowed to speak and who isn't is valuable.

His point of departure in *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?* (1969) is a quote from Samuel Beckett's *Textes pour rien* (1954): “Beckett nicely formulates the theme with which I

would like to begin: >‘What does it matter who is speaking,’ someone said, ‘what does it matter who is speaking.’<sup>18</sup><,” (205) and Foucault describes this question uttered here as an expression of “indifference” (ibid.). Through an analysis of the special status of the author’s name and the importance of authorship throughout history, Foucault speaks of the ideology imbedded in the concept of the author and in the concept of the genius of the author which disguises that every author-subject exists due to “points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system[s] of dependencies” (221), meaning that every author is socially situated in a certain position that enables her to become an author, and thus, the author speaks from that very position. Thus Foucault asks how it is that this subject came to inhabit a position in society from which to legitimately be a recognised author: “How, under what conditions, and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, by obeying what rules?” (221). Of course, this, at first, seems contrary to the Beckett quote above, namely the expression of ‘indifference’ that is “one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing” (205), but it is not. There are two points of importance here. Firstly, one question (What subject can speak in this discourse?) should not obliterate another (What matter who’s speaking, - and for whom?), instead those two questions should be thought in relation to each other, because in defining what kind of subject might be allowed to articulate certain thoughts it is also important to see how that subject might be able to speak *for* another subject that does not ‘have’ a voice of its own within the discourse. And secondly, the ‘indifference’ formulated in *Textes pour rien* is not articulated by the narrator in the

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<sup>18</sup> This seems to be a translation of the text by the translator of Foucault’s text, the original Beckett translation of his own French text differs both in phrasing and in punctuation: “What matter who’s speaking, someone said what matter who’s speaking.” (16). Since Foucault, presumably, read Beckett’s text in the original French “Qu’importe qui parle” (*Nouvelles et textes pour rien*, 143), this different rendering of the French is negligible.

text but by someone else. The narrator is quoting something that another person (or another being) has said ('someone said').

Although Beckett's narrative throughout *Textes pour rien* does not offer anything similar to a storyline where the chosen point of view would be a politically potent choice, the problem of giving voice to someone else's point of view in a narrative is clearly depicted: "what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it's me?" (22). The first question, 'what would I say,' can be interpreted as a character in search for the words to articulate itself. This question is closely connected to the if-clause. If I had a voice to tell my story, how would I narrate my story? The other question dismantles this voice that is in search of a voice as a narrative construction, the narrator, invented by the author. Then, this narrator seems to come to life and asks back into the void: Who is pretending to be me, speaking for me? Who usurped my identity? Further down this duplicity is reiterated: "I'm not in his head [...] and yet I'm there, for him I'm there, with him, hence all the confusion." (ibid.) It is the paradoxical situation of simultaneous presence and absence. The narrator is 'there' 'for him,' the author. The author jolted the narrator into existence and thinks this dynamic is "easy to understand, that's what he says, but he doesn't understand." (ibid.) Thus the question of dependency of the narrative voice on the author is enunciated and this is a question that lies at the very heart of fiction.

This emphasises, that politics do matter in the writing of fiction and that, indeed, "Literature is Political," (564) as Judith Fetterley insisted, and that it does matter how the 'other' is re-presented as Spivak argued. Understood as a self-referential metatext discussing its own existence as literary text in the context of the question of the authority of the author, Beckett's text explores the possibility of taking up a point of view that is not based on the author's own experiences of life, hence the experiencing

subject's revolt (expressed by the narrator) against the imposing authority of the writing subject (i.e. the author). It is with this question in mind that we must ask how Schnitzler's interior monologue imagines female subjectivity. Since Else is portrayed as frequently contemplating the thought of having a lover, of admiring her own beauty and of speculating about other people's sex lives, an inquiry into the expression of female sexuality in this text is vital for the assessment of how the writing subject displays the experiencing subject. I will begin by outlining Freud's interpretation of female subjectivity and sexuality in *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse*. Since Freud has been heavily criticised by feminists for his conception of women, this will showcase the revolt of the experiencing subject against the writing subject. This analysis will help situate Schnitzler, since their positions in society are quite similar, both being Jewish doctors living in Vienna in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and will help determine what form of socio-political criticism this novella performs.

#### 2.2.2. Re-presentation of Female Subjectivity and Sexuality in Freud and Schnitzler

Freud's analysis of one of his patients, Ida Bauer, is better known as the "Dora-case." It is noteworthy that Ida Bauer did not deliberately choose to engage in therapy with Freud but was forced to do so by her father. She broke off the treatment after three months. Freud states in the introduction to the text that he never took notes during the sessions and in fact wrote down the entire history after Bauer had terminated the treatment. Furthermore it should be mentioned that Freud presents this case study as a doctor to the scientific world and thus his interpretation of Ida Bauer and her symptoms dominates in his writings, thereby establishing a coherent interpretation which is presented in a convincing manner, for his presentation of arguments and logical



deduction is quite well done. Ida Bauer is not quoted at length, which might be due to the fact that Freud wrote this analysis without documented conversations with her. But Freud does not take her criticism into account and the entire case study presents not only an interpretation of Ida Bauer, but a validation and legitimation of his psychoanalytical theory. Despite this, Ida Bauer's disagreement with his assessments – and even her silences speak volumes – could not be suppressed by Freud's text.

Schnitzler's novella, on the other hand, seems to depict this very problem of applied psychology that excludes women from partaking in the discourse. In her article "Hysteria, Feminism and Gender," Elaine Showalter acquaints her readers with the feminist discussion about Dora and explains two opposing opinions: Whereas one side sees Dora as a successful rebellion against patriarchy and as a feminist heroine (e.g. Hélène Cixous), the other side (e.g. Catherine Clément) declares that Dora did not actually have any real voice in the discussion and that "Hysterics should not be classed with feminist heroines, but with deviants and marginals who actually reinforce the social structure by their preordained place in the margin. Indeed, their roles are ultimately conservative" (Showalter, 332). Showalter concludes that, in fact, "it seems paradoxical that Dora [should have been] singled out by women writers and intellectuals who have been able to have the education and activity that Ida Bauer sought in vain." (ibid.), especially so since, after Dora had left therapy with Freud, she never became a successful woman. Showalter draws on Toril Moi's analysis of the problem, who argues that Freud's description of the hysteric's story as 'incoherent' reveals the "social powerlessness of women's narratives" (Showalter, 333) and explains that "The *reason* why the neurotic fails to produce coherence is that she lacks the *power* to impose her own connections on her reader/listener" (Moi qtd. in: ibid.). In connection with Schnitzler's Else it is important to see, that Else is neither a neurotic nor a hysteric

throughout the entire novella. After the public display of her body, her body is *inscribed* with “Hysteria” by *society*. This is why the examination of (un-)reliable narration is so crucial: In the case of Dora, a young girl was declared as unreliable narrator by her psychiatrist because she did not accept *his* interpretation, thereby showing which presumptions about women declared Dora as unreliable narrator merely because she accepted neither Freud’s theory nor the general opinion about women. Showalter also reflects on this problem:

“But if Freud is an unreliable narrator, a very different plot emerges. [...] Dora is a victim of Freud’s unconscious erotic feelings about her that affected his need to dominate and control her. It’s significant that Dora *has no voice* in Freud’s text, that we get nothing of her direct dialog, and that her historical and Jewish identity are both suppressed. [S]he never became a subject, only the object of Freud’s narrative. His interpretations of her problem reflect his own obsessions with masturbation, adultery and homosexuality. He never understands her story at all; he simply tries to bully her into accepting his version of events. His vaunted penetration of her secrets is really a kind of *verbal rape*. [...] His interpretation of her story is more about himself than about her.”  
(319, my emphasis).

In his case-study, Freud is both focalizer (i.e. the consciousness that experiences the encounter) and narrator (i.e. the textual expression). Dora does not even feature as a focalising subject. Reading Showalter’s analysis, I am inclined to think that Schnitzler might have seen it in a similar light. In fact, Schnitzler heavily criticised Freud for his “fixed ideas,” such as the Oedipus complex and called psychoanalysis “one-sided” and “monomaniacal” (Schnitzler’s diary entries qtd. in Sherman, 781). This is made visible in *Fräulein Else*. Not only did Schnitzler choose to set the point of view within the consciousness of a young woman who is basically being coerced into a socially acceptable form of prostitution by her ruthless father, but he represented the fabula in such a way as to allow him to accentuate “[dass Else] zur Hysterikerin pathologisiert

wird" (Gess 167). Even before analysing society's behaviour towards Else in the novella, Gess demonstrated that Schnitzler's incorporation of Schumann's music in the text could be read as a defence of Else's, and thereby also the musician's, sanity: "Denn Schumann war nicht nur Prototyp des schizophrenen Komponisten, sondern auch ein Paradebeispiel für [die] Diagnose des Wahnsinns [als ein] gesellschaftliche[r] Ausgrenzungsmechanismus" (154), and Gess goes on to argue: "Ganz in diesem Sinne diskreditiert die Novelle *Elses Verwandte*, die [...] zur Diagnose 'Hysterie' verleitet werden." (ibid.). This contortion of Else's state of mind that society carries out is predicted earlier in the text by Else herself (that is, Schnitzler created a narrator who represents the focalizer in this particular way): "Da unten werden sie meinen, ich bin verrückt geworden. Aber ich war noch nie so vernünftig. Zum erstenmal in meinem Leben bin ich wirklich vernünftig." (364). According to common logic, insanity's opposite is reason. Else's recognition that society will take her for a lunatic shows that she is aware of the social impossibility of her plan – her insistence that she is acting reasonably displays the comprehension of the irreparable effect her action will have. This insistence also shows her conviction that this is, indeed, the only possible solution that does not deny her the possibility to act according to her own sensibility and reason. Furthermore, she realises that this is the only option she has if she wants to rebel against the social roles that have been imposed on her, and the only way to refuse Dorsday's proposition without losing the financial means to sustain her own (and her mother's<sup>19</sup>) social status. In addition to all this, this is the only way she can *publicly* display her own desperate situation and it is impressive that she insists on this public display of the unjust treatment she is experiencing, fully knowing that probably no one (maybe with

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<sup>19</sup> Although one should not confuse her action with any kind of altruistic behaviour in order to save her mother.

the exception of Dorsday) will understand *what* she tries to wordlessly articulate. This articulation of the silencing mechanism ends for her tragically: She cannot speak unless she is willing to sacrifice herself, i.e. her ‘sanity’ in the eyes of society.

Here, I want to add Goodstein’s critique that

“Shored up by his inability to think that she might separate love and sex, Freud’s conviction remained that Dora herself, rather than the world that measured her actions by a cruel double standard, was at fault for her neurotic suffering. [...] Freud, too, had betrayed her by placing all the weapons of psychoanalysis on the side of the world in which the only acceptable role for Dora was to be the passive object of masculine desire.” (218).

This quote is a wonderful point of departure to analyse how Else’s sexuality is delineated in the novella. However, since it is important to ask in an interior monologue, to speak with Beckett, “Who says this, saying it’s me?” (22)<sup>20</sup>, I want to begin by roughly situating Schnitzler and the meaning of sexuality in his life and work. Schnitzler himself was a very prominent literary figure, especially so in Vienna, and his play *Reigen* had been banned from theatres for its open display of sexuality and promiscuity. This prominence of sexuality is a general feature in many of Schnitzler’s works (such as *Traumnovelle* [1925/26] or *Liebelei* [1894]), another recurring theme being anti-semitism.<sup>21</sup> This interest in sexuality is not only reflected in his writings, but also influenced his own life, as depicted in his diaries, in which, according to Sherman “he [Schnitzler] described both his affairs and orgasms” (776). Thus the author’s lively interest in sexuality also influenced the predominance of sexuality and Else’s own interest in sexuality in the novella. Of course, it needs to be analysed in what terms

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<sup>20</sup> In Beckett’s text, this questions symbolise the focalizer’s revolt against the narrator and the (implied) author.

<sup>21</sup> I will not focus much on anti-semitism here; two points are worth noticing. Firstly, that the disapproval of *Reigen* showed clear signs of anti-semitism (see Barker, 2 and Sherman, 776), and, secondly, that an earlier draft of Schnitzler’s *Fräulein Else* specifically describes her as Jewish. These direct affirmations of her Jewish identity were later removed, or at least concealed. Throughout the narrative there are hints at her Jewish identity, which Barker discusses in detail.

Else's sexuality is depicted and what that tells us about Schnitzler's assumptions about female sexuality. Thus, an analysis of Else's sexuality will show whether this narrative differs from Freud's in the context of doctor/'patient' relationships.

There are two very obvious aspects concerning Else's sexuality: Firstly, she is very intrigued by the (potential) sex-life of others, especially that of Paul and Cissy. She conjectures several times about how an affair unfolds and develops: "Ob Cissy in der Nacht ihre Tür offen läßt? Oder sperrt sie ihn erst auf, wenn er klopft? [...] Dann liegen sie zusammen im Bett. Unappetitlich. Ich werde kein gemeinsames Schlafzimmer haben mit meinem Mann und mit meinen tausend Geliebten." (337); „Wahrscheinlich muss er noch etwas abmachen mit Cissy wegen heute Nacht“ (339); Hat sie was an unter dem Schlafrock, wenn sie zu ihm kommt?“ (356). Secondly, she makes absolutely no connection between sex and love, nor between love and marriage. In Else's thoughts about her body she imagines someone else seeing her naked or fantasises about possible marriages which she always sees in the light of enabling her to take lovers. This leads her to reflect upon the difference it makes to be a married woman and she connects this idea of marriage with the possibility of having affairs and with the freedom to dress and act more liberally: "Der Ausschnitt ist nicht tief genug; wenn ich verheiratet wäre, dürfte er tiefer sein." (334); "Er weiß offenbar nicht recht, was er mit mir reden soll. Mit einer verheirateten Frau wäre es einfacher. Man sagt eine kleine Unanständigkeit und die Konversation geht weiter." (340). This proves that she is absolutely aware of her social situation. She could not possibly take a lover because that might compromise her entire life. In addition, this highlights that she does indeed separate love from sex. She delights in seeing herself in the role of perfected beauty that is admired by a male spectator and thereby reiterates male constructions of female sexuality. But she does so only in this particular desire to be considered as a beautiful

body and thereby excludes different male constructions of female sexuality, namely that she should not fantasise about displaying her naked body. Similarly, the most important thing for her in a sexual encounter is not that she is being *loved* by the observing man but that she wants to have an affair with a ‘pretty face,’ as I would phrase it. She constantly evaluates men according to their beauty: “Der Marinefähnrich Brandel [...]. Frecher Kerl. Aber hübsch.” (327); “der schöne Schwarze mit dem Römerkopf“ (328); “der lange blonde Mensch mit den leuchtenden Augen“ (356). This does not mean that she is superficial but that she is sexually attracted to someone she considers pretty, which is not unusual. Contrarily to stereotypes, she does not confuse attraction with love but separates her desire to love and be loved very distinctly from sex: “Ich bin nicht verliebt. In niemanden. Und war auch noch nie verliebt. Auch in Albert bin ich’s nicht gewesen, obwohl ich es mir acht Tage lang eingebildet habe. Ich glaube, ich kann mich nicht verlieben. Eigentlich merkwürdig. Denn sinnlich bin ich ganz gewiß.“ (327). This is also stressed due to the fact that all her fantasies revolve around sexuality and not about idealistic romantic love, as is also indicated by her desire to have multiple lovers. “Ich werde hundert Geliebte haben, tausend, warum nicht?” (334).

But not only has Schnitzler created Else’s sexuality quite contrarily to social standards and stereotypical male designation, he also seems to have been fully aware of the problematic gender-relations involved. This can be shown through certain motifs that recur throughout the text. The first thing to notice is that Else is a well-taught woman and that everyone thinks she’s charming. She exclaims herself that they will all care for her when she’s ill but that no one sees her as a subject of her own accord (see 356). Hence her isolation from society. As noted above, Gess sees this isolation as indicated by the form of the interior monologue. She connected this narrative style with

‘Freie Fantasie’ and described the constructed unconstructedness of both forms. The question whether this could be read as a sign that Else’s isolation is only a textual construction depends on the way this isolation is illustrated in the narrative text and whether we conceive these manifestations as reliable or not. In order to analyse this I want to trace this question in connection to gender-relations.

Else’s status as a woman in society means that she is not allowed to pursue a career, but instead she depends on a male relative for monetary support. Although her parents do not assign her a partner in marriage, it is manifested that they would have looked favourably upon a match with an older, but wealthy, gentleman even if they knew that their daughter did not like him (see 355). Thus far, an interpreter can rely on Else’s account. This gets more intricate when she realises that her father knew what Dorsday would ask of her. According to Else’s interpretation, this means that in precarious situations her parents (especially her father, because she does not presuppose that her mother was aware of this) would basically be willing to sell her off into a socially acceptable mode of prostitution. But is this reliable information? As the reader only knows what she thinks to be true, this is difficult to verify. At this point it helps to clarify that question by taking Vogt’s discussion of the Possible-Worlds Theory and his connection to cognitive science into account. He states that “a reader can monitor how a narrator or focalizer makes sense of data and arrives at his conclusions and evaluations about the events in the fictional universe and compare these with his own interpretative processes.” (148). What happens to our literary interpretation when we observe the text with Vogt’s statement in mind? As I already mentioned, Else takes a vivid interest in the possibility that Paul and Cissy are having an affair. At first, her suspicion is described: “Daß sie was miteinander haben, Cousin Paul und Cissy Mohr, darauf schwör’ ich.“ (324). It is obvious that Else does not have any certain evidence and that

her evaluation is based on her observation of the behaviour of the two. The reader witnesses this behaviour when Else sees them standing at some distance. “Sie sehen mich nicht. Was sagt er ihr denn? Warum lacht sie so blitzdumm?“ (338). The element of the text simply narrates that Else sees Paul and Cissy, but they do not see her which could be ascribed to the nightfall, but Cissy states not long after this that her hairdresser would visit her at 7pm and we know that it is summertime<sup>22</sup>. The interest in what he is saying to Cissy is already part of the level of the story and the focalizer, especially the demeaning phrasing ‘blitzdumm’ expresses the focalizer’s emotions. Nevertheless, it can be said that Else’s interpretation of their behaviour is not unfounded. At the end of the novella Else’s perceptive analysis of the situation is verified. This reinforces her state as a reliable focalizer. There is another aspect of the story that underlines her reliability. When she first receives the letter, the reader is presented with the actual textual data. The letter is long and highlights her father’s effort to manage his situation. Her mother’s narrative does not in any way lay blame on Else’s father but tries to acquit him of his guilt: “der Papa ist zum geringsten Teil daran Schuld” (331). In stark contrast to this, every time she apologises to Else for putting her into such a situation, she addresses her as “Mein liebes, liebes Kind”; “mein liebes gutes Kind” (ibid.), as though she wanted her to feel guilty if she did not succeed. This is stressed again in the telegram “Sonst alles vergeblich.” (361), meaning that if Else does not succeed everything is lost, and thus, saving her father is made out to be *her* responsibility. It is crucial to have this external textual data because it allows the interpreter to more easily distinguish between a reliable focalizer/narrator and an unreliable one. This textual data shows how these narratives are trying to manipulate Else’s feelings. Hence, it does seem convincing to accept Else as reliable focalizer who is very observant and who sees through social

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<sup>22</sup> “wundervolle Sommernacht heute, beinahe warm,“ says Dorsday (347).



conventions. In order to further prove this analysis I will juxtapose Else's interpretation of external textual data with Daniel Prince's, the focalizer in Dujardin's novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés*. This comparison will show two different types of representing the focalizer within the narrative of an experiencing consciousness.

*Les Lauriers son coupés* was also written in the form of interior monologue, also includes music sheets, text segments in italics and external textual data. The scene in which external textual data enters the narrative is the scene in which the protagonist, Daniel Prince, looks through old letters that he had received from Leah, a rather poor actress, and his own diary notes. Daniel spends a lot of his time thinking about Leah and idealising her as his true love. This is contrasted, firstly, by Leah's letters in which she almost always pleads for money, and secondly, by his own contradictory statements. There is one diary entry in which he plans on telling Leah that he loves her and therefore will not demand of her any more physical attentions.<sup>23</sup> Yet, he never manages to tell her this and continues his courtship (including his attempts to obtain physical compensation in return for his money) and insists on claiming that he loves her, even though he often fantasises about other women he sees on the street or in a restaurant (see esp. pp. 25-30). Here, there is a clear discrepancy between what the protagonist says he feels and what he then goes about doing. Daniel Prince is clearly self-delusional about his own feelings and his real intentions, as can be seen most clearly through the external textual data provided in this narrative. As in *Fräulein Else* the protagonist is the focalizer while the textual signs are transmitted through a 'neutral' narrator, but the effect is a very different one. While the outer world constantly (and

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<sup>23</sup> "Dearest, I have thought deeply of all that has passed between us; I desired you – passionately; that is my only excuse; I forced myself on you and now I ask you to forgive me. I might pass this night in your arms, dear, but - . Good-bye, beloved, I give you back your body and I leave you now. . . because I love you." (77).

throughout the entire novel) denounces Daniel Prince as unreliable focalizer, Else is even reinstated as reliable through external textual data. Thus while the focalizer's assessment of reality in *Les Lauriers* is contradicted by the way this focalizer is represented within the narrative (by means of e.g. external textual data), Else's assessment of reality is not contradicted by anything within the narrative, which shows that she is an intelligent young woman who is deeply aware of social conventions and social rules and is capable of accurately interpreting her situation. This is also stressed by her interpretation of marriage, when she states "es geschähe ihnen ganz recht, ihnen allen, sie haben mich ja doch nur daraufhin erzogen, daß ich mich verkaufe, so oder so. [...] Und es wäre ihnen ganz recht gewesen im vorigen Jahr, wenn ich den Direktor Wilomitzer geheiratet hätte, der bald fünfzig ist." (355). After thinking about accepting Dorsday's condition she realises: "Wenn ich einmal heirate, werde ich es wahrscheinlich für billiger tun." (333). This is quite an adequate description of the patriarchal exchange-policy and these legitimate reflections on the condition of women in society demonstrate her critical thinking. This also intensifies her sensation of loneliness and isolation, for there is no real place for her in the world:

"Nein, ich will ihn nicht sehen. Ich kann ihn nicht mehr sehen. Ich will niemanden mehr sehen. Ich will nicht mehr ins Hotel, ich will nicht mehr nach Hause, ich will nicht nach Wien, zu niemand will ich, zu keinem Menschen, nicht zu Papa und nicht zu Mama, nicht zu Rudi und nicht zu Fred, nicht zu Berta und nicht zu Tante Irene." (354f.)

Having now established Else as a trustworthy focalizer, I want to return to the problematic gender-relations within the narrative. In comparing *Fräulein Else* to *Emilia Galotti*, Bettina Matthias argues that whilst father-figure and seducer were fighting over the female body in Lessing's play, in Schnitzler's novella those two opposing figures have "basically joined the same ideological camp" (253), and due to that "Else has no real support or support-group any more." (258). Of course, in the novella the father is

not even at the same location and the comparison to *Emilia Galotti* lacks a vital connection. Else is supposed to rescue her father, and not the other way around, and Emilia Galotti is seduced and then ‘rescued’ by her father, while Else is disgusted by Dorsday’s advances towards her. This is made clear throughout the entire narrative text and can be read as symbolically indicating the silencing of women in patriarchal society. Already in the beginning, Else does not find him to be a likeable person and her dislike and almost fear of Dorsday is intensified when she forces herself to speak to him about her father’s problem. “Das hat er nett gesagt, aber meinen Arm braucht er darum nicht zu berühren.“ (341). This unmistakable unwanted physical contact bothers her, but within this society, and especially under these circumstances, she is not allowed to express that she feels uncomfortable. “Warum drückt er seine Knie an meine, während er da vor mir steht. Ach, ich lasse es mir gefallen. Was tut’s! Wenn man einmal so tief gesunken ist. [...] Ja, ja drück‘ die Knie nur an, du darfst es dir ja erlauben.“ (342). She already feels like she has to comply with his wishes and Dorsday silences her voice completely through his inappropriate physical contact that should more accurately be described as sexual harassment:

“Was ist das? Er faßt nach meiner Hand? Was fällt ihm denn ein? [...] Er soll meine Hand loslassen! Nun, Gott sei Dank, er läßt sie los. Nicht so nah, nicht so nah. [...] Warum so nah, du Schuft? Ich will deinen Atem nicht auf meinen Wangen. [...] Nein, nein, ich will nicht. *Warum sag‘ ich’s denn nicht.* Bring‘ dich um, Papa! Was will er denn mit meiner Hand? Ganz schlaff ist mein Arm. Er führt meine Hand an seine Lippen. Heiße Lippen. Pfui!“ (345-347, my emphasis).

The reader witnesses Else’s inability to speak out against him and also her afflicted reaction to her own silence. She cannot even explain to herself why she endures his physical advances. Furthermore, this should be classified not only as physical, but also as psychological/mental abuse: Her powerlessness and her inability to speak are *not* her fault. It is Dorsday who puts her into a situation where she is simply petrified and

defenceless – and then exploits this situation. An additional point of importance is that Dorsday takes the liberty to do so even *before* she has asked him about the money. Thus, he is not even trying to ‘buy’ himself the right to make these advances towards her, but exploits her desperation during which she is unable to openly manifest her disapproval and disgust, showcasing the common case in patriarchal societies for men to feel they ‘have the right’ to behave in such a way. But Dorsday not only exploits this physically, this silence is also convenient for him because it enables him to vindicate and acquit himself from any blame and to indirectly articulate that in his opinion he has the right to treat her in this way:

*“Ja, Else, man ist eben nur ein Mann, und es ist nicht meine Schuld, daß Sie so schön sind, Else. [...] Sie sehen mich an Else, als wenn ich verrückt wäre. Ich bin es vielleicht ein wenig, denn es geht ein Zauber von ihnen aus [...]. Sie werden möglicherweise ahnen, daß ein Mann zu Ihnen spricht, der ziemlich einsam und nicht besonders glücklich ist und der vielleicht einige Nachsicht verdient.“* (345-347, italics in the original, my emphasis).

These lines reiterate perfectly the abomination of the typical male discourse that objectifies women, denying them an autonomous status as Subject while simultaneously blaming them for being culpable of having seduced the male subject. Personally, I cannot read these lines without feeling deeply disturbed and disgusted – and Else’s (probably very similar) reaction to this speech is reflected within. She seems to display bewilderment at his speech, since she looks at him ‘as though he were crazy,’ thereby indicating that he realises her discomfort and nonetheless keeps imposing his point of view unto her.

But this is not only a male discourse because in a patriarchal society women have been instructed to fear and hate each other and this depicts the intricate relationship between women within a society where female proximity is ultimately turned into female hostility due to fear of association with the ‘outcast’ woman and thus becoming

an ‘outcast’ themselves. From this perspective it becomes more evident why Schnitzler’s novella features so much female hostility, one that can be seen in Else’s relationship with her mother, her aunt and with Cissy. This female hostility expresses itself, for instance, through her aunt’s refusal to travel with Else in the same part of the train and with society’s interpretation of Else’s behaviour as an hysterical attack. It is interesting to examine more closely why this happens. As Showalter investigates the historical circumstances of Ilza Veith, an early woman doctor who wrote *Hysteria. History of a Disease* in 1965, she explains that this has even been a major problem for early female doctors and psychologists. Although being a woman in science, Veith trusted completely in Freud’s analysis of hysteria and did not question its assumptions about female sexuality. Showalter emphasises, however, that it would not be productive to criticise her unwillingness to compromise herself with a feminist position, because “Veith, like many other women writing about hysteria, felt pressured to avoid a feminism traditionally linked with the disorder itself.” (329). One time in Veith’s life this led to her ignoring severe symptoms like “migraine headaches, disturbed vision, and olfactory hallucinations” (331). She did not go to the doctor because these symptoms “were frequently attributed in the medical literature to women with ‘hysterical personality’” (ibid.). When she finally entered the hospital with a paralysis on her left arm, she was not taken seriously as a scholar of medicine and expected to submit to the doctor’s treatment. Her left arm was never cured (see ibid.). This had an impact not only on female doctors but also on women writers, as Jennifer Redman argues in her essay on Else Lasker-Schüler, where she shows what impact the social stereotype of women as hysterics had on Lasker-Schüler’s life and writing. These texts indicate clearly what was at stake for a woman in a certain social role if she wanted to defend women (or herself, for that matter) who were being excluded from and

marginalised by society. As an ultimate rehabilitation of the male subject as the only capable sex, it was almost impossible for women to help each other. Instead, if they wanted to be saved they needed a male protector. This is also hinted at in *Fräulein Else*. Paul tries to dissuade his mother from prematurely condemning Else to an asylum, although his attempts are certainly very vague and do not explicitly state what he thinks. In the atmosphere of distress his speech could also be designated to merely calm down his mother: “*Aber Mama, jetzt ist doch nicht der Moment davon zu reden. [...] Es wird nicht das Geringste passieren, Mama. Ich garantiere dir, daß du keinerlei Ungelegenheiten haben wirst.*“ (376). It seems that Schnitzler was aware of his precarious status as male (doctor) who writes in defence of a young woman. Of course, this is the complete inversion of Freud’s analysis of Dora. In fact, it seems likely that Schnitzler would have agreed with Showalter’s interpretation of the entire affair (see above).

Goodstein argues that

“[Dora’s] departure may better be seen as an expression of the truth [Freud] did not wish to see, the truth that psychoanalysis was not, after all, outside the patriarchal circuit of exchange. Else’s self-exposure is, in the context of Schnitzler’s narrative, even more eloquent. She does indeed show them all, though Dorsday may be the only one to have understood her mute speech.” (221).

This point seems very convincing and I would read Else’s immobility after her exposure as a metaphor for her status in society. This reiterates her inability to reject Dorsday’s physical advances during their conversation and displays the silencing of not merely her voice or her body, but a silencing of her point of view as reliable narration. Thereby, she is stripped of her status as subject once more, meaning that any analysis of her situation will be constructed similarly to the way Freud constructed Dora’s: “‘When she was in a bitter mood,’ writes Freud, ‘she was overcome by the notion that she had

been delivered over to Herr K as the price for his tolerating the relations between Dora's father and his wife'" (Goodstein, 216). Freud was convinced that this could not be the case and suggested that Dora was actually in love with Herr K. (see *ibid.*, 215f.). Else's situation is similar, because her point of view is not taken into consideration. The only possible interpretation they inscribe into her immobility is that she had a 'hysterischen Anfall'. The great difference this narrative makes is that it was conceived as interior monologue that allowed the reader to stay within the consciousness of the silenced woman and witness the full extent of her paralysed and helpless situation.

It is noteworthy that Cissy seems to be the only one to suspect that Else has not fainted and is capable of hearing them (see Schnitzler 378). Alas, her opinion is not even considered to be worth listening to. At the very end, the narrative is taking a repetitive course. The female voice that tries to narrate events in a different manner is silenced by the male doctor, Paul (who is also her lover). Later, when she and Paul are standing next to Else this scene occurs: "*Aber Cissy, was tust du denn? < - > Nun, ich umarme dich. Warum denn nicht? Sie hat sich auch nicht geniert.<*" (379). Hereby, Cissy not only refers to Else's act of disrobing and her admiration for Else's shamelessness. Although Paul rejected Cissy's analysis of the situation, he nevertheless does not want to display his affair with Cissy in front of Else, even though he had previously explained the same thought to his mother: "*In diesem Zustand sind die Sinne manchmal unheimlich geschärft.*" (377). This relates a lot about the gender-relations that are at work, namely that only a male doctor has the ability (and authority) to correctly describe the state of the female 'patient'. Thus far the juxtaposition of Freud and Schnitzler has shown, that Schnitzler's depiction of female subjectivity and sexuality are much more nuanced than Freud's. Instead of trying to incorporate a young woman's narrative into an already existing psychoanalytical category, Schnitzler shows

that social realities are much more complex than an interpretation of repressed sexual desires. Thus, it does matter who's speaking, since, to some extent, the sovereignty of interpretation lies within the position of the subject who has the power to articulate point of view. However, as Spivak has shown in her essay, representational politics are complicated and often lead to misconceptualisations of the 'other'. The question how to circumnavigate such complications remains, and even though Schnitzler's text performs representational politics decently, it only functions within them. The answer needs to be sought elsewhere.



### III. HAN KANG'S THE VEGETARIAN HOW TO RE-PRESENT THE UN-RE-PRESENTABLE?

This project started out as an analysis of Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, which I have more recently counterposed to Freud's *Bruchstücke eine Hysterie-Analyse*. Between them, there is, of course, an obvious connection, which has already been written about in many texts. What is fascinating about these two texts specifically is that they both try to do the same thing in very different ways: They try to give voice to the 'hysteric,' Schnitzler by emphasising the social circumstances and the sensibility of the young girl who is constructed as a hysteric by society – and Freud through psychoanalysis and therapy, which was his way of trying to 'give voice' to the hysterics, i.e. making their stories heard. Thus, Freud's project was to re-translate the somatic expressions of the unconscious into 'logos,' i.e. the discourse of reason but it was also an attempt to reexamine coeval preconceptions about hysterics. The purpose of his analysis was to re-evaluate their situation, to change the narrative from their inherent 'madness' to a narrative that proposed that hysterical seizures were mere somatic expressions of repressed sexual desires. Hence, the importance of therapy and communication as 'the talking cure' for psychoanalytical theory. Schnitzler's novella is very similar to Freud's approach in that Schnitzler creatively 'gives voice' to a 'hysteric'. He uses the narrative structure of interior monologue in order to suggest that what is perceived as 'hysteria' in society is merely the expression of social oppression (and blackmailing, in this particular story).

As third literary text I chose *The Vegetarian* by South Korean author Han Kang.<sup>24</sup> Interpretations of *The Vegetarian* have mostly focussed on the themes of love,

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<sup>24</sup> It should be said, however, that due to my lack of knowledge of Korean, my analysis inevitably depends on the translation by Deborah Smith. Smith's translation was heavily criticised by the Korean media for being inaccurate and, sometimes, linguistically wrong. To counteract this lack of knowledge

depression and violence but have also developed feminist and eco-feminist readings of the novel.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Bae Byung-hoon, a Korean PhD Candidate in Religious Studies at Sogang University (as of 2017), argues that all characters in *The Vegetarian* are lonely beings, who cannot find meaning in their lives and therefore feel depressed or have suicidal impulses.<sup>26</sup> Arguing something similar, but from a different standpoint, Kim Myung-Joo suggests that the novel proposes a re-imagining of the human and the importance of love and non-violence and the ‘Homo Amans,’ “not as a successful achiever of love but as a doomed failure who nevertheless keeps on loving” (91). There has also been an eco-feminist analysis of the text by Rinci Chandran and Geetha R. Pai, and an analysis of *The Vegetarian* in connection to the ethics of veganism by Caitlin E. Stobie, both of which emphasise the active decision of the protagonist to change her behaviour on ethical grounds. As Jina Kim argued in her presentation of the controversy around the translation by Smith, ‘feminist’ readings of *The Vegetarian* that conceive of Yeong-hye’s behaviour as rebellious might be due to the translation. According to Kim, the translation portrays the protagonist as more active than the Korean text does. In fact, even the translation itself does portray the protagonist in terms of passivity, mostly so through the descriptions of the focalizer/narrators. Mr. Cheong, Yeong-hye’s husband, describes her as “unresponsive” (7) and compares her to “some kind of ghost, silently standing its ground” (ibid.) in the scene where he first encounters her standing in the kitchen in the middle of the night and is unnerved by “her complete lack of reaction” (ibid.). This aspect of passivity that can be seen in the English translation as well should be emphasised. This passivity, however, has been interpreted as activism by Stobie who

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I draw on Jina Kim’s presentation on the translation controversy given at the UO, Winter 2019. The fact that it is a translation intensifies my main questions: Who’s speaking, for whom and whose voice is that anyway? I will not discuss the issue of translation here in detail. For a more detailed account of the controversy around Smith’s translation see “Appendix: Whose Voice is it Anyway – in Translation?”.

<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, I can only refer to academic research in English. This certainly limits my approach.

<sup>26</sup> I am relying on the abstract, which was translated into English. The paper itself is in Korean.

interprets Yeong-hye's vegetarianism as connected to her realisation that the female body and the animal body are subjected to similar rules (see 794). Therefore Stobie proposes, that Yeong-hye herself detects the intersectionality of oppression and suffering that the novel unravels. On an extra-textual plane, I agree with her interpretation, however, I would not endorse her argument that Yeong-hye herself realises this and therefore stops eating meat. In fact, her determination to become a vegetarian, and, later on, to stop consuming food altogether, is rooted in the force of aggression that dwells within her. It is the realisation of her "*Intolerable loathing, so long suppressed. Loathing, I've always tried to mask with affection.*" (28), which is (maybe not exclusively) directed at her husband as an earlier segment indicates: "*If you knew how hard I've always worked to keep my nerves in check.*" (19), she says, apparently in an imaginary conversation addressed to her husband ("*The morning before I had the dream, [...] – remember? You got angry.*" [ibid.]). Thus, it seems plausible to read (in a quite Freudian manner) her "*Dreams of Murder*" (28) as a phantasy that symbolises her desire to kill her husband. However, the dreams do not stop after she is divorced and lives by herself, indeed, the third chapter of the novel is the only one in which Yeong-hye is not haunted by dreams and instead the dreams have become a source of knowledge to her.<sup>27</sup> She has not comprehended "the intersection of varying forms of oppression between all living beings" (794), as Stobie argues, but has, through her sexual encounter with her brother-in-law, recognised her own interest in plants, her love (and sexual desire) for plants and is therefore able to draw the conclusion to not consume any type of food anymore, since that would mean killing plants.<sup>28</sup> Hence the changed nature of

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, her epiphany that the tree's equivalent to the human head would be its roots is similar to what scientists believe nowadays, namely that there are certain transmitters of information and nutrition, which are located in the roots and fulfil a function analogous to neurons in the animal brain. (see e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-4w5xYLwiU>)

<sup>28</sup> Plants themselves (or, namely, trees) are envisioned as the epitome of peaceful living, a form of living that is free of violence. This certainly romanticises plants, since there is an immense variety of plants who are either carnivores (e.g. pitcher plants), parasitic plants (such as orchids) or plants like the black walnut tree, who poisons his neighbours through toxic chemicals. Thus, plants are not necessarily as peaceful as we might imagine them to be.

her dreams. This seems compatible with a recent article by Yoo Yo-han who proposed to read Yeong-hye's desire to become a plant as a longing for a return to a mythical time in which "animals and humans coexisted harmoniously and human lives were organically united to those of plant" (157).<sup>29</sup>

As can be seen, it is vital to distinguish between the different layers of the narrative (see my account of Mieke Bal above). Stobie's analysis is based on the text itself and thus misinterprets the protagonist. Even though the novel can be interpreted as a depiction of the intersectionality of oppression, it should be clearly distinguished from what the protagonist's own interpretation of the situation is. Stobie, as well as other interpretations, conflate these two planes of signification. Thus, a comparison with Schnitzler and Freud helps highlight the (socio-political) importance of such a distinction. There is no 'factual' or biographical connection to either Freud or Schnitzler, instead the connection can be drawn in terms of the performance of the novel and the overlapping themes (e.g. mental illness): *The Vegetarian* actually performs the exact opposite of both Freud's *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie Analyse* and Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*. All three texts represent the protagonist but their mode of re-presentation is completely different. Through an analysis and comparison of these three modes of re-presentation I will revisit Spivak's criticism of Foucault and Deleuze. Her argument that both theorists reinstate the idea of a sovereign subjectivity when talking about the subaltern will be of consequence here. I have already outlined how female subjectivity and sexuality are re-presented in Freud's and Schnitzler's texts. Here I will focus more closely on how the re-presentation of the protagonist in Han's novel functions in comparison to the other two texts. Since Han's novel stages the almost complete absence of the protagonist in a way that heightens the emphatic impact of this absence on the reader, this comparison

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<sup>29</sup> I am relying on the abstract, which was translated into English. The paper itself is in Korean.

will help illuminate the possibility of re-presentation through non-representation (i.e. absence of the protagonist's point of view from the narrative) and the importance of silence as communication, which I will discuss in the last chapter.

In the next section I want to explore the way in which re-presentation [darstellen] works in the first part of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* in contrast to Schnitzler's novella and Freud's analysis of the Dora-case. I will begin by first summarising Schnitzler's form of re-presentation. Secondly, I will present an analysis of Sigmund Freud's *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse* which will highlight the complications that emerged in this specific case from a male doctor writing about his female patient. And thirdly, I will show how the first chapter in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (also 'The Vegetarian') mimics the structural problem that is inherent in Freud's text, but in such a way as to draw attention to the faultiness of such an analysis.

### 3.1 Re-presentation and (un-)reliability in *The Vegetarian*

#### 3.1.1 A short Summary: Schnitzler & Fräulein Else

Schnitzler chose to re-present Else through close identification with her. The choice of interior monologue emphasises this connection. The protagonist is re-presented as being able to present her point of view on her own terms, in her own voice. This, of course, is a mere simulation, artificially constructed, but the effect is quite well done. The interior monologue manages to establish an emotional connection between reader and protagonist, influencing the reader towards a desire to understand Else. As I have outlined earlier, Else's consciousness is depicted as non-coherent and vivid. Through reevaluation of the situation she changes her opinions. This incoherence, however, is not a-logical but accurately reflects the mechanism of decision-making processes. Thus,

while the depiction of an experiencing consciousness might be incoherent in the sense that there is no straight line of argument, her thought process, her reasoning is still coherent. This is important to underline, since it shows that although every consciousness works in a non-coherent fashion and consequently can be narrated as such. However, it does not follow that the reasoning-process is unreasonable. The strength of Schnitzler's novella is that it manages to walk this very fine line of depicting [re-presenting] how the incoherent consciousness makes sense of its world and knows how to accurately interpret it. Furthermore this consciousness is that of a young woman and through the re-presentation of her as reasonable she is re-presented as being a reliable source of information about and an accurate interpreter of her world. Thereby the (male) interpretation of that world (Else's father, Dorsday and Paul) and society's reaction to her (her aunt) is systematically undermined.

### 3.1.2 A Re-examination: Freud & Ida Bauer

Freud begins his *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse* (1905) with a preface explaining his decision to publish this case study. He explicitly states that he is publishing his analysis without his patient's consent and argues that if he had asked, he would have been denied the permission. Since Ida Bauer had been his patient, this public discussion is a breach of confidence. The fact that the names of everyone mentioned are altered does not change this. Freud presents two arguments to justify his decision: Firstly, since the names are changed it should be impossible for anyone to figure out who Dora or the other parties involved are. Since her real name is well known today, this calculation did not work out. Secondly, he argues that even though his duty as a doctor is to uphold confidentiality, even after the treatment has been terminated, he also has another duty. One that contradicts the dictum of confidentiality: His duty to science and to its

development. Furthermore, he sees the necessity of publishing this in the fact that his earlier publications had been criticised for not disclosing information about the case studies that led him to his theoretical understanding of hysteria in particular, and mental illness in general. (see 9f.). Another concern that he addresses in this preface is a question that is even more closely related to re-presentation [darstellen]. He explains that he had never taken notes during the session because it could cause a sensation of mistrust in the patient and, additionally, would prevent himself from paying close attention to all the details. He points out that of the two dreams that were essential for his analysis he had taken notes directly after the session, taking care to write down the exact words. Since the entire treatment lasted less than three months and since he wrote down the entire case study directly after the termination of the treatment, he assures that there are no flaws in his recordings (see 12).

Even though both of these explications show that he was concerned about them, there is an essential fallacy: He does not question his own method of analysis, nor does he even entertain the possibility of having misinterpreted his patient. He explicitly states: “Die Krankengeschichte selbst habe ich erst nach Abschluß der Kur aus meinem Gedächtnisse niedergeschrieben, solange meine Erinnerung noch frisch und *durch das Interesse an der Publikation* gehoben war.“ (12, my emphasis).<sup>30</sup> Why did he immediately know he wanted to publish this case? Since the patient had left him before termination of the treatment, before having been ‘cured’ – why have such an interest in publishing it? And why does his patient’s refusal to continue the treatment not make him question his analysis? Why does he not further examine his own determination to

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<sup>30</sup> In the revision of 1923 he writes he wrote everything “in den nächstfolgenden zwei Wochen”

(15).

publish a discontinued case? It is impossible to answer these questions without reverting to speculations. Instead, I want to focus on the way Freud is re-presenting [darstellen] his ‘protagonist’.

The case study is set in between a preface and an afterword, both of which stress the validity and importance, and thus consolidate, Freud’s theory, and throughout this text, Freud’s interpretation of Ida Bauer (and especially of her dreams) is the prevalent content. Even though he does ‘quote’ his patient this text is not so much about his patient, but about his interpretation and theorising of hysteria. Although Freud’s mission is to unravel the causes of their illness and to ‘give voice’ to their struggles, the strictly hierarchical mode of conversation subordinates the voice and opinion of the ‘hysteric’ to his judgment and interpretation:

“In Wirklichkeit sind die Kranken *unfähig*, derartige Berichte über sich zu geben. Sie können zwar über diese oder jene Lebenszeit den Arzt ausreichend und zusammenhängend informieren, dann folgt aber eine andere Periode, in der ihre Auskünfte seicht werden, Lücken und Rätsel lassen und ein andermal steht man wieder vor ganz dunkeln, durch keine brauchbare Mitteilung erhellten Zeiten.“ (18, my emphasis).

Here, Freud is talking about the impossibility of reconstructing the history of the illness based only on the description of relatives or, in this specific quote, of the patient. Of course, in Freud’s theory of the suppression of sexual desires, the subject herself would not know the real cause. After all, that is Freud’s mission: to help the ‘hysteric’ acknowledge their real problem, that of a suppressed sexual desire. For Freud, the recognition of that suppressed desire is vital, since once it is no longer suppressed, it does not need to express itself in the unconscious any longer.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “Wenn das praktische Ziel der Behandlung dahin geht, alle möglichen Symptome aufzuheben und durch bewußte Gedanken zu ersetzen, so kann man als ein anderes, theoretisches Ziel die Aufgabe aufstellen, alle Gedächtnisschäden des Kranken zu heilen.“ (Freud, 20).



For Freud, the history of the illness, however, can only be complete after a full analysis of the patient: “Gegen Ende der Behandlung erst kann man eine in sich konsequente, verständliche und lückenlose Krankengeschichte überblicken.“ (20). As with all interpretations that follow a strict model of interpretation from which is not to be deviated, the history of illness that Freud constructs will be defined by his own models of psychoanalytical theory. This is problematic for a couple of reasons. Firstly, Freud’s theory of hysteria is pre-existent to this particular case study and therefore his interpretation may be biased because he is looking for very specific symptoms with pre-determined meanings. Secondly, since Freud is the interpreter, the definition of ‘completeness’ and ‘reasonability’ of the history of the illness will be defined according to his concept of them. Hence his denial to accept even the possibility of having misinterpreted the situation or misread the ‘signs’. Additionally, this encourages an interpretation that will not allow the dissent of the patient to be perceived as legitimate criticism worthy of critical inspection. Instead, Freud deliberately undermines Ida Bauer’s criticism and takes her silences to express consent and acceptance, if not also approval, of his interpretation. Furthermore, some of his storylines are even presented without Ida Bauer’s reaction to them, which make it difficult to tell whether she concurred or not. To show this, I want to focus on two particular events in Freud’s narrative. First, his re-presentation of one situation that occurred between Herr K. and the fourteen-year-old Dora and, second, Freud and Dora’s last session together.

At the age of fourteen, Dora had been invited to join Frau K. and her husband at Herr K.’s store in the centre of B. (an anonymous town). Together they had planned to go and watch “eine kirchliche Feierlichkeit” (30). According to Freud’s narrative (and he does not tell how he knows this), Herr K. convinced his wife to stay at home

and all his employees had already left when Dora entered the store – this is what happens:

“Als die Zeit der Prozession herannahte, ersuchte er [Herr K.] das Mädchen, ihn bei der Türe, die aus dem Laden zur Treppe ins höhere Stockwerk führte, zu erwarten, während er die Rollbalken herunterließ. Er kam dann zurück, und anstatt durch die offene Türe hinauszugehen, preßte er plötzlich das Mädchen an sich und drückte ihm einen Kuß auf die Lippen. *Das war wohl die Situation, um bei einem 14jährigen unberührten Mädchen eine deutliche Empfindung sexueller Erregtheit hervorzurufen.* Dora empfand aber in diesem Moment einen heftigen Ekel, riß sich los und eilte an dem Manne vorbei zur Treppe und von dort zum Haustor. [...] In der nächsten Zeit vermied sie übrigens die Gelegenheit, mit Herrn K. allein zu sein.“ (ibid., my emphasis)

What I find inexplicable is why Freud was so determined to interpret this situation in terms of Dora's sexuality. In this segment, Freud shows that Dora's experience was that of being deeply disgusted ('heftigen Ekel'), that she ran away and that she avoided situations, in which Herr K. could have repeated his actions. Freud's psychoanalytic analysis of this event does not accept the possibility of that disgust being real and instead focuses on disgust as repression mechanism. For him, apparently, any sexualised encounter whatsoever, whether consensual or not, is the origin of sexual arousal. His interpretation runs thus:

“In dieser [...] Szene ist das Benehmen des 14jährigen Kindes bereits *ganz und voll hysterisch*. Jede Person, bei welcher ein Anlaß zu sexuellen Erregung überwiegend oder ausschließlich Unlustgefühle hervorruft, würde ich unbedenklich für eine Hysterika halten, ob sie nun somatische Symptome zu erzeugen fähig sei oder nicht. [...] Sie sagte, sie verspüre jetzt noch den Druck auf den Oberkörper von jener Umarmung. [...] Ich denke, sie verspürte in der stürmischen Umarmung nicht bloß den Kuß auf ihren Lippen, sondern auch das Andrängen des erigierten Gliedes gegen ihren Leib. *Diese ihr anstößige Wahrnehmung* wurde für die Erinnerung beseitigt, verdrängt und durch die harmlose Sensation des Druckes am Thorax ersetzt, die aus der verdrängten Quelle ihre übergroße Intensität bezieht. [...] Das Andrängen des erigierten Gliedes

hat wahrscheinlich die analoge Veränderung an dem entsprechenden weiblichen Organ, der Clitoris, zur Folge gehabt [...]“ (30-32, my emphasis).

Even though he admits the reality of disgust as Dora's experience, Freud cannot conceive of the possibility, that this encounter might not at all have been sexually stimulating for Dora. Freud sharply changes the focus of his inquiry due to his analysis, the psychoanalytical task being that of making Dora aware of her own sexual desires. The problem here is that his subject herself, Dora, is not allowed any opinion in this matter. Of course, Freud is far from condoning Herr K's behaviour, but his rhetoric makes clear the (at least unconscious) sexual complicity of Ida Bauer. It seems unthinkable to him that Dora might not have been attracted to K, “ein noch jugendlicher Mann von einnehmendem Äußern” (31, footnote 2), as Freud describes him. It is unthinkable precisely because, according to Freud, the real problem of the hysteric is a suppressed sexual desire. Had he not adhered to that conceptualisation of hysteria, he could have easily made the argument that, instead of suppressed sexual desire, it is sexual violence and harassment that can trigger ‘hysterical’ behaviour.

The second event that is of interest in this context is the session, in which Ida Bauer tells Freud that this will be their last session. At the end of the penultimate session, before she told Freud in the next session that she would discontinue the meetings, Freud recounts this change of words: “Als ich nach Schluß der [...] Sitzung meiner Befriedigung über das Erreichte Ausdruck gab, antwortete sie geringschätzig: Was ist denn da viel herausgekommen?“ (103); and the beginning of the last session:

„Zur [letzten] Sitzung trat sie mit den Worten an: ‘Wissen Sie, Herr Doktor, daß ich heute das letzte Mal hier bin?’ – Ich kann es nicht wissen, da Sie mir nichts davon gesagt haben. – ‘Ja, ich habe mir vorgenommen, bis Neujahr halte ich es noch aus; länger will ich aber auf die Heilung nicht warten.’ [...] Wann haben Sie den Entschluß gefaßt? - ‘Vor 14 Tagen, glaube ich.’“ (103f., my emphasis.)

Apparently, Ida Bauer was sensing that the sessions with Freud were not curing her and that she would only be cured after the sessions had ended. Toward the end of this last session, Freud argues that the reason for her distress was that Dora had believed Herr K's advances to be serious, that she had expected him to renew his advances and that she was angered at having imagined his love to be true (see 107).<sup>32</sup> Freud notices: "Sie hatte zugehört, ohne wie sonst zu widersprechen." (ibid.), clearly interpreting her silence as mute acceptance of his analysis, for he continues to ask: "Ich weiß auch nicht, ob Herr K. mehr erreicht hätte, wäre ihm verraten worden, daß jener Schlag ins Gesicht keineswegs ein endgültiges ‚Nein‘ Doras bedeutete" ( 108). Freud begins to mirror himself in K. He divulges his interpretation in front of her, and her task is that of listening and accepting his analysis.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, it is impossible to tell now, how much of the time in Freud's sessions were spent on Freud speaking vs. listening.

Similarly, he interprets Dora's decision to leave him as an act of revenge (see 107). Instead of asking if there might have been something about his methodology made her incapable of continuing the sessions or if he had misinterpreted Dora, Freud focuses on transference ('Übertragung') to explain why Dora broke of the sessions. He argues that he himself had not paid proper attention to the effect of transference and since it stayed undetected for too long he could not bring this transference to Dora's attention.

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<sup>32</sup> In this last session she tells Freud about a governess who worked for the Ks. The governess told Dora that Herr K had seduced her, telling her that he would leave his wife for her. After she had slept with him, Herr K. lost interest in her. Freud thus interprets Dora's slap in the face as inspired by jealousy and revenge, instead of asking whether she might have thought that Herr K. had behaved like this with many other women and therefore refused him. He similarly interprets the 14 days that passed before she told her mother about the incident as a time that Dora spent waiting for Herr K. to renew his advances. This is similar to his reading of Herr K's sexual harrassment of Dora when she was 14. Apparently, Freud knew little about why survivors of sexual harrassment are afraid to speak up. This question remains vital, since one of the main issues for Dora had been Herr K's denial and her parents' collaboration in silencing her story.

<sup>33</sup> This scene also has certain characteristics in common with the one in *Fräulein Else*, where Dorsday is harrassing Else.

According to Freud, Dora had first transferred her feelings for her father onto Freud and, later on, she (unconsciously, of course) began to see Herr K. in him (see 116): “So wurde ich denn von der Übertragung überrascht, und wegen des X, in dem ich sie an Herrn K. erinnerte, rächte sie sich an mir, wie sie sich an Herrn K. rächen wollte, und verließ nicht, wie sie sich von ihm getäuscht und verlassen glaubte.“ (ibid.). Over a year after she had broken off her therapy with Freud, Ida Bauer appeared for a last visit. She tells Freud that for roughly four to five weeks she had been “im ‘Durcheinander’” (118). After that, her condition began to get better and her seizures occurred less frequently. For Freud, his reaction is linked to transference, as he takes care to point out when he explains the concept of transference in more general terms: “Der Aufschub der Heilung oder der Besserung ist wirklich nur durch die Person des Arztes verursacht.” (113), meaning that if the transference has not been recognised early enough and, through hints, made visible to the patient, then the mere presence of the doctor might limit the improvement of the patient. This concept allows Freud to argue, that, actually, it was only after four to five weeks that the transference began to wear off and that improvement in the patient could begin to manifest itself. Since there is no further reference to other elements of Ida Bauer’s it is impossible to directly contradict Freud’s assessment, for within the logic of his own methodology his analysis is carried out diligently.

### 3.1.3 What’s the Difference? - Han & *The Vegetarian*

Han re-presents the protagonist through the lense of her husband, her brother in-law, and her sister. For now, I will only focus on the first part “The Vegetarian”. Although there are eight different segments in italics in the style of interior monologue that give insight into the protagonist’s thoughts, these fragments have the complete opposite effect of the interior monologue used by Schnitzler. The fragments are elusive and in

contrast to the depiction of Else's consciousness, there is no continuous re-presentation of her consciousness that would enable the reader to comprehend her resolutions. The representation of Else's experiencing consciousness is focused on a very short amount of time (everything happens in the time-frame of one single afternoon/early evening). In contrast, Yeong-hye's consciousness is presented in little portions. The reader is presented with loose dream-sequences or the protagonist's remembrance of them, and segments that sound similar to diary-entries but could also be an interior monologue, which take place within a time-frame of at least 2 months<sup>34</sup>. The exact time-line of these segments is also unclear.

What is striking about those segments is that they portray the protagonist in a light that is in stark contrast to her external behaviour. Whereas her husband's description of her is one of passivity, inattentiveness and absent-mindedness, these segments portray her within a maze of violence and inner turmoil. Her husband's description highlights her search for peace, non-involvement and non-violence in contrast with the physical and verbal violence that is done to her (her husband rapes her, her father uses physical coercion to try to get her to eat meat; her husband yells at her, the passive-aggressiveness of the people at the dinner party with her husband's boss). Yet, her dreams are full of blood ("*My bloody hands. My bloody mouth.*" [20]), physical violence ("*Dreams of Murder. Muderer or murdered... [...] Dreams overlaid with dreams, a palimpsest of horror. Violent acts perpetrated at night.*" [35]; "*Dreams of my hands around someone's throat, throttling them*" [40]), and they speak of treason, identity, being oneself and being usurped ("*I become a different person, a different person rises up inside me, devours me, those hours . . .*" [40]). But all these elements

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<sup>34</sup> In the beginning of the first part, it is winter, then "spring came, and still my wife hadn't backed down." (23). This is before the dinner-episode and the family-meeting, but there are no further time references in this chapter.

do not only appear in her dreams. They are (or have become) an integral part of everyday life: “*Intolerable loathing, so long suppressed. Loathing I’ve always tried to mask with affection. But now the mask is coming off.*” (36); “*Those drawn-out waking hours my fingers flexing to kill*” [40]. This violence is mixed with despair:

“Can only trust my breasts now. I like my breasts, nothing can be killed by them. Hand, foot, tongue, gaze, all weapons from which nothing is safe. But not my breasts. With my round breasts, I’m okay. Still okay. So why do they keep on shrinking? Not even round anymore. Why? What am I changing like this? Why are my edges sharpening – what I am going to gouge?” (41).

This last part showcases the inner struggle in its most potent form. Whereas all the other segments mainly deal with violence and/or phantasies of violence, the perplexity at her own physical change, especially the ‘loss’ of her breasts, indicates the violent struggle within herself *against* that violence. Not only against the violence between humans, but also the violence done unto all other living creatures. As the author herself pointed out, the story is about the question of whether innocence is possible: “I think this novel has some layers: questioning human violence and the (im)possibility of innocence; defining sanity and madness; the (im)possibility of understanding others, body as the last refuge or the last determination, and some more.” (Han qtd. in Patrick). This rejection of violence in a struggle for innocence is twofold. Yeong-hye strives for innocence for herself, she struggles to hide her aggression, her disposition towards violence against others. I read her loathing as directed towards her husband, the mask she has been wearing is that of the dutiful house-wife who provides for her husband. But, as Han also pointed out, “this novel isn’t a singular indictment of the Korean patriarchy” (ibid.). Although not being a negligible element, there are many more mechanisms at work here. One of them being the inner battle Yeong-hye fights against her aggressive desires, the desire to ‘purify’ herself from violence, which can be seen in her rejection of any body part of hers that might inflict harm (see above).

Another one being her desire to detach herself physically and mentally from the harm that is being done to her.

Her physical detachment can be most clearly described through an analysis of her reaction to her family when they try to force-feed her meat. This scene is full of violence, starting with verbal forms of persuasion that express symbolic violence due to the circumstances and the imperative of their speech. “This whole vegetarian business stops right now” (43) demands her mother at the beginning of the conversation. The situation soon escalates with Yeong-hye’s father’s display of aggression culminating in his ordering his son and son-in-law (Mr. Cheong) to restrain Yeong-hye’s body from moving while he himself tries to force meat into her mouth. This scene strongly resembles the one in which Mr. Cheong rapes Yeong-hye. Yeong-hye’s resistance might be called ‘successful’. She refuses to open her teeth. When she struggles free she uses a fruit knife in an attempt to physically detach herself from the situation. The only way in which Yeong-hye is able to counteract the impossibility to communicate with her family, the incapability of her family to understand her – the only one who even tries to communicate anything besides their own imperative message is In-hye who proposes she should set up a “well-balanced meal plan” (43) if she wishes to be a vegetarian – is harming herself. Paradoxically, physical violence is the only way she can make her family listen, the only way she can detach herself from the violence that is inflicted on her by others. And yet, even this extreme form of communication is lost upon them: Her mother’s first rationale is to trick her into eating meat by pretending that the food is only herbal medicine.

The second segment in italics gives useful interpretative insight into the meaning of her loathing and the metaphor of the mask, but it also shows how she (successfully) detaches herself mentally from verbal violence. This is the segment that



follows her husband's remarks "This strange situation had nothing to do with me." (26). In this segment, Yeong-hye recounts the events of the day before she "*had the dream*" (ibid), apparently speaking about the first time she had that dream. It is an imaginary conversation that she has with her husband: "*I was mincing frozen meat – remember? You got angry.*" (ibid.), intercepting in quotation marks what her husband had yelled at her that morning, and what he had yelled at her that evening. There are several connections to the other segments. The loathing is foreshadowed: "*If you knew how hard I've always worked to keep my nerves in check.*"; and so is the mask after Yeong-hye recounts cutting herself with the knife: "*Sticking the finger in my mouth calmed me. The scarlet color, and now the taste, sweetness masking something else, left me strangely pacified.*" That evening her husband found a broken off piece of the knife in the food, which makes him angry and he yelles at Yeong-hye. Her reaction is quite interesting: "*I gazed vacantly at your distorted face as you raged. [...] Why didn't this agitate me like it should have done? [...] everything around me began to slide away, as though pulled back on an ebbing tide. [...] I was alone, the only thing remaining in all of infinite space.*" It is not quite clear what she means with 'agitating,' whether she should have been agitated by the thought that something might have happened to her husband had he swallowed the piece of knife or whether she should have been agitated by his yelling at her. However, the sentence quoted above about how she always worked hard 'to keep her nerves in check' suggests that it is the latter. Thus, her husband's verbal violence functions in this moment similarly to the way in which the colour and taste of her own blood had earlier that day – and similarly to when she cuts herself at the family-meeting – only that this form of mental detachment is non-violent and leaves no other impression in the physical world apart from an expression of absent-mindedness. Instead of detaching herself from the violence inflicted on her in an act of

physical violence against herself, she detaches herself from the verbal violence through an ‘act’ of mental detachment. Although, in a strict sense, she doesn’t ‘act’ at all, it is rather this mental detachment that acts on her.

Although these segments do not re-present a logical strain of thought, they nonetheless provide an insight into Yeong-hye’s mind. They not only re-present that which is visually not perceptible, but also function as a direct contradiction of her husband’s judgement. Despite the fact that the main character still remains elusive, contradictory and ambiguous, the reader’s sympathy lies nonetheless with her, even though a conceptual understanding of her personality cannot be established through this narrative. The emotional connection is established through a dialectic of repulsion [Abstoßung] and attraction [Anziehung].<sup>35</sup> This dynamic occurs in the first part of *The Vegetarian*. In this chapter, the protagonist is seen in a more preferable light due to the unpleasantness of the narrator/focalizer himself. The first part of the novel, also entitled “The Vegetarian,” is narrated by Yeong-Hye’s husband, Mr. Cheong, who turns out to be a disturbingly honest narrator. It will suffice to point out one sentence to make this dynamic visible. After describing how he raped his wife, the narrator calmly discloses: “After this first time, it was easier for me to do it again” (38). The narrator openly demonstrates this despicable behaviour without any sign of remorse and thus makes it (almost) impossible for the reader to identify with him. Even though there are only very few indicators that inform the reader about the protagonist’s personality, the crass focus on the husband inevitably compels the reader to align herself with the protagonist. This

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<sup>35</sup> The German terms offer a more precise description of this dynamic: Abstoßung (being pushed away from) & Anziehung (being pulled/drawn towards). Both terms combine the association of physical and emotional reaction with the reaction between two objects/elements.

disturbing honesty indirectly undermines the trustworthiness of the narrator's judgment and of his interpretation of the situation.

But it is not only honesty that sabotages the authority of the narrator. When he announces: "This strange situation had nothing to do with me." (26, see above) he is immediately contradicted by the following segment in italics, which functions as an expression of Yeong-hye's interior monologue. As outlined above, this part of the narrative does suggest that part of her anger and aggressiveness is directed at him and exists because of him. This compromises not his 'honesty' as a narrator but his trustworthiness as interpreter of the situation. Similarly to the narrator/focalizer Daniel in Dujardin's *Les Lauriers*, the text contradicts the narrator/focalizer, if not through external textual data, then through the intersection of his point of view with that of his wife.

Thus, the re-presentation of the protagonist in this chapter takes place on several levels. The most 'immediate' one is the interior monologue/dream-sequences/memories, which are woven into the narrative and give the reader a momentary glimpse at the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. The narrator's unsympathetic and self-centred account of the events inclines the reader towards a compassionate connection with the protagonist, while the segments in italics consolidate this connection, since they confirm the reader's suspicion about the narrator. This also emphasises the complicity between (implied) author and protagonist and shows how this complicity has been cleverly constructed into a narrative that manoeuvres the reader into a sense of emphatic complicity with the protagonist. What is interesting about that (positive) 'manipulation' is that the novel manages to re-present complexity on different levels, thus allowing for a maintenance of this complexity.

In my further analysis I will show how this different re-presentation functions in order to complicate our conceptions of communication, which helps reformulate the way we think about the way understanding works. In the first chapter there is no fruitful communication between narrator/focalizer and protagonist. But there is something similar to communication, which takes place between reader and protagonist and functions through the reader's empathy for the protagonist and antipathy towards her husband. In contrast to this, the third chapter ("Flaming Trees") is the only part of the novel where some kind of 'real' understanding takes place. Even though Yeong-hye does not speak at all, especially in the latter part of this chapter she has entirely seized to speak. This chapter reveals the most details about Yeong-hye's childhood, but more importantly, it can be said to be about the bond of the two sisters,<sup>36</sup> it shows their similarities and differences, but more importantly, a form of non-verbal communication between the sisters takes place. This communication works through In-hye's identification with and speculation about her sister. It works – not because there is a verbal exchange of opinions but because In-hye attempts to understand, she draws parallels between her own life and her sister's, she re-experiences the past, re-assigns meaning to that past. To take a closer look at how this form of communication and understanding works, I will explore the meaning of silence and/or the refusal to adhere to expected forms of communication in Schnitzler, Freud and Han. I will begin by drawing a connection between the (in-)ability of interpreting that silence and an analysis of how visual perception can misguide our interpretations. And lastly, I will

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<sup>36</sup> Kang said in an interview that the novel could be described as being about two sisters.

provide an interpretive analysis of “Flaming Trees” that suggests an alternative to phallogocentric<sup>37</sup> conceptions of ‘understanding’.

## 3.2 Whose Voice is it Anyway?

### 3.2.1 Mental Health and the Fallacy of Visual Perception

Jane Ussher argued, that there are certain epistemological assumptions at the root of all positivist-scientific thinking. I will only focus on one: the assumption of “realist logic” (209), meaning the idea that knowledge can only be gained through observation. This ‘realist logic,’ in turn, relies on the assumption that “objects have real existence independent of any perceiver, knowledge system, or practice.” (ibid.). The problem that can arise from an analysis based on a specific, unquestioned, knowledge system is a serious one. If a subject observes someone behaving in a non-normative way and therefore describes that behaviour as indicating madness, this knowledge of the subject will stay embedded within that particular system of knowledge. Within this system, then, the presumptuous observation acquires the status of ‘objectivity’. However, this inherently means that the observing subject reflected neither on her own subject-position nor on the question how the (e.g. socio-political) circumstances of that subject-position might influence their definition of what constitutes non-normative behaviour. Ussher introduces this criticism in order to reassess how these assumptions can lead to a misinterpretation of mental illness because it ignores that “subjectivity, behavior, and the very meaning of ‘health’ and ‘illness’ are constructed within practice, language, relationships, and roles.” (216). Of course, this does not imply that biological factors

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<sup>37</sup> Another Derridian term that fits well is “carnophallogocentrism,” which describes how Western culture favours the consumption of meat over a vegetarian diet because meat is situated within society as an important symbol for masculinity and power and thus seen as irreplaceable (see Stobie, 788).

are irrelevant to mental health. Ussher's criticism of realist logic shows that an assessment of mental health cannot be made from an objective point of view.

This can be further complicated when the question of knowledge production is formulated within an intercultural setting. As Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí argues in her book *The Invention of Women. Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*: "A concentration on vision as the primary mode of comprehending reality promotes what can be seen over that which is not apparent to the eye; it misses the other levels and the nuances of existence." (14). For her, this explains the prevalence of the body in Western society, since "the world is primarily perceived by sight. [...] The gaze is an invitation to differentiate." (2). In Schnitzler's novella the fallacy of visual perception is made explicit. As I have argued, the protagonist in Schnitzler's novella is restricted by various social rules that dictate the behaviour of women and mainly chooses to follow the one option that at least allows her to publicly articulate the impossibility of her situation. This performative act is not pure rebellion and should not be romanticised. It is a desperate act of choosing the least terrible of options. What is interesting is that Schnitzler specifically placed the reader inside Else's mind in order to validate her point of view. Furthermore, this performance takes place in plain view. Like a dramatic play, it involves and depends on the spectatorship of an audience. Thus Else makes the conflict she has to confront observable. However, making something observable does not mean that it will be interpreted correctly by the observing subject. The 'realist logic,' the logic that depends on the predominance of the visual and the body for knowledge production in Western discourses, is re-presented by the reaction of Paul and Else's aunt. The people surrounding Else are incapable of understanding her action – maybe with the exception of Cissy (see above). This shows Schnitzler's awareness of

the fallacy of visual observation and his emphasis that it does not hold the key to objective knowledge.

*The Vegetarian* functions in a similar way. I will here only describe how the fallacy of observation is treated in the first chapter. Relatively early on in the novel, Mr. Cheong makes an assessment of the mental state of his wife through observation: “[What] If the hints at hysteria, delusion, weak nerves and so on, that I thought I could detect in what she said, ended up leading to something more?” (25). Although the narrative is not very detailed, the reader learns enough about Yeong-hye’s behaviour. Yet, the ‘medical’ assessment of Yeong-hye’s husband is not only extremely vague, but simply misleading. “Hysteria,” for instance, is not even used in modern medical discourse anymore (see Concise Medical Dictionary, “Hysteria”). Today there is a distinction made between “Conversion Disorder” and “Dissociative Disorder”. Conversion Disorder is diagnosed with the following symptoms: “blindness, deafness, loss of sensation, gait abnormalities, false memory, or paralysis of various parts of the body.” (ibid., “Conversion Disorder”), while people diagnosed with Dissociative Disorder display symptoms like “loss of memory for important personal details (see amnesia), wandering away from home (see fugue), the assumption of a new identity, and trancelike states with severely reduced response to external stimuli.” (ibid., “Dissociative Disorder”). One could argue that Yeong-hye displays certainly one of the symptoms of the latter: ‘trancelike states’. However, it should be noted, that this type of behaviour is not new to her husband. When he recounts the night he had found her standing barefoot in the kitchen he compares “her complete lack of reaction” (15) with experiences of their past life together: “It was like those rare occasions when, absorbed in a late-night TV drama, she’d failed to notice me arriving home.” (ibid.).

Instead of further discussing Yeong-hye's mental health in medical terms, which is neither my profession nor my question of inquiry, I want to focus on the very nature of this observation. As mentioned above, Mr. Cheong's description of Yeong-hye's symptoms is far from being thorough. In fact, he does not even state what specific types of behaviour he interprets as indicating 'hysteria, delusion, weak nerves and so on'. Additionally, the narrator interprets the protagonist according to his standards of normative behaviour but is unwilling to have a conversation with his wife about the situation:

"I never inquired as to the nature of this dream. I'd already had to listen once to that crazy spiel about the barn in the dark woods, the face reflected in the pool of blood and all the rest of it, and once had been more than enough. All because of this agonizing dream, from which I was shut out, had no way of knowing and moreover didn't want to know, she continued wasting away." (25, my emphasis underlined, italics in the original).

What is so striking here is that while complaining about being 'shut out,' Mr. Cheong goes on to narrate that he 'didn't want to know'. Additionally, Mr. Cheong only begins to complain to a third party after his wife has 'embarrassed' him in front of his superiors. Before that, he did notice the change in Yeong-hye's physique but he did not call his in-laws nor did he consult a doctor. When she first announces to him that she will not use any animal product for cooking anymore he is shocked and describes her as "self-centered" (21). Later on he describes how she "grew thinner by the day" (23) and began to resemble "a hospital patient" (ibid.), but this does not seem to trouble him much. He goes on declaring: "But what troubled me more was that she now seemed to be actively avoiding sex." (24). This emphasises his lack of regard for Yeong-hye and shows that, in fact, as long as it does not concern him, he does not care at all. Thus, his description of her as 'hysteric' expresses more his own discontent with a wife who no



longer fulfils his commands and can thus be linked to a more general phenomenon of defining 'defiant' women as 'mad' or of otherwise excluding them from society.

This disregard is mirrored in his interpretation of Yeong-hye's behaviour, which is rooted in misguided visual perception. Mr. Cheong perceives his wife as being calm and distanced without noticing the turmoil that takes place within her. This assessment of her disposition is based on visual perception alone. In a similar vein he denies the possibility of himself being part of the problem: "I resisted the temptation to indulge in introspection. This strange situation had nothing to do with me." (26). This belief, again, is rooted in his subjective perception of their relationship as unproblematic. Since his wife never verbally expresses any kind of anger towards him, this possibility does not even exist for him. Interestingly, this very statement is directly contradicted in the segment in italics that follows it: "*If you knew how hard I've always worked to keep my nerves in check.*" (27). I will return to this segment later in relation to re-presentation and (un-)reliability.

This misguided perception is somewhat differently addressed in the second part "Mongolian Mark". When Yeong-hye sees the naked body covered in flowers, for her, the body comes to simultaneously represent [vertreten] and re-present [darstellen] the flowers. She is sexually aroused by the flowers, not by the human body. This anticipates her desire to be a plant, which develops into the deep-rooted and genuine belief that she is really transforming into a plant, which is narrated in "Flaming Trees". The painted body ceases to be a mere human body and instead figures as a human-plant hybrid and Yeong-hye envisions this hybridity as a cure for herself: "Will the dreams stop now?" (121) she asks after the sexual encounter with her brother-in-law, who painted his body with flowers explicitly for that purpose. It is worth quoting her entire account of the

situation because it will help clarify the importance of this moment for her. When asked by her brother in-law about the faces she sees in her dreams she responds:

“It’s different every time. Sometimes it feels very familiar, other times I’m sure I’ve never seen it before. There are times when it’s all bloody . . . and times when it looks like the face of a rotting corpse. [...] I thought it was all because of eating meat [...] I thought all I had to do was to stop eating meat and then the faces wouldn’t come back. But it didn’t work. [...] And so . . . now I know. The face is inside my stomach. It rose up from inside my stomach. [...] But I’m not scared anymore. There’s nothing to be scared of now.” (122).

First of all, this is one of the rare instances, in which we are presented with her interpretation of her own situation, and it is the only situation, in which she actually explains her own feelings and thoughts. This scene also emphasises the huge impact that this visual illusion has on Yeong-hye. After this disclosure, the reader does not discover much about what happens between this scene and the last part of the book, which is set at a time when Yeong-hye has already been admitted to a psychiatric clinic. What we learn about the events in between is mainly what happened to her brother in-law and how she got admitted to the clinic, however, there is no account of Yeong-hye’s feelings or thoughts. Since there is no further mentioning of her nightmares, which are central elements of the first two chapters, it could be argued that this means that the dreams have stopped. Indeed, in “Flaming Trees” there is an account of only one dream of Yeong-hye – but the nature of this dream is altogether different from the nightmares that haunted her before. It is a dream where she experiences herself becoming a tree. In this dream she learns that the head of the tree is where its roots are. This metamorphosis into a tree in her dream takes over her life. She envisions herself as slowly turning into a tree, arguing that that is why she doesn’t need to eat anymore – she only needs sunlight and water (see 153f.). The remaining question, whose answer remains indefinite, is the following: Did the humanoid flower-sex cure that physical

pain in her chest? Did it stop her nightmares? In a way, it did. “Flaming Trees” is the only section of the book where the protagonist seems to be at peace. This peace is disturbed only by the medical staff enforcing a treatment on her that she is not willing to undergo. Despite this, it would be wrong to declare that it was the sex itself that ‘cured’ her, and not only because that re-invokes older conceptions about hysteria and its cure.<sup>38</sup> Rather, it seems that this becoming-plant (certainly in a more ‘real’ way than Deleuze and Guattari could have conceptualised) does not only happen on a visual plane, but, and even more so, on a psychological and even biological plane. The psychological plane means, of course, that Yeong-hye genuinely believes that she is *as a matter of fact* becoming a plant. The biological plane is intertwined closely with the psychological one in this case. Since she firmly believes that she does not need food anymore, she is physically incapable of eating without having to vomit as a direct reaction to the food. Obviously, she does not magically grow leaves, but she physically (and not merely ideologically) rejects food because her psychological and biological reaction to food have become inseparable.<sup>39</sup> Here, again, mere visual perception of her body cannot explain the physical change that has taken place. Since the metamorphosis that she senses is occurring within her body, it is not perceptible to the eye.

Similarly, Else’s ‘paralysis’ is described as hysterical seizure by other characters. In the novella, the visual perception of the characters can only detect and interpret what they can observe: A young woman disrobing and collapsing in a room full of people. In contrast to the interior monologue, the reader experiences both, the

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<sup>38</sup> Doctors used to believe that the uterus was able to change its location within the body. According to them, if the uterus had wandered into the brain of a woman, that woman would become hysterical. The treatment proposed was basically that the woman needed an orgasm, which would re-locate the uterus where it belonged.

<sup>39</sup> This effect is similar to the effect of placebo, where the patient is healed not by medicine but by her own belief in the effect of medicine. This field of study is too complex to explore in this context.

visual perception and interpretation of the characters through Else's perception *and* Else's thoughts and feelings throughout the entire narrative. Thus, the 'realist logic' is dismantled as being misleading and incomplete. Instead, the narrative proposes that understanding of the 'other' works through identification and direct experience of the other's thoughts and feelings. In interpretations of this novella, the misguided visual perception of the characters has been replicated. Thus, Else's 'paralysis' has been read as "classical hysterical seizure, with katatonia and increased sensual awareness" (Schmid-Bortenschlager, 514), instead of seeing it as a metaphor for her status in society (see above, p.46). Schmid-Bortenschlager at least admits that the interpretation of literary texts need not be exclusive or hierarchical but that literature allows for unresolved ambiguity (521), an ambiguity that she does not seem to see in Freud. However, it is only if we take Freud's analysis for granted, that we assume that Freud's interpretation is finite and exclusive. Indeed, *Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse*, leaves enough room to question Freud's interpretation, let alone his methodology. In fact, many elements of Freud's narration can be questioned – amongst the most telling, maybe his (mis)interpretation of Dora's silence(s). Since there is no possibility for communication with Ida Bauer herself, the reader is left with a net of ambiguities. The interesting difference that Schmid-Bortenschlager notices between Freud and Schnitzler is that instead of only focussing on sexuality and the individual, Schnitzler does take social possibilities and the constructions of social roles into account, which can be seen clearly in Else's awareness of the trade in women through marriage, which invokes Lévi-Strauss analysis of women as objects of exchange in patriarchal societies (see 518). Thus, Schnitzler accurately reflects the social intricacies that influence Else's situatedness. How is the social reality of the lived lives of women in South Korea reflected in *The Vegetarian*?

Since I am not a scholar of Korean culture and society, I will use a long segment from a study that analyses depression in married women in South Korea in order to describe the general social circumstances of women in Korea. The study is titled “Multiple Roles of Married Korean Women: Effect on Depression” and was written by Kwang Ja Lee, Chae Chung Um, and Susie Kim, all three of whom work at the College on Nursing Science at the Ewha Woman’s University in Seoul. Their text helps situate the social circumstances that are reflected in the novel:

“Korean family life is generally based on Confucian philosophy and ethics that strongly influence the traditional values and roles of family members. Harmonious relationships among the family members are expected and strongly reinforced. Traditional values support the patriarchal system of roles and relationships in Korean families. The husband is expected to be the breadwinner, major decision maker, head of the family, and enforcer of rules. The wife’s role is to provide emotional nurturance to her husband and children and to assume full responsibility for the household tasks. She is expected to be passive and submissive to her husband and his family. When family members fail to perform the role behaviors demanded by tradition, disharmony and shame may be brought to the family, and women may be reprimanded by actual or threatened abandonment by the family (Ho, 1987). These traditional roles are challenged when Korean women work outside the home to assist in providing financial support and are also expected to perform numerous household and child-rearing tasks. Some women may cope with this challenge by negotiating with their husbands for assistance with household tasks and rearing children. Others may try to accomplish all of the expected tasks by working harder themselves.” (469f.)

What this article shows (and which can be applied more broadly) is that the possibility to work has impacted women in often negative ways, since it was expected that they simply add their career on top of all the work they already have to do, instead of giving them the option to diminish their work on “traditional woman’s work.” The effect of this can be seen quite clearly in In-hye, who is not supported by her husband in any way and instead must accomplish the entirety of the household and child-rearing work plus

economic labour by herself. Even though the text does not examine Yeong-hye's married life in detail, it becomes clear, that In-hye mirrors her younger sister and her behaviour in many ways. Both their husbands neither share their household work, nor provide emotional support. In-hye's situation is intensified by the fact that she has a child she has to take care of, and is the sole breadwinner. Thus, she is 'independent' of her husband, since, in fact, he is superfluous concerning the maintenance of their household. Furthermore, due to his absence (physically and metaphorically) he does not seem to play an important role in her emotional life. This is reflected in the narrative itself, since the loss of her husband does not impact her life very much. In the third chapter, In-hye never remembers her husband except for in negative terms. She does not experience his absence as emotionally important, there is no mentioning of her missing him, instead, she is haunted by the fact that, even while they were still living together, he was already absent, even when he demanded physical attention, separated from her through his silence. This silence, however, functions very differently in comparison to Yeong-hye's silence. His silence is also a communication strategy, but with the opposite goal: He does not want to communicate and rejects the possibility of forming a relationship with his wife based on mutual understanding. His silence functions similarly to Mr. Cheong's silence, which is expressed in his refusal to engage in conversation with his wife about her dream. This type of silence functions as a barrier that is used as a strategy of exclusion.

The fact that only in the third chapter does the reader realise that In-hye's situation might be similar to Yeong-hye's stresses that visual perception and 'objective' interpretations are fallible, and asks: 'How does communication function? As could be seen in Freud's communication with Ida Bauer, most communications depend on a hierarchical structure that designate one interlocutor as the determinant of what is

considered ‘rational,’ ‘true’ or ‘complete’. The husbands’ silences function in a similar way, for they operate as determinants of the possibility of communication itself (which they negate). In the following section I want to explore the importance of silence as communication strategy from a different angle, explore how Yeong-hye’s silence functions differently and analyse what this novel can teach us about communication, and whether this form of communication might shed light on a possibility of non-hierarchical mutual understanding.

### 3.2.2 Silence as Communication Strategy?

George Steiner wrote in “The Hermeneutic Motion” that “all cognition is aggressive” (157). Steiner’s concept of ‘understanding’ is informed by Hegel and Heidegger, equating comprehension with appropriation (see *ibid.*). However, if any kind of understanding should be equally conceptualised as violent, appropriative act, then it certainly legitimises imperialistic violence against Others, since colonialism could accordingly be read as necessary for comprehension of and communication with other cultures. This view on the matter does not distinguish between an imperialist concept of understanding and a very different form of communication and understanding, namely one that is based on mutual respect and acceptance and thus refuses to acknowledge the difference between them. To acknowledge this difference, however, is important, especially because an imperialist notion of understanding does not allow for silence to be comprehended as communicative strategy and thus effaces silence from the discourse as inessential. This silence, so often misunderstood as non-communication or refusal to communicate is actually an alternative form of communication, one that does not abide by the logical laws of ‘male,’ eurocentric, phallogocentric reason. Of course, it is important to give support to those who are

silenced and enable them to translate their silence into speech, but I think it is equally important to begin to understand their silence on their own terms.

Since silence can only be perceived as absence, it is easy to misread. Silence mingles with the question whether it is impossible to understand the Other. Thus, interpreting silence through observation alone turns out to be inadequate to accurately measure inner turmoil. This inadequacy of comprehension applies not only to the incapability of 'natural' human perception to comprehend the invisible expression of stress in other species, such as plants, whose stress-level can only be interpreted with the help of electronical measuring devices.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, inner turmoil and stress are often invisible to the observer as could be clearly seen in Freud's comprehension of Dora's silence as acceptance of his interpretation. Else's performative silence functioned similarly within society – as a mirror that reflected only what the perceivers wished to interpret. Her silence in the situation when she is harrassed by Dorsday and her sensation of being petrified is not recognised because Dorsday only perceives what he wishes to see. Furthermore, does her silence function as a platform for his speech that is directed at her, but also at himself. He needs this platform in order to establish the well-known narrative of the beautiful temptress that acquits him of any guilt and legitimates his demeanour (see above, p. 44). In a similar vain, Cissy envisions Else as a woman who is not ashamed and wishes the same for herself and Paul (see above, p.45f.).

Yeong-hye fulfils a comparable, albeit not analogous, function. She is described as 'calm,' 'inattentive,' with a 'lack of reaction' and throughout the entire novel

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<sup>40</sup> There's a lot of research existing about this and the issue has even made it into newspaper articles, see e.g. "Dekorationswahn. Pflanzen sind keine Beistelltische" von Helmut Höge: <http://www.taz.de/!5577867/>, last accessed: 3/20/2019.



displays a very passive behaviour (except for those scenes in which she is confronted with physical violence).<sup>41</sup> Similarly to Else, whatever interpretation is imposed on her from the outside merely reflects the interpreter. In “The Vegetarian” her husband relates the events of one evening when they had been invited to join his boss for dinner at an elegant restaurant. Upon discovering her vegetarianism, the conversation stays on that topic quite long, even though Yeong-hye herself does not say anything. Her husband even feels the need to invent a dietitian who had counseled his wife to follow a vegetarian diet. Here, Yeong-hye not only functions as a site of interpretation but also as a site of the signifier. It is clear from her husband’s behaviour that he sees himself as attached to her and knows that if she appears as a strange person in front of his boss, he will be linked to that image through mere association. This functions similarly to the female hostility in *Fräulein Else*. Even before leaving the house, Mr. Cheong had dragged her back inside the house and told her to put on more make-up because he didn’t want to appear in public with his wife having a “sickly pallor” (28). As long as she stays inside the house and as long as her physical weakness cannot be linked to himself, he does not care.

The general conversation at that meeting centres around vegetarianism in a clearly condemning tone: “Meat eating is a fundamental human instinct, which means vegetarianism goes against human nature” (31); “I’d hate to share a meal with someone who considers eating meat repulsive, just because that’s how they themselves personally feel” (32). Even though Yeong-hye never expresses any such feelings, what the others perceive is what they expect to perceive – they expect Yeong-hye to perceive

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<sup>41</sup> According to Jina Kim, who spoke about the English translation by Deborah Smith at a Symposium on Translation presented at the University of Oregon in February 2019, the English translation actually renders the protagonist more active. This comparison to the Korean text enhances the importance of the protagonist’s passivity.

them with the same judgmental attitude with which they are observing her: “It seems to me that one shouldn’t be too narrow-minded when it comes to food.” (31). Obviously, this is a self-contradictory statement since it is made as a latent attack against another person who chose to live on an ‘unconventional’ diet. In a way that is not dissimilar to Freud, Yeong-hye’s silence, her wordless gaze, is considered to confirm their theories. But this silence is not a denial of communication. When asked, she does answer the question as to why she stopped eating meat. She tries to communicate to them, she wants to tell: “I had a dream” (31). Both, this form of silence and this form of communication, is starkly contrasted in the third chapter of the novel, “Flaming Trees”.

This last chapter is narrated by In-hye, Yeong-hye’s elder sister, and she is not only confronted with the inability to communicate with her sister, but also with the silence of her own husband: “Had she ever really understood her husband’s true nature, bound up as it was with that seemingly impenetrable silence?” (137). Here the husband’s silence clearly works as a refusal to communicate, which is fueled not only by neglect but also by disrespect.

In addition to the lack of communication between herself and her husband, In-hye herself is unable to communicate with anyone about what is happening to her. This inability slowly starts dissolving itself when she tries to communicate with her sister. Her attempt at communication and understanding has nothing to do with the idea of imperialist appropriation as proposed by Steiner. Instead, she indulges in introspection. She remembers the beatings that her sister had to endure at the hand of their father, she repeatedly asks herself whether she did everything she could have done, but more than that, she tries to understand her sister – not in a rational manner, but through emotions and a sense of connection. However, this understanding does not magically happen, but

is the result of reflection and a lot of emotional labour. In the beginning she cannot comprehend her sister at all and thus fails to be able to communicate with her. After In-hye promises to get her sister out of the clinic if she would only promise to eat, Yeong-hye accuses her sister of being just like the doctors: “No one can understand me . . . the doctors, the nurses, they’re all the same . . . they don’t even try to understand . . . they just force me to take medication, and stab me with needles.” (162). Shortly after this scene, the narrator encloses In-hye’s own feeling and the way they might be related to her sister’s feelings:

“This pain and insomnia that, unbeknownst to others, now has In-hye in its grip – might Yeong-hye have passed through this same phase herself, a long time ago and more quickly than most people? Might Yeong-hye’s current condition be the *natural progression* from what her sister has recently been experiencing? Perhaps, at some point, Yeong-hye had simply let fall the slender thread that had kept her connected with everyday life.” (172, my emphasis).

Not only does this imply that Yeong-hye’s reaction is ‘natural,’ but the narrator also begins to draw parallels between the two sisters. These questions are, of course, In-hye’s, i.e. the focalizer’s, which is reflected shortly before when In-hye mutters to herself “Perhaps [...] Perhaps it’s simpler than I thought. [...] You’re crazy” (ibid.). The rapid change in her interpretation acknowledges the impossibility of monolithically determining the reason for Yeong-hye’s state of mind and, instead of enforcing a medical system or objective observational analysis, In-hye attempts to create understanding through emotional connection and compassion. But it also shows the difficulty of understanding someone else and that understanding needs to take place through a long process and not one singular (violent) action. But this text also teaches us that In-hye does not only begin to understand Yeong-hye, but through her desire to understand her sister she also begins to comprehend herself better. This is exemplified in the two male narrators in the novel. Both display such character traits as self-

centredness and indifference towards others and thus can neither understand themselves nor others and thus are incapable of gaining knowledge about themselves or about others. This illustrates, yet again, the fallacy of the philosophical concept of the self as autonomous and independent of others.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

“The subaltern *cannot* speak.”, this was Spivak’s verdict after the first version of her essay *Can the Subaltern speak?* but in the revised version she came to reassess the question. Revisiting the case of Bhubaneswari<sup>42</sup> she admits: “I was so unnerved by this failure of communication that, in the first version of this text, I wrote, in the accents of passionate lament: the subaltern cannot speak! It was an inadvisable remark.” (63). What is important here is that Spivak acknowledges that Bhubaneswari did, indeed, speak (although she argues that, being middle class, Bhubaneswari was not really a subaltern). She explicitly expressed through her own menstruation blood that she did not commit suicide because of an illegitimate pregnancy. What was so disturbing to Spivak is the silencing of that blood-voice not by the colonial empire, but by her own family who do not remember the real circumstances anymore and thus reestablish the prejudice of illegitimate pregnancy as reason for female suicide.

In my analysis of re-presentation I have not so much been interested in the subaltern as such, but in the figure of the oppressed woman who is denied the power of defining meaning, who is not mute but unheard, who is not inarticulate but uses a different type of expression, who is not speechless but simply misinterpreted. As Spivak correctly says, “All speaking, even seemingly the most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception<sup>43</sup>.” Whenever someone is communicating with me, I already receive a ‘coloured’ version of that communication.

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<sup>42</sup> Bhubaneswari Bhadu was a young woman who was fighting for Indian independence who committed suicide in North Calcutta in 1926. She was a distant relative of Spivak herself. Bhubaneswari waited for her period before killing herself so that it could not be interpreted as the reaction to an illicit pregnancy. However, decades later, other family members remembered Bhubaneswari’s suicide as “a case of illicit love” (63).

<sup>43</sup> This idea of espionage imagines something similar to what Rafael analyses in his text on translation: The interest in knowing what others say so that one can see through their secrets is one form of state espionage.

My understanding of that communication is always intrinsically intertwined with my own interpretation and thus the communication is ‘coloured’ with my interpretation. I do not agree with the idea that all understanding is necessarily violent (see George Steiner: “all cognition is aggressive”) because, firstly, this ‘colouring’ of the communication must not necessarily be inaccurate and, secondly, it does not need to be fueled by an aggressive energy but can instead be fueled by empathy. I propose to see this colouring as an alternative that does not lead into the idea of communication being necessarily and undeniably a violent, imperialist enterprise infused with the ‘male’ logic of conquering but as one that instead allows for a non-violent, non-imperialist concept of understanding and communication that acknowledges the complicity that can exist between two (or more) agents of communication. Instead of using the metaphor of ‘taking’ meaning out of some ill-defined void, I want to use the metaphor of giving one’s expression to someone else. Of course, this exchange of meaning does not necessarily mean that the meaning received is the same as the meaning given but in co-communication there is always the possibility of asking questions and of rethinking one’s own judgements.

The consequence that I draw for theoretical and literary texts is that they might not be able to represent [vertreten] the subaltern or the oppressed, and they might not be able to ‘give voice’ to them, but what they do is that they re-present [darstellen], and through this depiction comes the possibility of communication. Even though Freud’s psychoanalytical assessment of Ida Bauer’s illness is very problematic, it could not conceal his own mechanics of interpretation. And his analysis has been recognised as biased and incomplete because of that. Thus, even though Freud tried to establish a sovereignty of interpretation for himself, and even though his interpretation is what he does manage to portray, the text has offered itself as a tool of indirect communication

with his patient. Schnitzler's text works in a completely different way. By artificially eliminating the doctor's perspective and creating a subjective narrative, the experiencing subject is disclosed as reliable focalizer. The simulated immediacy allows for an artificial, almost direct, communication with the young woman, even though this re-presentation [darstellen] gets close to being a representation [vertreten], this representation is nonetheless nothing but a mere construction by the author. This construction, however, is, as I have shown, well thought through and powerfully crafted in such a way as to 'manipulate' the reader into an empathetic disposition towards the protagonist. What is important in this narrative is that Schnitzler did not obliterate the silence that Else endures but instead incorporates a discussion of the mechanisms of silencing in patriarchal discourse and society into his text. A similar voiceless void is beautifully arranged in Han's novel where the protagonist's silence is re-presented [darstellen] in order to emphasise the inaccessibility of that voice. The fact that this silence is contrasted with the active 'male' narrative, which is cleverly constructed in such a way as to undermine the validity of its own point of view, heightens the sensitivity of the reader and allows for a more nuanced representation [vertreten] of the silenced. This first chapter predisposes the reader towards a sympathetic engagement with Yeong-hye and her situation and this desire to understand is performed by In-hye in the last chapter through her recollection of the sister's past together and through an account of her own experience. These experiences mirror Yeong-hye's experiences in the first chapter (e.g. the recurring nightmares and the insomnia) but are now re-presented by the narrator from the experiencing subject's point of view. Thus In-hye performs the function of the relative who listens to and comprehends the silent speech of the protagonist. similarly to Spivak who remembers the message of menstrual blood, In-hye remembers the message of recurring nightmares and insomnia.





APPENDIX: WHOSE VOICE IS IT ANYWAY – IN TRANSLATION?  
THE CONTROVERSY AROUND DEBORAH SMITH’S TRANSLATION OF *THE VEGETARIAN*

Deborah Smith’s translation of Han Kang’s first novel *The Vegetarian* has been controversial. The book was first published in South Korea in 2007. The English translation, first published in 2015, was celebrated by English-speaking reviewers and severely criticised by South Korean media and scholars, most of which focused on textual mistranslations, arguing that this was due to Smith’s inaccurate knowledge of the Korean language, which she had, in fact, only started to learn roughly three years before she began to translate the novel. Unfortunately, I do not speak Korean myself and can therefore not independently judge this translation, just as I could not research what was said and written about the controversial translation in Korean. Therefore I will begin by outlining the controversy as reported in English-language media (UK and US), taking into account questions of (in-)accurate textual translation and stylistic differences. In this part, I will focus on articles written by Charse Yun, a Korean-American scholar who teaches translation and writing at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. In reference to this particular case, the second part of this paper will be dedicated to a more general problem of translation, namely, that a text from a language (especially one that only very few people besides native speakers understand) depends on translation for it to be seen by others. Despite the inherent problem of translation, this is also absolutely necessary for ‘western’ ideas about literature, for the translation is the only way to engage with multiple foreign literatures. Even polyglottism is not an answer because one person cannot possibly learn all existing languages. Thus, if one wishes to expand or change the literary canon to include more than Eurocentric literature, translations are indispensable. Thirdly, I will scrutinise the role that the practice of translation has and the premises that might impede certain texts from being translated

and the role the literary market plays in this. For this I will take a look at Tilted Axis Press, a new publishing press for translated texts founded by Debora Smith in 2015 and connect their agenda to other endeavours in feminist and postcolonial theory to engage in literature without blindly reinstating the hierarchy of the western canon and its definition of what counts as a masterpiece of literature.

### The Press-Controversy

Deborah Smith's translation of Han Kang's first novel *The Vegetarian* has been very controversial, especially, since they won the Man Booker International Prize together, translator and writer. This is the first year the award has been given based on a single book instead of the entire body of work by an author and also the first time to be given to both translator and writer (see Man Booker Prize), and Boyd Tonkin, the chair of the panel of judges stated that the judges chose *The Vegetarian* "unanimously" (qtd. *ibid.*) as their winner because "Deborah Smith's perfectly judged translation matches its uncanny blend of beauty and horror at every turn." (qtd. *ibid.*).

Interestingly, it was only after Wook-Dong Kim<sup>44</sup> and Charse Yun, both Korean-American scholars, introduced the Korean debate about the controversial reception of Smith's translation to the english-speaking world that the problem of translation was more widely recognised. Before that, all but one reviewer of *The Vegetarian* wrote about the translation favourably, which is also an indicator that probably none of those reviewers actually knew Korean. The only negative review was written by Tim Parks who, when closely reading the text, notices some dissonances in

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<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately Wook-Dong Kim's article was not available to me, but according to other newspapers' reviews of this essay, he accused Smith of not knowing the Korean language sufficiently, especially of the sentence structure and claims that she is generally an inept translator (see Rosche).

the literary style, some words being very colloquial, while he considered that other words were to be refined in order to be believably the narrator's words (see Parks). His approach was the following: "I must consider the relationship between content and style in the English translation. In a literary text a certain content manifests itself in a certain style. There is no separating the two." (ibid.). He does not explicate in any way why he thinks that content and style cannot be separated, and while it is true, that content is a part of the style and the style part of the content, it does not necessarily imply that content and style need be coherent. The writer as a creative artist can do whatever she wants, including writing the narrator's use of words incoherently. This incoherence could also signify the colouring of the narrative by the focalizer or the implied author. Furthermore, he is talking about a translation. Maybe this disparity is meant to make the foreignness of the text visible? But let's turn to an analyst who does speak Korean, for otherwise the analysis will be no more than an analysis of the translation itself, independently of the Korean novel itself.

As Charse Yun, a Korean-American, explains in his article in the *Korea Exposé*, shortly after Smith and Han won the Man Booker International prize "Korean-language media began to report numerous mistranslations" and it soon became a very controversial debate, and not only due to 'mistranslations'. Yun cross-read the English translation and the Korean novel and said that "Smith occasionally confuses the subjects of sentences. In several scenes, she mistakenly attributes dialogue and actions to the wrong characters, as in one bizarre exchange where the brother-in-law ends up referring to himself in the third person" (LA-Times), adding that a research paper presented at Ewha Womans University in 2016 showed that 10.9% of the first part of the novel was mistranslated while 5.7% of the Korean text had been omitted (*Korea Exposé*). There can be no doubt that this is problematic.

There is another question that is very important to analyse besides the question of the translation of the language itself, namely whether the translation of the culture and its mentality is present in the translated text. How did the translation introduce Korean culture to the English-speaking world? Was the Korean culture inherent in the text mistranslated? What importance does a difference in style of writing have? As far as English-language newspapers go, Yun provides the most elaborate analysis that takes these issues into account. The only other article focusing on this question is one by Jianyang Fan, a reporter for *The New Yorker*. However, much of her analysis of the controversy surrounding Smith's translation is based on Yun's texts, which is why I will not take her article into account.

Yun not only criticises Smith's knowledge of Korean but also more generally the style of her writing, the rhythm of the sentences. He writes that "Smith amplifies Han's spare, quiet style and embellishes it with adverbs, superlatives and other emphatic word choices that are nowhere in the original," emphasising that "This doesn't just happen once or twice, but on virtually every other page." (LA-Times). Interestingly, this does not deter him from his admiration of the translation because, according to him, it managed to give attention to Korean literature and helped introduce Han Kang to the English-speaking world (see *ibid.*). Yun brings up another point in his assessment of the translation: The question of the accurateness of the translation is 'moot'. Interestingly, 'moot' has two quite different meanings: 'irrelevant' or 'questionable' (See Oxford Online Dictionary). The question is irrelevant because most of the translation's readers will never be able to compare the text to the Korean novel itself, and undecidable, because it is a complicated academic question that oscillates between mistrust of the translation due to its inaccuracy, and admiration of the translation for its power to popularise Korean literature as a whole. Whether accurate

or not, the translation sparked interest in many people, Korean literature has become more popular and a “highly respected South Korean writer [has been introduced] to much-deserved recognition abroad” (ibid.).

This ambivalency towards the translation can also be seen elsewhere: Jeong Gwa-ri, professor of Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University, argued that “Smith added emotional adverbs in descriptions and amplified the emotional context by making something ordinary more special” (qtd. by Yung Suh-young). Although he saw the popularity of *The Vegetarian* as important for the “future of Korean literature” and as an “opportunity to introduce the value of Korean literature overseas” (qtd. ibid.), he stressed that it is important to question “whether transformation of the original text is rightful” (qtd. ibid.). This very ambivalence seems to be widely spread in the study of translations in general and points to the highly political engagement of translation theory, which allows us to question how the politics of the speaking voice in translation works. Who is speaking for whom, and why, and what does all that matter?

### Philosophies of Translation and their Politics

For the past centuries, most debates about translations have centered around the dichotomous opposition of fidelity vs. freedom. In more recent texts about translation this opposition has been renamed and become a debate about foreignisation and domestication. I will not further elaborate on the conceptions of these notions by different theorists, for I am not interested in the definitions of these terms but in their appearance as dichotomies in theories. As Lori Chamberlain has pointed out, this dichotomous distinction is based on misogynous metaphors and endowed with a colonial attitude. In her account of the fidelity/freedom-debate she argues that idealised

images of the female have been used in order to validate the positive or negative assessments of ‘faithful’ or ‘unfaithful’ translations, which are intertwined with the cultural evaluations of what is defined as ‘productive’ and what as ‘reproductive’ work. An example that can make the fallacy of gendered metaphors in this distinction visible is the case of Clara Schumann. She herself was a virtuous pianist, but also a creative composer. However, after her marriage she focused her creative work on editing her husband’s compositions (see Chamberlain, 254). Even more striking is that her own compositions were invalidated due to her being a woman artist<sup>45</sup> and she was only fully acknowledged as a composer in her own right in 1990 (Schumann-Portal). For a long time, she was not acknowledged as a ‘productive’ artist, but was seen as a ‘reproductive’ pianist. Even this ‘reproductive’ work was not recognised as an independent interpretation of the work of art. Thus, the virtuous pianist might be compared to the translator, for both always offer an interpretation of the ‘original,’ thereby changing its form of expression. This form of interpretation, as Chamberlain shows, has been gendered as ‘female’:

“The sexualisation of translation appears perhaps most familiarly in the tag *les belles infidèles* – like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful. [...] For *les belles infidèles*, fidelity is defined by an implicit contract between translation (as woman) and original (as husband, father, or author). However, the infamous ‘double standard’ operates here as it might have in traditional marriages: the ‘unfaithful’ wife/translation is publicly tried for crimes the husband/original is by law incapable of committing. This contract, in short, makes it impossible for the original to be guilty of infidelity. Such an attitude betrays real anxiety about the problem of paternity and translation. (255).

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<sup>45</sup> If Wikipedia is to be believed, this is what one commentator, Hans von Bülow, wrote about Clara Schumann’s compositions: „*Reproductives Genie* kann dem schönen Geschlecht zugesprochen werden, wie *productives* ihm unbedingt abzuerkennen ist ... Eine Componistin wird es niemals geben, nur etwa eine verdruckte Copistin ... *Ich glaube nicht an das Femininum des Begriffes: Schöpfer*. In den Tod verhaßt ist mir ferner alles, was nach Frauenemancipation schmeckt.“ (my emphasis). Unfortunately, in the short time I had to research this, I could not find out where this quote originally was taken from.

Here, woman figures as the beautiful, alas 'unfaithful'. Chamberlain exposes, how our preconceptions of gender influence the evaluation of translation. The author is by default the 'male' who needs to insure that his patrilineal kinship is guaranteed. It is the beautiful woman that embodies unfaithfulness, for unfaithfulness of the male is inconsistent with the construction of maleness itself, adultery being defined as something that only women can commit. In a similar vein, when concerned with the source-text language, it is the 'mother-tongue' who's chastity needs to be preserved (see 255f.), thereby insuring the patrilineal heritage of the 'original' (see 255). Thus, the anxiety about *les belles infidèles* becomes clear as an anxiety about patrilineal descent, evoked even in the grammatical complicity of the feminine plural of *les belles infidèles* with *la traduction*. Since the name for the translators could have been *les beaux infidèles*, concurring with the idea of the male translator, *le traducteur*, the gendering involved in defining the status of translations is plainly visible.

Simultaneously to the gendering of metaphors of translation, Chamberlain (although her main focus remains the aspect of gender) also establishes a link between colonialism and the practice of translation. She argues that "translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expanding nations." (258). Thus, colonisation means not only the appropriation of valuable resources and cheap human labour, but also the appropriation of other cultures, elements of their languages and literatures (including oral tradition), music and other forms of art. Contrarily to the honest endeavour of trying to learn from other cultures (which should not be villainised), cultural appropriation describes the practice of forcefully taking what one wants without any concerns for the source languages and literatures and their

people, including taking only what reflects and thereby confirms one's own stereotypes about the other culture.

Vincente L. Rafael argued that translation and language learning can be seen as 'war-fighting skills' (see 452), paralleling Chamberlain's claim that "literary success is equated with military success" (258). Rafael analyses a speech given by George W. Bush in 2006, in which Bush promised more funding for "the teaching of so-called 'critical languages' such as Arabic, Farsi, Chinese" (451), situating this political strategy within the history of empires. Rafael convincingly explains how language features as an elemental tool for colonisation strategies. Learning languages and translation is, in this context, rendered into an activity that can be "weaponized for the sake of projecting American power abroad while insuring security at home" (453). Foreign languages and the study of other cultures thus become means for espionage and exploitation. As Rafael argues, this conception of translation is closely link to the ideological implications inherent in perceiving the language of others as less valid or less valuable than one's own: "Rather than an alternative, the native language [meaning the languages of Native Americans] is regarded like any other foreign language: as an instrument for consolidating the dominant place of English." (457). But if languages and translations can be weaponised, and if the dichotomies of fidelity/freedom and foreignisation/domestication are inherently inscribed with gendered metaphors and colonialist concepts, how can we circumnavigate these problems in translations?

Lawrence Venuti famously argued that the work of the translator should be made visible, so maybe we can find an alternative if we start to consciously 'see' the practice of translation. Venuti also reflects on the social and political circumstances of translation. He understands the translator "as co-producer of a text" (Emmerich, 200). Thus, a translation cannot be understood as a text manufactured by an individual



independent of the social structures that surround her, but as a co-production between text, translator and “prevailing practices of marketing, reading and evaluating translations” (ibid.). Thus, the publishing industry has a mayor impact on how translations are being done, for they are the ones reading the translations, editing, suggesting stylistic changes etc. and therefore have a huge impact on how translators do their work. The publishing houses, in return, are influenced by the capitalist demand that texts be ‘consumable’ (see Venuti, 187), meaning, easy to read, quick to read, so that books can be consumed at high speed. Venuti argues that “this translation strategy has a certain relation to bourgeois economic values: the less awkward, unidiomatic and ambiguous a translation is made, the more readable it is, and hence the more ‘consumable’ it becomes as a commodity on the book market.” (ibid.). Thus bourgeois values merge with the spirit of capitalism<sup>46</sup>: the subject is an autonomous individual, “free and equal”. There are two premisses that Venuti explores when he talks about “fluency in translation” (ibid.).

Firstly, fluency is linked to the idea of transparency, meaning, the upholding of the illusion that the author’s style, personality and intention or meaning is represented (see ibid.). This transparency is the invisibility of the translator, for it obscures the fact, that the work of translation is a decision-making process where the translator’s active work consists of choosing from different possible options. This decision process is far from innocent because the translator cannot translate without having interpreted the text, which is why the translation will always be influenced by the translator’s personal

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<sup>46</sup> “Ein wichtiges Element für eine Netzwerkgesellschaft ist, dass die einzelnen Teilnehmer bestimmte Qualitäten haben müssen, um darin erfolgreich zu sein, wie z.B. Flexibilität, Verfügbarkeit, Mobilität und persönliches Engagement.“ (my paper for Sonja’s Theatre course Fall 2018; the network society in Chiapello/Boltanski’s *Le Nouvel Esprit du Capitalisme* [1999] is the new spirit of capitalism. One essential quality of a successful person in this form of society is the autonomous, independent subject who is not bound by any ties. Unfortunately I cannot discuss this here in more detail.

interpretations. Venuti links this transparency also to the readability, i.e. easy accessibility, of the text.

Secondly, Venuti links the question of fluency to the conception of the human subject as “a free, unified consciousness that transcends the limitations posed by language, biography, and history and is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action.” (187f.). He argues that it is necessary to decenter this conception of the transcendental subject and quotes Barthes’ definition of a ‘text’ in *The Death of the Author* as “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” (197). This opposition to the idea of the transcendental subject and to the idea that a text presents the reader with the author’s expression of “himself or [of] a personal truth” (ibid.) can also be used for the practice of translation, for it exposes both author and translator to be not the independent, autonomous individual composing the text, but conceptualises them as imbedded in a very specific environment and therefore (unconsciously) influenced by it, meaning that they “bring with them a set of ideological determinations” (197). Thus, what seems to be the author’s or the translator’s choices of phrasing are not only determined by personal taste and style, but also by “the social context in which they are made” (see ibid.). However, Venuti is not as radical as Barthes in his wish to relieve the author of her authority, as can be seen in his argument that translation is always a ‘decision process’ (see his discussion of Jiri Levý, 182). No two translators produce the same translation, and similarly, no two authors produce the same text. Thus, Venuti’s text dismantles the dichotomy of the author’s agency vs. the death of the author and the text as a mere tissue of quotes as not necessarily contradictory, especially when he explicitly stresses that “By insisting on larger, cultural determinations I do not mean to exclude the question of intentionality; my discussion does in fact incorporate Grave’s [i.e. the translator’s] own record of his intention, his preface.” (192).

In a similar way, Venuti argues against the dichotomy of fluency vs. fidelity, by giving two examples and explaining that there are different types of fluency that can be translated. His first example is the translation of Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars* by the British poet and translator Robert Graves. Graves translation is very readable (fluency) and even translates cultural items, such as monetary systems and cities from the Latin sesterces to gold pieces, from antique names of cities to their modern equivalents, "whenever they are more familiar to the common reader than the classical ones" (qtd. *ibid.* 191). Instead of invalidating Graves translation, Venuti explains how this specific translation was done in light of historical circumstances. Since the British population was not well acquainted with Latin culture and literature, Graves chose to accommodate them and render the foreign text in such a way as to make it accessible to them, so that they could begin to learn about it (see 191).

Furthermore, for Venuti, there is a second layer that needs to be taken into account: Suetonius's text displays the historical figure, Caesar, not as a coherent entity, thus contradicting the bourgeois ideology of the transcendental subject inherent in the fluency of the text itself. The underlying content that "does not offer a coherent position of subjectivity for the reader" (193) is seemingly overwritten by the bourgeois ideology of fluency, whilst simultaneously being reinstated by the very transparency of that fluency that shows the incoherence of Caesar's actions – and therefore negates the bourgeois assumption of the subject as transcendental entity.

The second example Venuti chose in order to articulate his differentiated conception of fluency is Ezra Pound's translation of the Anglo-Saxon *The Seafarer*. Venuti describes Pound's translation strategy as 'resistance' (see 194), meaning that he uses archaic words and imitates "compound words, alliteration, and accentual meter of Anglo-Saxon poetry." (*ibid.*) This, however, renders the text into poetry that is not very

easily accessible or understandable, due to the “elliptical, discontinuous poetry, in which transparency is rejected and the subject (of the enunciation as well as of the enounced) is dislocated.” (ibid.). Thus, the style contradicts the bourgeois ideology of the transcendental subject. As Venuti argues, the translation has nonetheless also an element of fluency. In the Anglo-Saxon text, the protagonist is not a coherent subject. Instead there is “an intriguing discrepancy between the seafarer’s obsessive desire to maintain his hard life at sea, [...] and his Christian belief in an afterlife of spiritual rewards and punishments” (ibid.). However, “Pound’s translation heals this split and recuperates the transcendental subject: it omits the Christian references entirely” (195),<sup>47</sup> which reinstates the notion of a transcendental subject, while the source-text features opposing concepts of the subject, one individualistic, the other collective (see ibid.). If we consider Venuti’s early text in this way, we can already see impulses towards the changes he later made in his theory. As Karen R. Emmerich points out, Venuti’s thinking turned towards a ‘stylistic analogue’ (see 202). This stream of thought can already be seen in his critical approach to the concept of fluency as outlined above. Thus he dismantles the dichotomy of ‘foreignising’ and ‘domesticating’ and instead draws attention towards the fact, that both can take place on at least two levels of the translation, content and style.

As Antoine Berman has shown in *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign*, one important element when translating novels is the rhythm of the novel, meaning, the narrative flow, this ‘rhythmic movement’ as Berman called it. In this strain of thought, he argues that “it is fortunately difficult for translation to destroy this rhythmic

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<sup>47</sup> As Venuti mentions, it might be that earlier versions of the poem did not reference Christianity. The Christian ideology might have been added in ‘monastic transcriptions’ (see 194). But even if the Christian references were added by monks, there could have been a split in the subject in earlier versions that referred to something other than Christianity.

movement,” but it can “considerably affect the rhythm” (248), which seems to be what, for instance, Yun criticised about Smith’s translation. Another point that Berman discusses, is that the translation can destroy the “underlying networks of signification” (248). These two elements point towards Venuti’s discussion of fluency and how these ‘underlying networks of signification’ (i.e. the subject not seen as transcendental entity) can be made visible through a linguistically fluent translation and obscured by a linguistically decentered translation (see above). These conceptions are similar to what Gayatri Spivak calls ‘rhetoricity of language,’ which works differently in every language and is thus very difficult to translate. She insists, that a translation needs to pay much attention to this rhetoricity in the source-text language if it wants to evade the trap of a ‘neocolonialist construction of the non-Western scene” (181).

What is interesting about this is that although Smith’s translation has re-shaped the language from its ‘quiet style’ and has ‘embellishe[d] it with adverbs, superlatives and other emphatic word choices’ (Yun qtd. above), when reading the novel, the protagonist’s quiet style of existence was transmitted. In an interview, the author, Han Kang, said about her main character, that “ironically the protagonist, Yeong-hye, doesn’t have a voice. She’s a silent character that is observed, desired, misunderstood, and pitied, and for precisely those reasons I took great care when writing her.” (interview, 6:51-7:12 – transcribed English subtitles). This idea about a silent resistance, a resistance that is non-violent and does not speak is contrary to a Western understanding of resistance, where it is conceptualised in more violent terms. This quiet resistance seems to be embedded in South Korean culture, made visible by the “candlelight revolution” (Han, NY Times) in the Winter of 2016/17: “Every Saturday, in cities across South Korea, hundreds of thousands of citizens gathered and sang together in protest against the corrupt government, holding candles in paper cups,

shouting that the president should step down.” (ibid.). But there seems to be more to this concept of a peaceful revolution. Han explains that when South Koreans seem ‘calm’ in the face of the possibility of war with North Korea, this might only be seen on the surface: “And yet, does this calm prove that South Koreans really are as indifferent as we might seem? Has everyone really managed to transcend the fear of war? No, it is not so.” (ibid.) She goes on to explain why, for South Koreans, war with North Korea can never be a solution: They still feel the artificial division of people who are the same people.

“One reason, even in these extreme circumstances, South Koreans are struggling to maintain a careful calm and equilibrium is that we feel more concretely than the rest of the world the existence of North Korea, too. Because we naturally distinguish between dictatorships and those who suffer under them, we try to respond to circumstances holistically, going beyond the dichotomy of good and evil. For whose sake is war waged? This type of longstanding question is staring us straight in the face right now, as a vividly felt actuality.” (ibid.).

This rejection of violence and war can be felt in *The Vegetarian*, even though the English language itself might not reflect that. The protagonist is portrayed as elusive. She does not have a voice of her own in the text, which is narrated by three different narrators: her husband, the husband of her sister and her sister. We glimpse at the protagonist through the other characters’ description of her. There are only a few lines in italics in the first part of the novel that seem to be the protagonist’s stream of thought. Other than that, there is no psychologically comprehensible description of the character, which, to me, seems to be quite contrary to westernised concepts of character description in literature, where it seems to be the belief that one can sympathise best with characters whose actions have been explained, whose mind has been psychologically made interpretable.

Independently of whether my assessment of this cultural element of peaceful resistance and the elusiveness of the character in contrast to western ideas about literature is adequate or not, there is another element that needs to be taken into account. Smith's translation was not created in a void but was influenced by editors the publisher. Therefore, the translation cannot only be said to have been influenced by Smith's decisions of how to translate, but also by the demands of the publishing industry. Smith herself recounts her experience with publishing houses:

"I was getting enough of an insider's view of the publishing industry to be aware of all the implicit biases that made it so difficult for these books to ever get published, especially if they weren't from European languages (harder to discover, editors can't read the original, lack of funding programmes, authors who don't speak English). Plus, publishing's inherent conservatism means that what little did get through was weighted towards the commercial end of the scale, which is not the kind of writing that excites me." (qtd. by Abrams).

Here, the problems within the publishing houses are made explicit and point to another problem that needs to be discussed when talking about translations: Who gets to decide who is published in translation? Who is editing these translations? What ideas about how literature should look like influence the ways translators can work? And, is there any way to counteract this?

### Counter-Publishing?

For Deborah Smith herself the question of translation is a political choice. In her "not-for-profit press" ('About Tilted Axis Press') *Tilted Axis*, which she founded in 2015, they are determined to publish English translations of texts from other languages and cultures that are not very well known in the English-speaking world, and thus have no voice in the Western construction and interpretation of the world. She stated, "we

publish exclusively fiction that is translated from an Asian language, contemporary, and innovative. In other words, the kind of books that might not otherwise make it into English, for the very reasons that make them exciting to us.” (qtd. in Abrams). Obviously, there is a problem inherent in this statement. The publishing press selects the books they will publish themselves, they don’t take submissions (see *ibid.*) and this selection seems to be based on an interest in another culture’s literature that is defined by what ‘we’ as Westerners find interesting. But the issue is more complex. Tilted Axis Press has presented itself as feminist, but by acknowledging the plural in the noun ‘feminisms’. On their website they argue:

“For us, feminist publishing means working against the fetishisation of ‘oppression’, and demands that authors explicitly subscribe to what white women recognise as feminism, or even foreground their femaleness in their work. Working towards ensuring the women we publish have the creative agency to contextualise their work, resisting the commodification, fetishisation and/or erasure of their femaleness on their own terms.” (‘Translating Feminisms’).

But the project is also invested in decolonisation: “As part of Tilted Axis’s wider project of decolonisation through & of translation, and in response to seeing WoC author’s work misread through a white feminist lens, we wanted to re-imagine the possibilities of a fully intersectional international feminism.” (*ibid.*). This agenda is also evident in the diversity of the main staff (see pictures at ‘Who we are’). By revealing their intentions and reasons they disclose their agenda, but also themselves. In politics as in literature it is important to know who has the power to speak, for it determines who gets to decide who’s voices are being heard, and how these voices are being translated. As Foucault argued in *Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?*, it does matter “How, under what conditions, and in what forms [...] something like a subject [can] appear in the order of discourse,” and that it also matters to analyse how these conditions dictate “What place



[this subject can] occupy in each type of discourse, what functions [it] can assume, by obeying what rules” (221). Here, Foucault talks about the author of a (literary) text, but this also encapsulates a very relevant question in Translation Theory. As Yun stressed, the reader of the translation is most likely to not know the source language and is thus incapable of comparing the translation to the source-text, hence the importance of asking who is *not* being translated and why? As Jeong lamented, Korean literature has not been the focus of Westerner’s attention regarding world literature, and only two novels, Shin Kyung-sook’s *Please Look after Mom* and Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*, have been popular ‘overseas’ (see Jeong, qtd. by Yun). A similar concern seems to be the fueling energy for Tilted Axis Press, Smith stating that their main focus is “to publish under-represented writing, which is an intersection of original language, style, content, and often its author’s gender. To publish it properly, in a way that makes it clear that this is art, not anthropology.” (qtd. by Abrams). This focus on the artistic dimension in translation is obviously important when translating literary texts, for the artistic creation in the source language is what we admire in literature. Thus, while content and style certainly can be contradictory, they cannot be clearly separated because the style of writing is part of the content, and vice versa. In writing her defence of Smith’s translation, Claire Armitstead argued that one of the main reasons why Korean literature is so little known is because English was the translators’ second language and thus they “throttled the literary life out of it, preventing sophisticated and important writers such as Hwang Sok-Yong or Yi Mun-Yol from taking their rightful place on the world stage” (Armitstead). Armitstead shows another important problem for translation theory. Not only can a foreign text be mistranslated or altered in the process but, and in a way this is even more essential, the foreign language text needs a translation if it wants to be recognised in the english-speaking world. Since 1985 it has

been a concern in western feminist theory to evade ethnocentricity and not only talk about white feminism and white women's literature, but to incorporate the writings and points of view of women of colour. As Elizabeth Abel emphasises in her article "Black Writing, White Reading" (1993), around 1985 the new attention to texts by women of colour had several reasons, one of which was "the sheer brilliance and power of this writing and its escalating status in the literary marketplace and, consequently, the academy" (831). As can be seen, the emergence of new literature is able to influence the academic discussion of feminism. It was important for the development of intersectional feminism, as proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1991, to first incorporate non-white women's perspectives into academic discussions of feminism, and similarly, literary texts from other ethnicities/cultures will first need to be seen on the western/english-speaking 'literary marketplace' in order to make our own biases visible to us. Obviously, this is not the task of non-european writers but of European/Western publishing houses. The task for us is to create a platform where these texts can be published in their own right as great literature. In the case of Asia, most national literatures have been outshadowed by the presence of Chinese and Japanese literature, thus making it more difficult for Korean literature to be acknowledged on the popular book market (see Yun qtd. by Fan). In this light, the agenda of Tilted Axis Press is quite clearly one that wants to overcome this problem by focusing on publishing texts from languages and cultures that are not commonly seen on the literary market. The importance of translation is eminent in writings of women of colour and in texts from overshadowed literatures. Many people of colour from the U.S. or from countries of the African continent have chosen to publish their work in English or in French, depending on their country of origin and that countries history of being colonised. This however, has taken the focus away from other African languages and their literatures,

for it is much easier and more comfortable for the eurocentric literary market to publish these books in their own languages, be it French or English, for there is a ready Western audience for these languages. Most writers from Asian countries don't even have that option and translation will be the only way for them to present their literary works to the world. But translation is not only important for under-evaluated literatures but can also help to undermine our notions of canonicity.

This canon however is defined to a high degree by academia itself, and consequently, their ideas about what should be defined as literature and what should be read also influences what is being taught. What Venuti fails to mention when he writes about fluency is that it is precisely the academic elite, the elite that already speaks that foreign language, or, the academic elite of that foreign language, that criticises translations that make the content accessible to those who have not learned the foreign language but are interested in reading foreign literature. Furthermore, providing translations that the readers enjoy might inspire them to learn more about that particular culture, that particular writer, or they might even think about learning that language. And this is why, adding to the intersections of feminist analysis and postcolonial theory, we need to take social class and the fallacies of elitism into account.

## Conclusion

Of course, when reading and talking/writing about translations it is necessary to engage with a critique of the translator's method of translation. And it is also important to learn about the other language and culture. But by counteracting colonialist and sexist metaphors that determine the value of a specific archetype of translation we can re-evaluate translations and make them more visible *as* translations. To change the

publishing industry as a whole might be a utopian project but, as *The Vegetarian* exemplified, the popular translation of one novel has the power to influence what the readers are interested in and how they think about other cultures and literatures.

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